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CHAPTER 7

The dynamics of Nepali pronominal distinctions in familiar, casual and formal relationships

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Nepali uses various morphological means formally to distinguish at least five levels of deference in verbal interaction. In addition to the three Nepali second person pronouns, for each of which the Nepali verb distinguishes separate conjugated forms, Nepali speakers also make use of the deferentially conjugated verb in combination with the respectful term *hajur* or with kinship terms to give expression to different levels of deference and formality. Moreover, the Nepali verb distinguishes a separate mediopassively conjugated construction used exclusively when the notional subject of the sentence is a member of the former royal family. Speakers can also exploit the device of the ambiguous avoidance term *āphu* 'self' or make oblique reference to the second person through the use of the first person plural when a speaker is uncertain of the register which would be most appropriate.

Unlike the simple two-term system found in many Western languages, such as French *tu* vs. *vous*, the choice of pronoun and conjugation between intimate friends and indeed between higher caste married couples tends to be highly asymmetrical. The semiotics of this asymmetry is commensurate with the degree of intimacy which the two individuals feel towards each other. This phenomenon, strikingly unfamiliar to the contemporary Occidental, illustrates rather vividly how different the sensibilities and semantic underpinnings of the many tiers of deference expressed by pronominal usage and other morphological parameters in Nepali are from those of an intimate interaction whereby the two European individuals might simply be able to *tutoyer* each other. A descriptive account is provided of actual usage, and an analytical exposition of the semiotics of this morphologically diverse system of indexing relationships in Nepali speech is presented.

Keywords: Nepali, pronouns, pronominal agreement, deferential systems, honorifics, pronominal morphology, semiotics, sociolinguistics

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The second person in Nepali

There are three pronouns to refer to a singular second person referent in Nepali. These are the familiar second person pronoun तँ *tã*, the intermediate form तिमी *timī* and the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. In his grammatical notes on Nepali, Clark (1963: 71) introduces the unfortunate terms 'low grade honorific', 'middle grade honorific' and 'high grade honorific' for the pronouns तँ *tã*, तिमी *timī* and तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* respectively. In fact, these terms are misnomers because none of the three Nepali second person pronouns can aptly be called honorific in terms of their meaning. Clark explains that the form तँ *tã* 'is used in familiar speech to children and junior servants', whilst the pronoun तिमी *timī* 'is used among friends and to more senior servants', and the form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* 'is the form regularly used in polite conversation'. Although Clark's simple description comes in handy for users of an introductory coursebook, in fact we shall see that his synopsis represents a gross oversimplification.

Korolëv (1965: 99; 1968: 1259) treats तँ *tã* as a singular second person pronoun, which he translates with Russian ты *ty* 'you' (sg.). He treats तिमी *timī* as a plural second person pronoun and translates this form with Russian вы *vy* 'you' (pl.). In so doing, Korolëv's approach is historically informed and diachronically correct, though no longer an entirely adequate way to describe modern Nepali usage. Korolëv (1968: 1260) qualifies the form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, which he renders orthographically in Devanāgarī script as तपाईँ *tapāĩ*, as a 'strong polite form' of the second person. Indeed, the pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* is a 'strong' form in that this second person pronoun represents an innovation in the pronominal system. The pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* originally represents a compound of the singular second person pronoun तँ *tã* augmented with the element पाईँ *pāĩ*, which also occurs in the now rare form मपाईँ *mapāĩ* 'I myself'. For the latter, Tripāṭhī and Dāhāl (vs 2040: 1050) recorded the spelling मपाईं *mapāĩ̃*, which parallels the spelling of the second person deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, and they explained that the form is used when talking about oneself in a prideful fashion.

According to Turner (1931: 272, 371, 493; 1966: 502), the element पाईँ *pāĩ or* पाईं *pāĩ̃* ultimately derives from the same etymon that is reflected in Pali as *pāyēna* and in the Prakrit forms *pāēṇa* ~ *pāēṇaṁ*, meaning 'for the most part'. The Nepali element पाईँ *pāĩ* in तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* and मपाईं *mapāĩ̃* is therefore cognate with the Kumaunī emphatic particle *pai* and the Marāṭhī form *pāī* ~ *paī* 'certainly, generally'. In addition to the orthographic variant तपाईँ *tapāĩ*, given by Korolëv, the pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* sometimes occurs in modern sources and the electronic media as तपाई, *tapāī* without the *bindu* indicating nasalisation. This variation is due to nothing more than carelessness, but the orthographic variation is worth noting nonetheless.

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Others have subsequently corrected the use of the term 'low grade honorific'. For instance, Verma and Sharma (1979, I: 191) labelled the form तँ *tā* 'non-honorific', the form तिमी *timī* 'honorific' and the form तपाईं *tapāĩ* 'formal'. Aryāl (2010: 19) labels the second person pronouns तँ *tã*, तिमी *timī* and तपाईं *tapāĩ* as 'non-honourific', 'middle honourific' and 'high honourific' respectively. As I have already hastened to stress, the meanings of none of the three Nepali second person pronominal forms can be accurately qualified as honorific. Schmidt (1976) proposed that the factors underlying the usage of the different Nepali pronouns are 'social distance' and 'solidarity'. She recognised that Nepali has more than three registers, although her account of the morphology of the 'fourth' register is inaccurate.

With reference to the work on the three-tiered system of pronominal usage in Hindi by Dhanesh Kumar Jain (1969, 1973), Schmidt makes the astute assertion:

> I do not disagree with the position that a single complex dimension (i.e. social distance) may contain diverse aspects such as power and solidarity… The real issue is whether we are justified in making a universalistic distinction of three ranked categories. (Schmidt 1976: 213)

In fact, as numerous individuals who operate in both language communities have experienced for themselves, the Nepali and Hindi systems are quite far from congruent. Despite asymmetries in pronominal usage which both languages share, in practice the two systems diverge wildly. Rather, the meanings encoded by pronominal forms are language-specific and reflect entirely distinct language-specific constellations of cultural values and social sensibilities (cf. Braun 1988).

From an all-encompassing vantage point, the Nepali system of pronominal usage sometimes creates the impression of defying description because multiple systems coexist in the language, depending on a person's caste and upbringing, but also depending on a person's individual sensibilities and sophistication. At the same time, pronominal usage in Nepali is in transition and undergoing rapid change. Nonetheless, many generalisations can be stated, and the exceptions can then also be insightfully explained. Detailed examples will be adduced and explained to describe the individual meaning of the three second person pronouns. Whilst I contend that the term 'honorific' is semantically a misnomer, the distinction between the three Nepali second person pronouns does have to do with सम्मान *sammān* 'respect, deference, acknowledgement' as well as with familiarity vs. distance.

