Pronominals:
A Comparative Study of the Languages of Bihar and West Bengal

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1 Focus of This Paper

Pronominals as we know are of various types being classified as: personal pronouns, inclusive/exclusive pronominals, honorifics, deictics, interrogative pronouns, indefinite pronouns and enclitic pronominals or pronominal suffixes. Some languages have pronominals in all the above categories while some lack such a distribution.

The present paper is a study in this area. Focusing on the regions of Bihar and West Bengal this paper is an attempt to highlight the occurrence of pronominals in seven prominent dialects of Bangla as well as three of the major Bihari languages. This paper is an investigation into these ten languages bringing out the similarities and dissimilarities with respect to the occurrence and use of the pronominals.

1.1 Sources for the Study

The various types of classifications that have been discussed in this paper have been derived from three major sources on the Indo- Aryan languages: Grierson (1903-27), Masica (1991) and Cardona (2003). Dialectology of modern Indo- Aryan/ New Indo- Aryan (NIA) provides evidence for an early division between the Inner and the Outer groups[i] (Grierson 1917- 20 a, b, 1927), the former including what is now the Punjabi, western Hindi and Rajasthani areas of North India, the latter including most of the remainder – i.e., eastern Indo-Aryan (Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Orissa), south-western India, and perhaps Sindh and Kashmir.

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1.2 Bengali Group

As already mentioned above this paper is a study of the pronominals of the two languages forming the eastern branch of NIA[ii] languages, namely, Bengali and Bihari. In the Bengali group the languages that have been studied are:

- Central or Standard Bangla
- Western Bangla
- South-Western Bangla
- Northern Bangla
- Rajbansi
- Eastern Bangla and
- South-Eastern Bangla

1.2.1 Choice of Standard Form for Bengali

Of these seven dialects the Central dialect or the dialect spoken in and around Kolkata has been taken as the standard form. The western dialect of Bangla is spoken in its extreme form in the east of the Chhota Nagpur division. The south-western dialect is spoken in the central Midnapur region. The standard of the northern dialect of Bangla may be taken to be the form of the language which is spoken in the district of Dinajpur. Rajbansi, the well-marked dialect of Bangla is spoken in the country to the north-east of that in which northern Bangla is spoken. The eastern Bangla is the most important with respect to the maximum number of speaker that it has. Along the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal, in the district of Noakhali and Chittagong, and in the north of the district of Akyab, the last belonging to the province of Burmah, a very popular dialect of has been named the south-eastern dialect.

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1.3 Bihari Group

The three languages falling under the Bihari group are: Magahi (spoken in the southern parts of Bihar), Bhojpuri (spoken in western Bihar) and Maithili (spoken primarily in Northern Bihar). But before proceeding with the classification let us first go through the various types of pronominals. They have been discussed as under:

- *PERSONAL PRONOUNS*

All the languages exhibit a paradigm of personal pronouns depending on the distinction of number and person. It is divided on the basis of first person, second person and third person varying according to the number distinction singular and plural. The present paper deals with the nominative case and the oblique case of the personal pronouns.

- *REFLEXIVES and HONORIFICITY*

The reflexive pronominals are used to refer to the self. In many of the Indo-Aryan languages they are also used as honorifics. However, in languages like Bhojpuri we see an entire paradigm of second person pronominals which are used as honorifics.

- *CLUSIVITY*

Clusivity is a widespread feature familiar from descriptive grammars and frequently figuring in typological schemes and diachronic scenarios. The term 'clusivity' is a common terminology for inclusive as well as exclusive pronominals.

The terms 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' are traditionally used to denote forms of personal pronouns which distinguish whether an addressee or addressees are included in or excluded from the set of referents which also contains the speaker. Referentially, both inclusive and exclusive forms are non-singular but some inclusives may structurally

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count as a solitary unit and align paradigmatically with referentially singular pronouns. In such cases, the singular paradigmatic opposition shifts from singular vs. non-singular to unit vs. augmented.

The inclusive is traditionally explained as an elaboration of meaning of the first person plural pronoun 'we'. When present in a language the opposition of 'we' inclusive and 'we' exclusive is intended to specify whether the reference of 'we' includes or excludes the addressee. The same difference is disregarded at the level of the pronominal marking in other languages.