Many Western languages distinguish between two registers, such as the French choice between *tutoyer* and *vouvoyer* or the German distinction between *duzen* and *siezen*. Brown and Gilman (1960) interpreted the pronominal usage between two persons, making up what they called a dyad, in terms of power politics, distance and solidarity. Cases of the asymmetrical use of pronouns were perceived

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as 'social dyads involving semantic conflict', whereas instances of reciprocal use of pronouns within a dyad were interpreted as cases in which the conflict had been resolved. In reality, many such semantic conflicts are never resolved, as in the traditional albeit now conservative Dutch usage of respectful *U* by a grandchild to his grandmother, and the grandmother's use of the familiar form *jij, je* and *jou* to her grandchild. In fact, such dyads are not even characterised by semantic conflict at all, merely by asymmetry. Instead, perhaps the discomfort expressed by Brown and Gilman is a reflection of an anglophone world view, or the tendency to be ill at ease with acknowledgements of a difference in social hierarchy could, more broadly, be symptomatic of an historical trend in Western social sensibilities, favouring, as it were, something akin to a forced redistribution of wealth, albeit in purely pronominal terms.

Both Dutch and Swedish are moving towards masking inequality of social station through increasing usage of familiar pronouns, i.e. Dutch *jij, je* and *jou* and Swedish *du* and *dig*, to persons, whom one would traditionally address with a polite second person pronoun, i.e. Dutch *U* and Swedish *ni* and *er*. The fact that pronominal usage is changing was vividly illustrated on one occasion when an elderly lady on the street in Amsterdam was being addressed by a young boy who had received only a "progressive" egalitarian upbringing and knew no better than to address anyone and everyone with *jij, je* and *jou*, even an elderly lady on the street to whom he had not been introduced. The offended lady merely kept looking down at the boy and repeating didactically 'U! U! U!'. Her insistence created the awkward impression on bystanders that she was addressing the boy with the respectful pronoun, whilst the boy, oblivious to the woman's intent, kept on babbling, all the while addressing the elderly lady with *jij*.

Historically, both Dutch and English underwent an evolution of sensibilities in the opposite direction. The informal English *thou* and *thee*, from Old English *þū* and *þē*, was crowded out by the polite use of the plural *ye* and *you*, from Old English *ġē* and *ēow*. In Dutch, the older second person *du* likewise passed long ago into oblivion, and when the original second person plural pronoun *gi*, later yielding *jij* in Holland and *gij* in Flanders, was not felt to be polite enough, the pronouns *U* and *jullie* were innovated. The polite *U* derives from *Uedele*, formerly abbreviated as 'U Ed.' in written Dutch, which represents a contraction of *Uwe Edelheid* 'Your nobleness', with the possessive pronoun contained in the expression representing a respectful and historically plural form. Since the historical plural form no longer felt semantically plural, Dutch innovated the form *jullie*, composed etymologically of *je* 'you' and *lui* 'people'. It is interesting to see the Dutch pronominal usage today evolving in the reverse direction, as if to keep in step with post-colonial egalitarian social sensibilities.

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Another notion that is becoming – or may already have become – alien to the Occidental mind is that deference does not preclude intimacy. In a usual relationship between a husband and wife, intimacy is naturally great. The asymmetry in pronominal usage in Nepali between marital partners reflects deference on the part of the wife and familiarity on the part of the husband. The husband's use of तँ *tã* is not disrespectful, but familiar. The wife's use of तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* is not distant in an emotional sense, but deferential. In a happy marriage at least, this pronominal usage reflects the loving acknowledgement of a culturally determined and socially sanctioned hierarchical distinction. Within this very real asymmetry, intimacy may thrive.

A husband refers to his wife respectfully as श्रीमती *śrīmatī*, and a wife refers to her husband respectfully as श्रीमान *śrīmān*.[1] However, these formal terms of reference are not used as terms of address. Instead, husband and wife may commonly address each other as बूढो *būḍho* 'old [man]' and बूढी *būḍhī* 'old [lady]', and these terms are also used by the spouses as informal terms of reference in collocation with the possessive pronominal forms *mero* 'my' and *merī* 'my' respectively, or by others as terms of reference in collocation with a third person possessive pronoun. A husband may address his wife affectionately as प्रिया *priyā* or प्रीयसी *prīyasī* 'darling', and a wife might address her husband as मेरो हजुर *mero hajur* 'my sire'.[2] Spouses also occasionally address each other by name. In terms of pronominal usage and the associated repertoire of conjugated verb forms, the situation contrasts sharply with the West, where pronominal usage within intimate relationships and friendships tends to be more reciprocal.

In Nepal, asymmetries in age and social status are acknowledged in pronominal use. The hierarchy is reinforced and often reframed in terms of fictive kinship. In this respect too, Nepali differs radically from Hindi, where kinship terms are not used in this way. In fact, when terms such as Hindi भाई *bhāī* 'brother' are used socially, they are felt to be condescending, and this condescension is even more pronounced with the form भैया *bhaiyā* or भईया *bhaīyā*. Yet in Hindi this term can also be used in a friendly way by a socially more privileged person to address a person of more modest social station. With regard to the use of terms of kinship, the Nepali situation is utterly distinct from Hindi usage.

In Nepali, a भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother' shows deference and fealty to the elder brother but can expect to receive support, succour and protection from his दाइ

1. The term पोइ *poi* is a disrespectful way to refer to someone's husband.

2. Whilst a Nepali husband's use of प्रिया *priyā or* प्रियसी *priyasī* as terms of address is somewhat reminiscent of the way in which spouses may address each other in Dutch as *schat* 'treasure', the Nepali system contrasts sharply with the Dutch system by its more pronounced gender asymmetry.

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dāi 'older brother' in return.[3] The affectionate and friendly connotation of these terms carries over into the use of words such as a भाइ *bhāi* and दाइ *dāi* as fictitious kinship terms of address between people who are not biological kin. From a Nepali perspective, one could even be inclined to wonder whether the reciprocal use of pronouns in Dutch, Russian, French or German may mask, overlook or brush aside asymmetries which could actually be quite helpful explicitly to acknowledge within a relationship. Moreover, an asymmetrical use of pronouns in Nepali does not at all preclude a strong sense of what Brown and Gilman called 'solidarity with the dyad'. Rather, such issues may very well belong to altogether different dimensions of social reality.

Finally, the three tiers of pronominal choice in the second person are also reflected in all of the conjugated indicative, optative and imperative verb forms. The imperative form used with a person whom a speaker addresses with the familiar pronoun तँ *tā* consists merely of the bare stem of the verb, whether this is an open or a closed verb stem, e.g. गर् *gar* 'do',[4] बस् *bas* 'sit', दे *de* 'give',[5] खा *khā* 'eat'. Imperative forms directed towards a person whom a speaker addresses with the intermediate form तिमी *timī* consist of the verb augmented by the imperative ending <-a> in the case of a closed stem verbs, e.g. गर *gara* 'do', बस *basa* 'sit', and the ending <-u> in the case of open stem verbs, e.g. देउ *deu* 'give', खाउ *khāu* 'eat'. Imperatives directed at persons addressed with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* consist, etymologically and orthographically, of the infinitive combined with the third person singular optative form of the verb हुनु *hunu* 'to be', i.e. होस् *hos* 'let it be, may it be so', e.g. गर्नुहोस् *garnuhos* [garnos] 'do', बस्नुहोस् *basnuhos*[basnos] 'please sit', दिनुहोस् *dinuhos* [dinos]

3. The spellings दाई *dāī* and भाई *bhāī* are also in use.

4. The विराम *virām* or हलन्त *halant* is usually not written in such forms. In practice, familiar imperative forms are seldom ever written at all. Routine omission of the *virām* in such forms, however, results in identical orthographic representations for the familiar imperative and the intermediate imperative of verbs with closed stems, e.g. familiar गर *gar* 'do', बस *bas* 'sit' and intermediate गर *gara* 'do', बस *basa* 'sit'. In Nepali, the *virām* is most often used (1) after round letters, such as those denoting retroflex sounds, especially in infinitives, (2) to silence a mute final /a/ in certain Sanskrit loanwords, and (3) as an orthographic attribute of certain consonant-final grammatical endings, e.g. singular second person optative, singular third person optative, plural third person optative, plural third person present indicative. However, the *virām* is not generally used to delete a mute final /a/ at the end of an orthographic word. The reader must just know whether the word in question ends in a consonant or in a *hrasva* 'short' /a/ [ə]. Unless placed between phonetic or morpheme brackets, Nepali is transliterated according to the traditional Indological system with minor adaptations, as explained in van Driem (2001: xi-xiii).

5. The morphophonology of verbs with open stems lies beyond the scope of this treatise, but it may be noted that the verb दिनु *dinu* 'give' exhibits regular alternation between the stems दि <di> and दे <de>.

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'please give', खानुहोस् *khānuhos* [khānos] 'please eat'. The ending <-nuhos> [nos] is effectively a conflation of the first infinitival ending and the third person singular optative form of the auxiliary.

The three tiers of pronominal choice reflected by the forms तँ *tã*, तिमी *timī* and तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* do not encompass the entire gamut of morphologically expressed deferential stances that are available to a speaker of Nepali. There are two additional forms of the imperative that may be used with persons who are addressed with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. The use of the plain infinitive in <-nu>, whilst deferential, has an instructional, neutral or expedient connotation, e.g. गर्नु *garnu* 'do', बस्नु *basnu* 'sit', दिनु *dinu* 'give', खानु *khānu* 'eat'. A second alternative, that is yet more polite than the form ending in <-nuhos> [nos], are the imperatives built from the infinitive in combination with the third person singular form of the possible future tense होला *holā* 'it may be, perhaps it will be', गर्नुहोला *garnuholā* 'kindly please do', बस्नुहोला *basnuholā* 'kindly please sit', दिनुहोला *dinuholā* 'kindly please give', खानुहोला *khānuholā* 'kindly please eat'. The latter forms are more polite because the use of the possible future tense of the auxiliary inherently suggests far less coercion, but rather a gentle suggestion.

The three pronominal tiers are likewise distinguished formally throughout the entire verbal conjugation of the indicative and optative mood as well. Two examples of one verb for each of the three tiers in just the simple present and simple preterite will suffice to illustrate this fundamental distinction permeating the elaborate system of Nepali conjugational morphology as well as to demonstrate that a speaker cannot avoid the deferential grades simply by dropping or avoiding the use of the pronoun, e.g. familiar तँ खान्छस् *tā khānchas* 'you eat', तैंले खाइस् *tãĩle khāis* 'you have eaten', intermediate तिमी खान्छौ *timī khānchau* 'you eat', तिमीले खायौ *timīle khāyau* 'you have eaten', and deferential तपाईं खानुहुन्छ *tapāĩ̃ khānuhuncha* 'you eat', तपाईंले खानुभयो 'you have eaten' *tapāĩ̃le khānubhayo*.

Even when not using second person verbal and pronominal forms at all, Nepali grammar compels a speaker to render explicit which pronoun he otherwise uses in addressing someone even when the speaker merely refers to the person in question in the third person. Today, the choice between the third person familiar pronoun उ *u* 'he, she' and the third person intermediate pronoun उनी *unī* 'he, she' has been somewhat eroded, so that the form उनी *unī* is seldom used, but suggests a referent whom the speaker addresses as तिमी *timī*, and therefore, by implication in most cases, a female referent in the case of a male speaker, as will become clear below. Persons whom the speaker addresses as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* are referred to pronominally in the third person as उहाँ *uhã* 'he, she'. Therefore, even when a proper name is used instead of a pronoun, the speaker's choice of pronoun when addressing a person is rendered explicit to the listener by the speaker's choice of third person verb form. For example, बाबुले भन्यो *Bābu-le bhanyo* 'Bābu said' suggests that the

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speaker might address Bābu with the familiar तँ *tā*, whereas the intermediate बाबुले भने *Bābu-le bhane* 'Bābu said' reveals that the speaker addresses Bābu as तिमी *timī*. Finally, बाबुले भन्नुभयो *Bābu-le bhannubhayo* 'Bābu said' shows that the speaker addresses Bābu with the pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. The distinction between the several tiers of third person deference are observed a *fortiori* in written language and elevated diction.