- ### *DEMONSTRATIVES , IDEFINITE and RELATIVE PRONOMINALS*

The forms of the interrogative and relative pronouns are more or less exact copies of the demonstrative/third person personal pronoun with the morpheme /k-/ for the interrogative and /dʒ-/ for the relative. Magahi also has correlatives, in /s-/ or /t-/ (the Bangla correlative /ʃ-/ and /tara/, etc.) comparable to the Hindi /wo/ in /wo……..dʒo/. Demonstrative pronouns are deictic with a contrast between proximate and distant reference.

Other pronominals and modifiers include the indefinite pronoun /koi/, the indefinite attributive /kəuno/, the indefinite numeral /kəi/ and the indefinite quantitative /kutʃʰ/. An important aspect of the noun phrase structure in Magahi is the use of the numeral classifiers /go/, /ʈʰo/ (Bangla classifier /ta/). They essentially occur with numerals in attributive function and strictly denote countability.

- ### *INTERROGATIVE PRONOMINALS*

Interrogative words in general begin with k- in NIA. Most NIA languages distinguish between animate or inanimate (or personal/impersonal) interrogatives

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(who/what) in the direct but not always in the oblique case. All interrogative words in Bangla begin with k-. The relative pronouns are formally distinct from the interrogative pronouns and begin with dʒ-. Bangla shares these features with several other Indo-Aryan languages of India like Assamese, Oriya, Hindi, the three Bihari languages namely, Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri, Guajarati and Marathi.

1.3.1 MAGAHI

Personal pronouns in Magahi exhibit a paradigm for three persons and two numbers. They do inflect for case but essentially only two, nominative and the genitive. The genitive has an oblique form used before postpositions. Thus /həm/ nominative 'I' and /həmər/ genitive 'my', and its oblique form /həməra/, which is used with postpositions to obtain various periphrastic case functions such as /həməra se/ 'from me', /həməra la/ 'for me' and /həməra ke/ for the accusative and the dative. A noteworthy fact in this regard is that Magahi, unlike Hindi but like Bangla uses the genitive, and not the dative, in 'experiencer, subject constructions.

- **Personal Pronominals in Magahi**

	First person		Second person		Third person	
	Inferior	superior	inferior	superior	proximate	non-prox
Sing						
Nom.		həm	tũ/tõ		i	u
Obl.	mora	həmra	tora	tohəra	eh	oh
Plu						
Nom	həməni	həmrəni	tohəni	tohrani	i	u
Obl.	həməni	həmrəni	tohəni	tohrani	inh	unh

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More specifically it uses the genitive oblique without any postposition for this purpose. However, the genitive form is available only to the singular and not to the plural pronouns, which results in the plural pronouns occurring in the single case form.

The forms of the *interrogative* and *relative* pronouns are more or less exact copies of the *demonstrative*/ third person personal pronoun with the morpheme /k-/ for the interrogative and the morpheme /dʒ-/ for the relative. Magahi also has correlatives, in /s-/ or /t-/ (the Bangla correlative /ʃ/ and /tara/, etc.) comparable to the Hindi /wo/….in /dʒo………wo/.

- **Interrogative, Demonstrative, Relative and Correlative pronominals of Magahi**

	Demonstrative	interrogative	relative	correlative
Nominative	i/u	ka/kke (human)	dʒe	se/te
Oblique	ekəra/okəra	kəkəra	dʒekəra	sekəra/tekəra.

The interrogative pronominals are classified on the basis of +/- human distinction. He also provides a list of the indefinite pronominals of Magahi which is as follows:

	Interrogative		indefinite
Singular	who (+human)	what (-human)	
Nominative	ke/ko/kəuno	ka/ki/kãutʃi	keu/koi/kahu
Oblique	keh	kahe	kekəro/kəuno

It also needs to be noted that apart from the distinction of proximate and non-proximate third person pronouns, the distinction of honorificity is an important grammatical entity in this language and has extensive agreement consequences. It operates in both second person and third person.