Growing up in a pronominal world

The first place where a speaker becomes acquainted with pronominal usage is in the context of the family. The asymmetrical use of pronouns between husband and wife has already been mentioned. Children growing up will observe that their mother addresses their father with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, whereas their father will address their mother with the familiar pronoun तँ *tā*. Other than this asymmetry, the native language learner will quickly grow accustomed to the situation that within the family, pronominal usage directly reflects family hierarchy in terms of generation as well as of age within generation. Offspring will address their parents and their grandparents with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, and the same pronoun is used to address the siblings of both parents, the spouses of the siblings of both parents, the siblings of grandparents as well as the spouses of the siblings of grandparents. More generally, the pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* is the appropriate deferential pronoun for one's elders and for older people. The distance is a function of age. Amongst one's own siblings, a दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother' and दिदी *didī* 'elder sister' will likewise be addressed with the pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.[6] By contrast, a speaker addresses his or her भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother' and बहिनी *bahinī* 'younger sister' with the familiar pronoun तँ *tā*.

An understanding of the use of Nepali pronouns would be incomplete without an explanation of the system of kinship terms and the Nepali practice of fictive kinship. In this and the next section, the former will be elucidated, whereas the latter practice will be explained in the following section thereafter. A speaker refers to and addresses his or her father's elder brother as ठूलो बुवा *ṭhūlo buvā* 'big' or 'great father' and the latter's wife as ठूली आमा *ṭhūlī āmā* 'big' or 'great mother'. A speaker refers to and addresses his or her father's younger brother as काका *kākā*, कान्छा बुवा *kānchā buvā* or कान्छा बाबु *kānchā bābu* (both of the latter expressions meaning literally 'youngest-born father' and therefore something like 'junior father'), and his wife is addressed as काकी *kākī* or सानीमा *sānīmā* 'small' or 'little mother'. A speaker refers to and addresses the sister of one's father, regardless of whether she is elder

6. The spelling दीदी *dīdī* is also in use.

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or younger than one's father, as फुपू *phupū* 'paternal aunt' and her spouse as फुपाजु *phupāju*, फुपाज्यू *phupājyū* or फुपा *phupā* 'husband of paternal aunt'.

A speaker refers to and addresses his or her mother's elder sister as ठूली आमा *ṭhūlī āmā* 'big' or 'great mother' and the latter's husband as ठूलो बुवा *ṭhūlo buvā* 'big father'. A speaker refers to and addresses his or her mother's younger sister as सानी आमा *sānī āmā* or सानीमा *sānīmā* 'small' or 'little mother' and the latter's husband as सानो बुवा *sāno buvā* 'small father'. A speaker refers to and addresses the brother of one's mother, regardless of whether he is elder or younger than one's mother, as मामा *māmā* 'maternal uncle' and his spouse as माइजु *māiju* or माइज्यू *māijyū* 'wife of maternal uncle'. All of these paternal uncles and aunts and maternal uncles and aunts and their spouses are addressed using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. All of their offspring are referred to and addressed just as one's own siblings with the terms दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother', दिदी *didī* 'elder sister', भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother' and बहिनी *bahinī* 'younger sister', depending on the relative age of the person in question with respect to the speaker, and the corresponding second person pronominal forms are used in addressing these cousins, who are, in effect, terminological siblings.

Remaining within one's own generation, peers who are not on an intimate footing may address each other as तिमी *timī*. Indeed, both an adult as well as a younger person can use the form तिमी *timī* to someone of his or her own age or to someone of a younger age, whether of the same gender or of the opposite sex, with whom the speaker is not acquainted or not closely acquainted. However, Nepali pronominal usage is more complex and far more subtle a system than this generalisation would suggest. At school, pupils address older classmates from senior years of the same school with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, unless some other kinship or amical relationship obtains between the two persons in question. At school, male pupils address their male classmates or younger male pupils as तँ *tã*, and female pupils address their female classmates or younger female pupils as तँ *tã*. The familiar pronominal form तँ *tã* is used between classmates due to intimacy, familiarity and shared proximity when growing up. However, in the classroom or at play, male pupils address their female classmates or younger female pupils as तिमी *timī*, and female pupils likewise address their male classmates or younger male pupils as तिमी *timī*. Here the use of the intermediate form तिमी *timī* with classmates of the opposite sex reflects biological and social distance between the sexes. Acknowledging this difference through the use of the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī* reflects distance due to the gender difference and also implies a certain deference.

The situation described above underlies the sexual connotations of the use of the pronoun तिमी *timī* in the refrain of a once popular song.

> किन किन तिम्रो तस्वीर मलाई मीठो लाग्छ।
> *Kina kina timro tasvīr malāī mīṭho lāgcha*?
> Why, oh why does your picture look so delicious to me?

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The use of the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī* in the lyrics of this song was the obvious choice, but also implies a difference in gender between the singer and the person being serenaded. This pronominal usage can carry on into marriage under certain specific circumstances.

In a proper traditional marriage, bride and bridegroom may never have met and may not know each other. However, the two families who plan to join into an alliance through the marriage of their offspring or sibling have ideally arranged a partner of suitable caste, character, tastes, interests and socio-economic background in order to safeguard a socially acceptable and sustainable marriage. A marriage candidate of matching caste and adequate rank within caste for one's daughter (छोरी दिन मिल्ने *chorī dina milne*) is categorised as a कुटुम्ब *kuṭumba*. Many people swear by this age-old tradition, and a Westerner might be surprised to hear from a young man who has just said that he is getting married in eighteen months' time that the young man in question has no idea to whom he is getting married. The traditional young man might assert that he does not need to know, but that he has already notified his parents of his preferred timing. Therefore, he can state confidently that he will be married at the appointed time. Arranging the partner and the marriage is, after all, his parents' responsibility.

However, two people may, alternatively, fall in love and abscond to commit what is called a *love marriage*, known in Nepali as प्रेम-विवाह *prem vivāh*. Quite commonly, however, the English term is used in Nepali because an outlandish loanword is perhaps better suited to denote an outlandish custom. Whereas two people in an arranged marriage, who might even be total strangers, simply adopt the asymmetrical usage of pronouns between spouses previously described as soon as the marriage ceremony has been completed, the two members of a love marriage will have started out addressing each other with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī*, and this pronominal usage is then likely to carry on into their marriage. Consequently, the suggestion created in the mind of the listener by the persistence of their initial pronominal usage into their married life betrays that their marriage was not a properly arranged traditional connubial union. An erudite and illustrious Nepali journalist of high caste and his equally high-caste and well-bred wife happen to address each other with the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*. The suggestion evoked in the mind of an astute Nepali listener is immediate, although with such an internationally prominent social activist one might be forgiven for speculating whether the pronominal choice might not perhaps be part of some egalitarian social campaign.

Another typical and therefore illustrative case involves a couple who met and fell in love. This phenomenon happens to be quite a bit more commonplace than highly conservative people might be prepared to ponder, but the trick may be

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getting this relationship to be accepted by both sets of parents. By virtue of their sound traditional upbringing, the two individuals involved sought to elicit the approval of both of their respective families. The enamoured couple chose to submit themselves to the lengthy procedure of going through the motions to satisfy the traditional needs of both families and uphold the social standing that a proper arranged marriage brings. As a consequence, their union came to be recognised by the community as a traditional marriage. The marriage was duly arranged by both sets of parents and organised as the festive and joyous event that Nepali marriages traditionally tend to be. However, the unconventional way in which their marriage plans got started in the first place has left an enduring mark on their pronominal usage. Whilst before their marriage the two addressed each other as तिमी *timī*, after their marriage the wife adopted the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, but the husband still addresses the wife with the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*.

Talking to the in-laws

The many terms for in-laws in Nepali as well as the inherent asymmetries in the terminological system reflect social realities and traditional values. Indo-Aryan society is shaped by a patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal culture.[7] One's daughters and one's sisters are married off to other families and, as such, they are from birth destined to become members of another family. Men merit greater deference than women, and this courtesy is reflected both in the order in which food is served as well as in pronominal usage and other aspects of culture. Women are not traditionally wage earners or land owners, although they contribute incessant daily household labour to the family. Under ideal circumstances, if one has been able to find a worthy and prosperous family, the family of the prospective husband which accepts one's female offspring or female siblings merits deference and is traditionally the recipient of the दाइजो *dāijo* 'dowry', which is contributed by the parents of the bride.

From the reverse perspective, the wives of one's sons and brothers represent acquired family members, and this practice has engendered asymmetry in

7. Although the pitfall of simplistically equating the system of kinship terminology with the kinship system should, of course, be avoided, it is fascinating to observe how the Kiranti distinction between cross cousins and parallel cousins in the light of the preferential choice of cross cousins as prospective marital partners is reflected in the Kiranti systems of kinship terminology and contrasts with the Nepali systems of kinship and kinship terminology (cf. Davids and van Driem, 1985; van Driem 1987, 1993).

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the system of kinship terms. Sisters-in-law are addressed and referred to as भाउजु *bhāuju* or भाउज्यू *bhāujyū* 'elder brother's wife' and बुहारी *buhārī* 'younger brother's wife'. Whilst the former is addressed with the deferential pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, the latter is addressed with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī*. On the other hand, brothers-in-law are addressed and referred to as भिनाज्यू *bhināj yū*, भिनाजु *bhināju* or भिना *bhinā* 'elder sister's husband' and जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'younger sister's husband'. Both भिनाज्यू *bhināj yū* 'elder sister's husband' and जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'younger sister's husband' are addressed with the deferential pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

The relatively straightforward nature of the system of pronominal usage thus far to the mind of a naïve Occidental observer ceases when one arrives at the choice of pronouns for the spouses of younger siblings.[8] Whereas the brother-in-law through the marriage of one's younger sister, the जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'younger sister's husband', is addressed with the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, the sister-in-law through the marriage of one's younger brother, i.e. बुहारी *buhārī* 'younger brother's wife', is addressed with the pronoun तिमी *timī*. This choice might not *prima facie* appear to indicate deference, but one must consider that the term of address for one's younger brother is the familiar pronoun तँ *tā*. Yet the familiar pronoun तँ *tā* would constitute an inappropriate way to address the wife of one's younger brother because she is female and she hails from another family, and the choice of the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī* reflects and respects this distance.

A principal social cause for the different treatment meted out in the choice of second person pronoun between a जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'brother-in-law', younger sister's husband, and a बुहारी *buhārī* 'sister-in-law', younger brother's wife, stems not directly from their gender, but from the practical social consequences of patrilocality. The जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'brother-in-law' belongs to another family and is quite likely to live in another village altogether, whereas the बुहारी *buhārī* 'sister-in-law' has moved into the same family, village and household. The choice of the intermediate pronoun stems from proximity (नजीक हुनाले *najīk hunāle*). On the other hand, the difference in pronominal usage between addressing a भाउजु *bhāuju* 'elder brother's wife', who is addressed with deferential तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, and a बुहारी *buhārī* 'younger brother's wife' stems naturally from the deference that is shown in light of general age seniority and senior age within generation.

8. Actually, a naïve Occidental observer may very well get baffled long before this time, as attested by Turin (2001), who went to the trouble of documenting his bewilderment and socio-semantic misapprehensions. The survey by Schmidt (1976) and the impressions garnered by Turin neglect to distinguish between the language use of Nepali speakers whose mother tongue is a Tibeto-Burman language such as Newar, Limbu or Thangmi, and Nepali native speakers of Indo-Aryan caste, let alone the distinct usage of Nepali speakers of diverse castes and different geographical regions.

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The Nepali lexicon distinguishes terms to refer to the siblings of these sisters-in-law. The elder siblings of one's भाउजु *bhāuju* 'elder brother's wife' and बुहारी *buhārī* 'younger brother's wife' are referred to and occasionally addressed as जेठान *jeṭhān* or जेठान दाइ *jeṭhān dāi* 'brother's wife's elder brother' and जेठानी *jeṭhānī* or जेठानी दिदी *jeṭhānī didī* 'brother's wife's elder sister'. These in-laws are usually addressed simply and more expediently as दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother' and दिदी *didī* 'elder sister', using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. On the other hand, the younger siblings of one's भाउजु *bhāuju* 'elder brother's wife' and बुहारी *buhārī* 'younger brother's wife' are addressed and referred to as सालो *sālo* or साला *sālā* 'brother's wife's younger brother' as साली *sālī* 'brother's wife's younger sister'.