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- **Three Level Systems for Reflexives and Honorifics**

As far as *reflexives and honorifics* are related, we can notice that Magahi exhibits a three level system. The first level is when the second person singular is used in case of either very intimate relations as for mother-child relation or friend-friend relation. This pronominal is also used when a socially higher placed person refers to somebody who belongs to the lower rung of the society. The second level is when the second person plural pronoun is used when addressing one or more persons of lower status, children, close family members younger than oneself, or by equals in informal social institutions. These two levels are basically non-honorific levels.

The third level is actually the honorific level. Originally a reflexive pronoun is honorific. It is used when addressing one or more persons of higher status, persons to whom respect is due, elders and skilled persons and by parents to children to teach them good manners. Persons of equal status use honorifics in formal situations.

Second person may have variant forms /tũ/ or /tõ/ in the speech of some. There is also a reflexive pronoun /əpəne/ 'self' which is for extra respect in second person and has separate verbal agreement. All these together result in the three degrees of respect for the second person as discussed above.

It should also be noted that even the forms in second and third person singular do not show different forms for the honorifics: honorifics is operative in verbal agreement with them. The honorific genitive and oblique do show separate forms. The following list summarizes the use the **Magahi honorifics corresponding to person.**

person	singular	singular genitive	singular oblique	plural
first	həm	həmər	həməra	həməni

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second	tu	tor	tora	tohəni
(hon.)		tohər	tohəra	tohəni
Third (prox.)	i	ekər	ekəra	isəb
(hon.)		inkər	inkəra	
third(non-prox.)	u	okər	okəra	usəb
(hon.)		unkər	unkəra	

1.3.2 MAITHILI

Maithili pronouns are marked for three persons (1st, 2nd and 3rd), four grades of honorificity (high honorific, honorific, mid-honorific and non-honorific) for the second person and two grades of honorificity for the third person; two numbers (singular and periphrastic plural marked by <u>səb</u> or <u>lokəin</u> (all); and case. They are not marked for gender. The first person is indeterminate as to honorificity. (Cardona 2003)

The Maithili personal pronouns are: <u>həm</u>(I), <u>əpne</u> (you)-high honorific, <u>əhã</u> (you) - honorific, <u>tõ</u> (you) - mid-honorific, <u>o</u> ('he' honorific) and <u>u</u> ('he' non-honorific). The case system of pronouns is more complex than that of the nouns. As a matter of fact, the case morphology of the first and the second (mid-honorific and non-honorific) persons is alike, while the case morphology of the second person (high-honorific and honorific) is quite regular.

The third person pronouns are the same as the proximate and remote demonstrative pronouns. The demonstrative pronouns also show the honorific and the

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non-honorific contrast; <u>i</u> 'this' (honorific-proximate), <u>i</u> 'this' (non-honorific, proximate), <u>u</u> 'that' (honorific, remote) and <u>u/o</u> 'that' (non-honorific, remote).

The interrogative pronouns in Maithili are: <u>ke</u> (who) and <u>ki-kət^hi</u> (what). <u>ke</u> alone refers to humans and this has both honorific and non-honorific forms. The relative pronouns are <u>dʒe</u> (who)-used for humans with honorifics: non-honorific forms) and <u>dʒe</u> (what)- used for non-humans with honorific, non-honorific forms); the correlative pronoun is <u>se</u>. Let us now look at the occurrence of <u>personal pronouns</u> in the language.

	1P		2P		3P	
	Obsolete	Modern	Obsolete	Modern	Hon.	Non-hon.
Sing.						
Nom.	mo	həm	tõ	toh	i	i
Plu.						
Nom.	-	həmsəb	-	tohsəb	isəb	usəb

The **interrogative pronominals** in Maithili have been divided on the basis of +/- human attributes. The +human forms have again been classified into +/- hon. categories.

Who (+human)		What (-human)
Hon.	non-hon.	
ke	ke	ki (sing.nom.)
-	kahi	kət^hi (sing.obl.)

- **The relative/ correltive pronominals** are as follows.