A male speaker traditionally addresses his सालो *sālo* 'brother's wife's younger brother' with the familiar pronoun तँ *tã*, whereas a female speaker is more likely to address her सालो *sālo* 'brother's wife's younger brother' with the intermediate तिमी *timī*. Nowadays, male speakers of the younger generation are more often inclined to address a सालो *sālo* 'brother's wife's younger brother' with the intermediate तिमी *timī* because the familiar pronoun तँ *tã* is increasingly being perceived as overly familiar or less deferential. Both male and female speakers are most likely to address their साली *sālī* 'brother's wife's younger sister' with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī*. Depending on the family, the choice of pronoun may vary from the norm described here, contingent upon the nature of the specific relationship and social distance felt between a particular speaker and the particular person addressed.

Whilst the Nepali lexicon distinguishes a number of terms to refer to the siblings of one's sisters-in-law in the sense of the siblings of the wife of one's brother, the lexicon is far less precise when it comes to the siblings of one's brothers-in-law in the sense of the siblings of the husband of one's sister. The brothers-in-law through the elder sister are referred to and addressed as भिनाज्यू *bhināj्yū*, भिनाजु *bhināju* or भिना *bhinā* 'elder sister's husband', and the brothers-in-law through the younger sister are referred to and addressed as जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'younger sister's husband'. These terms are not as specific in meaning as the explanatory glosses used would seem to indicate.

The terms भिनाज्यू *bhināj्yū*, भिनाजु *bhināju* or भिना *bhinā* can be applied to all of the siblings of one's elder sister's husband, whether these siblings are male or female and regardless of whether the sibling in question is older or younger than one's elder sister's husband. Similarly, the term जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* is applied to all of the male siblings of one's younger sister's husband and the term जुवाईंनी *juvāĩ̃nī* to all of the female siblings of one's younger sister's husband, regardless of whether these siblings are older or younger than one's younger sister's husband. All of these referents are addressed using the deferential pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, both in deference to the family accepting one's sister into their family but also in acknowledgement of the social distance which obtains between the speaker and the persons thus addressed.

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If the need ever arises to specify which of the siblings of the husband of one's sister is intended, speakers simply make use of the Nepali sibling ordinal terms denoting birth rank within generation.

male		*female*		
जेठो	*jeṭho*	जेठी	*jeṭhī*	'eldest born'
माहिंला	*māhīlā*	माहिंली	*māhīlī*	'second born'
साहिंला	*sāhīlā*	साहिंली	*sāhīlī*	'third born'
काहिंला	*kāhīlā*	काहिंली	*kāhīlī*	'fourth born'
ठाहिंला	*ṭhāhīlā*	ठाहिंली	*ṭhāhīlī*	'fifth born'
अन्तरे	*antare*	अन्तरी	*antarī*	'sixth born'
जन्तरे	*jantare*	जन्तरी	*jantarī*	'seventh born'
खन्तरे	*khantare*	खन्तरी	*khantarī*	'eighth born'
कान्छा	*kānchā*	कान्छी	*kānchī*	'youngest born'

The masculine adjectival forms ending in <-ā> also occur as variants with the ending <-o>. Alongside the traditional orthographies माहिंला *māhīlā*, साहिंला *sāhīlā*, काहिंला *kāhīlā* and ठाहिंला *ṭhāhīlā*, the alternative spellings माइँला *māīlā*, साइँला *sāīlā*, काइँला *kāīlā* and ठाइँला *ṭhāīlā* are also in use, and *mutatis mutandis* for the feminine forms.

These kinship numeratives are used primarily as terms of reference with respect to siblings, and in some families they are used as forms of address as well. Just as a speaker can specify to which of his elder brothers he is referring by saying मेरो जेठो दाइ *mero jeṭho dāi* 'my first-born elder brother', मेरो माहिंला दाइ *mero māhīlā dāi* 'my second-born elder brother', मेरो साहिंलो दाइ *mero sāhīlā dāi* 'my third-born elder brother', and so forth, a speaker may specify which sibling of the husband of one's sister he has in mind by using kinship numeratives, e.g. जेठी भिनाजु *jeṭhī bhināju* 'first-born sister of elder sister's husband', साहिंला भिनाजु *sāhīlā bhināju* 'third-born brother of elder sister's husband', माहिंली जुवाईंनी *māhīlī juvāĩ̃nī* 'second-born sister of younger sister's husband', कान्छा जुवाईं *kānchā juvāĩ̃* 'youngest born brother of younger sister's husband'. Less specific terms such as ठूलो भिनाजु *ṭhūlo bhināju* 'big brother of elder sister's husband', सानो भिनाजु *sāno bhināju* 'little brother of elder sister's husband', ठूलो जुवाईं *ṭhūlo juvāĩ̃* 'big brother of younger sister's husband' can also on occasion be heard, especially when the husband of one's sister happens to have few siblings or when it can readily be made clear who is intended.

In Nepali, the facility of using kinship numeratives to specify the individual in question, should the need arise to do so, of course also highlights the fact that in the first place the Nepali lexicon is far more specific with regard to the siblings of the wife of one's brother than with respect to the siblings of the husband of one's sister. This asymmetry is a natural development stemming from the practice of patrilocality. The various भिनाजु *bhināju*, जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* and जुवाईंनी *juvāĩ̃nī* will usually live elsewhere with the daughter or sister who has been married out and who has

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consequently become a member of another family, whilst the lexicon is equipped with more differentiated vocabulary to distinguish between and refer to individuals who have married into one's own family and who consequently live in closer proximity to the speaker.

It is germane to observe that the use of the kinship terms भिनाजु *bhināju*, one gloss of which would be 'elder sister's husband', and जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃*, one gloss of which would be 'younger sister's husband', is expanding. As urban flight and social disruption has overwhelmed Nepali society in recent decades, the traditional mesh of Nepali social fabric at the village level has been disturbed. Kin do not necessarily interact with or even see each other with the regularity that was once characteristic of village life, with its slower pace, more intense local interaction and collective participation in events such as the harvest and the activities of the planting season. Moreover, the increased frequency of intercaste marriage and love marriages has contributed to the erosion of traditional kinship architecture. As a consequence, the terms भिनाजु *bhināju* and जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* can be observed in a semantically bleached guise to have begun encroaching upon the conventional domains of reference reserved to some of the other more specifically delineated sibling-in-law terms discussed in this section, particularly in families living in kinship situations in which relationships have suffered a break in the continuity of traditional norms. Along with the concomitant use of the distant pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, this development is emblematic for the general disruption of the traditional weft of Nepali social fabric.

The English lexicon is not at all specific in the case of terms for brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law when viewed from the perspective of Nepali grammar, which to some extent terminologically distinguishes the siblings of one's spouse from the spouses of one's siblings. This domain of sibling-in-law terminology is different for a male and a female speaker, not only in terms of the choice of pronoun to use in address a particular member of kin but also in some of the actual vocabulary used to denote particular kin relations. A male speaker refers to and may occasionally address the elder brothers of his wife as जेठान *jeṭhān* or जेठान दाइ *jeṭhān dāi* 'wife's elder brother', whom he generally addresses simply as दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother', whilst using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A male speaker refers to and may occasionally address the younger brothers of his wife as सालो 'wife's younger brother', whom he traditionally addresses with familiar pronominal for तँ *tã* or – in accordance with the more modern sensibilities that have begun to manifest themselves in the language community in recent times – with the intermediate form तिमी *timī*, depending on the nature of the relationship and the social distance felt between the male speaker and his wife's younger brother.

The Nepali lexicon also affords a male speaker with ways of addressing the wives of his brothers-in-law through his wife. A male speaker refers to and may

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occasionally address the wife of his जेठान *jeṭhān* 'wife's elder brother' as जेठानी *jeṭhānī* or जेठानी दिदी *jeṭhānī didī* 'wife's elder brother's wife', whom the male speaker usually addresses simply as दिदी *didī* 'elder sister', whilst using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A male speaker refers to and addresses the wife of his सालो *sālo* 'wife's younger brother' as साली *sālī* 'wife's younger brother's wife', and addresses her with the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*. Thus far at least, the system of kinship terminology for a male speaker appears more or less to equate the siblings of one's spouse with the spouses of one's siblings. However, a male speaker refers to and addresses the elder sister of his wife as जेठी सासु *jeṭhī sāsu* 'wife's elder sister', whom he addresses with the deferential second person form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A male speaker refers to and addresses the younger sister of his wife and as साली *sālī* 'wife's younger sister', whom he addresses using the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*. A male speaker addresses the husband of his जेठी सासु *jeṭhī sāsu* 'wife's elder sister' as साढु दाइ *sāḍhu dāi* or साढु दाजु *sāḍhu dāju*, whom he addresses using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A male speaker addresses the husband of his साली *sālī* 'wife's younger sister' as साढु भाइ *sāḍhu bhāi*, whom he addresses with either the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī* or the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* depending on the nature of the relationship and the social distance felt between the male speaker and the husband of his wife's younger sister.

The Nepali kinship term सालो *sālo* 'wife's younger brother' has no unfavourable connotation. However, speakers are aware of the semantic and formal similarity to the swearword साला *sālā*, which has an abusive flavour but is also still distinctly felt by Nepali speakers to be a Hindi loanword साला *sālā* 'wife's brother'. The rationale behind the fictive usage of this kinship term having become a swearword in the Hindi language community stems from the suggestion that an impropriety has occurred between the speaker and the sister of the person thus addressed, thereby impugning the honour of the sister of the person thus addressed, who is in reality not, of course, the speaker's brother-in-law. This abusive term was borrowed into Nepali, but this vulgar usage does not constitute part of the system of Nepali kinship terminology and is confined to a particular uncouth speech register.

A female speaker uses quite different vocabulary with respect to her brothers-in-law through her husband. A female speaker refers to and addresses the elder brother of her husband as जेठाजु *jeṭhāju* 'husband's elder brother', whom she addresses using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A female speaker refers to and addresses the younger brother of her husband as देवर *devar* 'husband's younger brother', whom she, traditionally and today probably still in most families, addresses with the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. In some families today, however, a female speaker may address her देवर *devar* 'husband's younger brother' with the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*, depending on the nature of the relationship and social distance felt between the female speaker and her husband's younger brother.

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The Nepali lexicon also affords a female speaker with ways of addressing the wives of her brothers-in-law through her husband. A female speaker refers to and may occasionally address the wife of her जेठाजु *jeṭhāju* 'husband's elder brother' as जेठानी दिदी *jeṭhānī didī* 'husband's elder brother's wife', whom she usually addresses simply as दिदी *didī* 'elder sister', whilst using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A female speaker refers to and addresses the wife of her देवर *devar* 'husband's younger brother' as देवरानी *devarānī* 'husband's younger brother's wife', and she addresses her either with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī* or with the familiar second person form तँ *tā*, depending on the nature of the relationship and social distance felt between the female speaker and her husband's younger brother's wife.

A female speaker likewise disposes of different vocabulary in order to speak about and address her brothers-in-law through her husband. A female speaker refers to and addresses the elder sister of her husband as आमाजु *āmāju* or आमाज्यू *āmājyū* 'husband's elder sister', whom she addresses using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A female speaker refers to and addresses the younger sister of her husband as नन्द *nanda* 'husband's younger sister', whom she refers to either using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* or with the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*, depending on the nature of the relationship and social distance felt between the female speaker and her husband's younger sister.

The Nepali lexicon provides a female speaker with specific terms for the husbands of her sisters-in-law through her husband. A female speaker refers to and may occasionally address the husband of her आमाजु *āmāju* 'husband's elder sister' as आमाजु दाइ *āmāju dāi*, and she will usually address the husband of her husband's elder sister simply as दाइ *dāi*, using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. A female speaker refers to and might occasionally address the husband of her नन्द *nanda* 'husband's younger sister' as नन्दे भाइ *nande bhāi*, and she will usually address the husband of her husband's younger sister simply as भाइ *bhāi*, whilst using the deferential pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

Regardless of the gender of the speaker, a speaker addresses and refers to one's father-in-law as ससुरा *sasurā* 'father of spouse', and one's mother-in-law as सासु *sāsu* 'mother of spouse', and the speaker addresses both relations with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. The male and female siblings of one's parents-in-law may likewise be referred to and addressed with the terms ससुरा *sasurā* and सासु *sāsu* respectively. When disambiguating which sibling of one's parent-in-law a speaker has in mind, the ordinal kinship terms may be used as adjectival modifiers, e.g. जेठो ससुरा *jeṭho sasurā* 'eldest brother of spouse's parent', कान्छी सासु *kānchī sāsu* 'youngest sister of spouse's parent'. In keeping with patrilocality, a male speaker refers to the household of his wife's parents as his ससुराली घर *sasurālī ghar*'parents-in-law's house' (male speaking), whereas a female speaker refers the parental household which she has left behind as her माइती घर *māitī ghar* 'parents' house' (married female speaking).