Relative		Correlative	
Non-hon	hon.	non-hon	hon

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Sing

Nom.	dʒe	dʒe		se	se
Obl.	dʒəhi	-		təhi	-

Plu.

Nom.	dʒesəb	dʒesəb		sesəb	sesəb

Indefinite pronominal for 'anyone/someone' is <u>keo</u> and for 'something' it is <u>kitʃʰu.</u>

1.3.3 BHOJPURI

- **The personal pronouns** for Bhojpuri are:

	1P		2P		3P	
	Obsolete	modern	obsolete	modern	proximate	remote
Sing						
Nom.	me	həm	tũ	tu	i	u/o
Plu						
Nom	həmni-kə	həmrən	tohəni-kə	tohrən	inh	unh

- As far as **the relative/correlative pronominals** are concerned they are:

	Who	that
Sing		
Nom	dʒe/dʒəun	se/təun
Pl.		
Nom	dʒinh-ka/dʒəun	tinh-ka/təun

Bhojpuri has indefinite pronoun /kutʃʰo/ 'some' for the inanimate and 'kəuno' for the non-honorific animate. /kehu/ is the form for the honorific and also the oblique for the animate.

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As far as the demonstratives are concerned, it is /həi/ (proximate/this) and /həu/ (remote/that). The large set of Bhojpuri deictics are based on the demonstrative stems and provide the patterns for the corresponding forms of the interrogative set in /k-/, the relative set in /dʒ-/ and the correlative set in /t-/.

Interrogatives have been classified on the basis of +/- human attribute.

	Who (+human)	What (- human)
Sing (nom)	ke/kəun	ka
Plu (nom)	kinh ka/kəun	-

Bhojpuri **honorifics** are the most striking feature of the language. The honorific is dependent on person and proximity. Let us look at the occurrence of the honorifics.

Second person

	Neutral	-hon	hon
Direct	tu	te	rəua
Oblique	tohər	tor	rəur

Third person

	Neutral	-hon,-prox	+hon, +prox	-hon,+prox
Direct	u	u	i	i
Oblique	unkəra	okəra	inkəra	ekəra

The personal pronoun /u/ shown above can be treated as neutral in terms of proximity. The proximate pronominal /i/ is the marked member of the pair. Its plural form, following the pattern is /ekʰəni kə/. The pronouns /tu/ and /u/ are treated as neutral also in the sense of being non-honorific without being overly honorific. They

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could be considered 'familiar' honorific. In fact, both second and third person have a still higher level of honorificity, a kind of super honorific /əpne kə/ for second and /ihə̃kə, uhə̃kə/ for third person with agreement consequences in the verb.

In the columns underneath I would present the pronominals of all the seven dialects according to the different categories.

- **Singular Nominative:**

	1P		2P		3P	
	Inferior	usual	inferior	usual	inferior	usual
CENTRAL	mui	ami	tui	tumi	se	tini
WESTERN	-	mui	-	tui	-	se
SOUTH-WESTERN	-	mui	-	tui	-	-
NORTHERN	-	hami	-	tumi	-	tini
RAJBANSI	mui	hami	tui	tai	-	tani
EASTERN	-	ami	-	tumi	se	tini
SOUTH-EASTERN	-	ãi	-	tui	te	

We notice that the central dialect has two simultaneous forms- inferior and usual whereas most of the other dialects have only one existing form with an exception to Rajbansi which also has two forms. Basically this is a diglossic situation.

- **Plural Nominative:**

	1P		2P		3P	
	Inferior	usual	inferior	usual	inferior	usual
CENTRAL	mora	əmora	tora	tomora	tara	tahara
WESTERN	-	mui-ra	-	tahar	-	tahara
SOUTH-WESTERN	-	monne	-	tan	-	tanne
NORTHEN	-	hamara	-	tor	-	tara
RAJBANSI	-	hamra	-	tomra	-	-

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	hama-gula	toma-gula				
EASTERN	-	-	-	-	-	tara
SOUTH-EASTERN	-	ãja-re	-	tõr	-	tara/tana

- **Demonstratives**

	+prox +anim -hon	+prox -anim -hon	+prox +anim +hon	-prox +anim -hon	-prox -anim -hon	-prox +anim +hon
CENTRAL	e	e	ini	o	o	uni
WESTERN		ei			ai	
SOUTH-WESTERN						
NORTHERN		i			u	
RAJBANSI		e			o	
EASTERN	-	ei			ai	
SOUTH-EASTERN		ei			ai	

- **Relative/correlative**

	Who	that
CENTRAL	dʒe(±anim., -hon.)/dʒinni(+hon.)	se(±anim.,-hon)/tini
WESTERN	------------ dʒe -------------------	----se ------------
SOUTH-WESTERN	---------- dʒe -------------------	----se ------------
NORTHERN	---	
RAJBANSI	dʒa/ dʒaj/dʒani	---

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EASTERN   --

SOUTH-EASTERN --

- **Interrogative**

	Whose	who (+human)	what(-human)
CENTRAL	kahar(+human)/ kiser(-human)	ke	ki
WESTERN	--		
SOUTH-WESTERN	--		
NORTHERN	--		
RAJBANSI	--		
EASTERN	-----------------------------------	ze	za/ki
SOUTH-EASTERN	-----------------------------	ze	za/ki

- **Indefinite**

	Anyone	anything	any
CENTRAL	kehu	kit∫ʰu	kono
WESTERN	keha	kit∫ʰu	kono
SOUTH-WESTERN	--		
NORTHERN	kehu	kit∫ʰu	kunu
RAJBANSI	kahaj	kaj	
EASTERN	keu	kit∫ʰu	kono
SOUTH-EASTERN	--		

- **Reflexives and honorifics**

For the central dialect the nominative, reflexives (apəni) and the genitive, reflexives

(apənar) are used as honorifics.

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1.4 Conclusion

The pronominals of ten language varieties- seven dialects of Bangla and three languages grouped under the heading of Bihari (Maithili, Bhojpuri and Magahi) have been discussed in this paper. The following types of pronominals have been discussed in the paper:

- personal pronominals
- interrogatives
- demonstratives
- indefinite pronominals
- relative/correlative
- reflexives and honorifics

The standard dialect of Bangla has two alternate forms- *sadhu bhasha* and *cholita bhasha (*Grierson 1907). Rajbansi also shows this distinction but the other dialects show only one form. The pronominal system clearly demonstrates this. The discussion of pronominals in the pages above clearly indicates the existence of diglossic situation prevalent in the region.

As far as Bihari languages (Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri) are concerned one finds a lot of similarity among the pronominal system of these languages. The main focus of this paper is not to highlight the similarities but to focus on the dissimilarities. Such dissimilarities have already been discussed above but it is worthwhile to summarize them once more. The personal pronoun system of Maithili has been classified into absolute and modern. The same is the case with Bhojpuri which also shows two alternate systems of pronominals. But, at present we see only one form-the other form being already merged. What can be the reason for this? One reason which I can think of is the influence of Magahi which has always shown only one form and this form has been actively incorporated in the pronominal system of the other two languages.

Another remarkable feature of these languages is the use of reflexives and honorifics. The use of pronominals referring to self as honorifics has been a common

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feature of many Indo-Aryan languages. Magahi shows three levels of honorificity, Bhojpuri has third person as well as second person pronominal paradigm of honorificity. Maithili shows third person pronominal paradigm of honorificity. So, though the feature of honorificity is common in all these three languages, the way it is exhibited by the pronominals is at variance.

Grierson (1917- 20 a, b, 1927) has grouped these languages in the Eastern branch of the NIA languages. No matter, the similarities are more than enough for such a nomenclature but it would not be wise enough to stick to it because we must take other parameters also to get a clearer picture of the typological influence of languages over each other and how they can be regrouped.

End Notes

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[i] The main difference between the Inner and the Outer languages seems to lie in the treatment of /s̺/, which remains /s̺/ only in the inner core but changes to /h/ or /ʃ/ in the languages of the Outer group.

[ii] Many scholars have argued against the classification of NIA languages but an examination of the geographical inscriptions (3rd Century BCE) indicates that the majority of innovations appearing in the inscription show agreement between the east and the southwest. (Southworth, 2004)

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