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The terms for offspring-in law are जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'daughter's husband' and बुहारी *buhārī* 'son's wife'. If the need arises of, for example, explaining kin relationship to outsiders, the disambiguating terms छोरी जुवाईं *chorī juvāĩ̃* 'daughter's husband' and छोरा बुहारी *chorā buhārī* 'son's wife' may be used to distinguish offspring-in-law from siblings-in-law, i.e. बहिनी जुवाईं *bahinī juvāĩ̃* 'younger sister's husband' and भाइ बुहारी *bhāi buhārī* 'younger brother's wife'. The deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* is used in addressing one's जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* 'daughter's husband', whereas the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī* is conventionally used when addressing one's बुहारी *buhārī* 'son's wife'. However, depending on the closeness of the relation felt between the speaker and the person addressed, the familiar form तँ *tā* may in some particular cases be used to address one's छोरा बुहारी *chorā buhārī* 'son's wife'.

The term जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* is also applied to the elder and younger male sibling of one's daughter's husband, and the term जुवाईंनी *juvāĩ̃nī* is applied to the elder and younger female siblings of one's daughter's husband. The term जुवाईं *juvāĩ̃* is likewise applied to the male siblings of one's son's wife, and the term जुवाईंनी *juvāĩ̃nī* is applied to the female siblings of one's son's wife. These siblings of the spouses of one's offspring are all addressed with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, although it is permissible and indeed represents traditional usage that a speaker may address the female siblings of the spouses of one's offspring, who are terminologically one's जुवाईंनी *juvāĩ̃nī*, with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī*.

The father of one's daughter-in-law or one's son-in-law is referred to and addressed as सम्धी *samdhī*, and the mother of one's daughter-in-law or son-in-law is referred to and addressed as सिम्धनी *samdhinī*, both of whom are addressed using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. The terminology of the Nepali kinship system is rendered schematically in the diagrams included in the Appendix.

Society as one big family

The social and personal factors discussed thus far which determine perceived distance between two individuals and therefore the choice of the pronominal form have included age and seniority, distance vs. familiarity, sameness or difference of gender within the context of a patrilocal and patrilinear society. Another factor is social standing, and in Aryan society on the subcontinent caste has been at least as decisive a factor historically as political clout and economic success. As an adult, it is safe and best to address anyone whom you do not know and who is not a child as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

Traditionally, however, speakers of high caste address a low-caste person whom they may or may not know, but whose caste is known to them, with the intermediate form तिमी *timī*. In 1983, a low-caste man in rural eastern Nepal who was

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twice my age took the trouble to explain to me that it was grammatically incorrect for me to address him as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. He asserted that only a foreigner could make such a mistake. Nepalis of high caste would, he insisted, never make the error of using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* to address someone of his low artisanal caste. To the mind of a speaker with such a traditional grammar, the use of तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* struck him as being just as absurd perhaps as the case described above of the elderly Dutch lady in Amsterdam appearing to onlookers to be addressing a child as *U*.

Today, however, probably most young Brahmins will address an older man or woman as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* in deference to their age even if they are of low caste, whereas traditional Brahmins of the older generations in rural Nepal are observed still to address members of low caste simply as तिमी *timī*. As the old adage goes, *tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*. There are cases in which the use of pronouns appears to be merely for the sake of appearances. In one such case, two friends of only slightly different age who grew up together normally address each other with the familiar form तँ *tã*. Rarely, on an occasion when there is an audience of outsiders, however, the younger of the two instead uses the form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, whilst the older of the two continues to address the younger as तँ *tã*. This usage is strictly for the consumption of the outsiders, who are thus indirectly invited to address both of them in a deferential manner, just as they address each other.

Another instance of keeping up appearances can be observed when a husband, who is normally addressed as तपाई *tapāĩ̃* by his wife, is suddenly addressed and referred to by his wife with the honorific हजुर *hajur* 'lord, sire' for the benefit of an audience of onlookers, who are thereby indirectly invited to show the same respect to her husband. Substitution of the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* with the honorific form हजुर *hajur* has no impact on the choice of inflected forms in the indicative mood, since both तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* and हजुर *hajur* take third person periphrastic deferential forms of the verbal conjugation.

In intimate same-sex friendships between friends of disparate age, the same use of pronouns can be observed as between a husband and wife in Nepali. Once when an elder friend in such a relationship addressed his younger friend with the intermediate form तिमी *timī* rather than the usual तँ *tã* in an attempt specifically to accommodate to a particular social context in which the speaker wished to mask the intimacy of their friendship, the sensitive younger friend promptly protested in anguished tones, asking whether the elder friend no longer loved him. The careless use of the intermediate pronominal form suggested distance and thus a denial of familiarity. Under such circumstances, distance can be hurtful.

Once again, a great discrepancy between the use of pronouns of address in no way precludes intimacy, nor does it lead to what Brown and Gilman (1960) described in the Western context as representing 'semantic conflict' crying out for

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resolution. Very much to the contrary, the Nepali pronominal system permits the expression and acknowledgement of the actual natural diversity in relationships. No compulsion exists to impose an artificial levelling of pronominal reference so that, in Nepali, the natural diversity of pronominal expression can thrive and flourish unimpeded. Regardless of whether the same-sex friendship in question happens to be characterised by – or be entirely devoid of – erotic content, pronominal usage between males as well as the pronominal usage between females both differ significantly from the pattern of pronominal usage observed when males address females, or vice versa.[9]

Above, in introducing the honorific word हजुर *hajur* 'lord, sire', we have entered into an extra dimension which renders the dynamics of the three choices of second person pronoun more complex. The honorific हजुर *hajur* can be used instead of तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, essentially effacing the distinction between the perspectives that would treat the person addressed as a second or as a third person grammatical category, particularly because in discourse it is quite possible to mix the use of the two forms, deferential तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* and honorific हजुर *hajur*, in the same conversation. In polite speech, the word हजुर *hajur* also simply serves as an interjection on its own, conveying a meaning such as 'yes' or 'I hear you'. At the same time, the choice of three distinct imperative forms directed towards a person whom the speaker would address as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* likewise demonstrated that the intricacies of Nepali

9. The *Mulukī Ain* promulgated in 1854 under Jaṅg Bahādur Rāṇā codified the caste system in Nepal, defining caste distinctions in meticulous detail and regulating all forms of intercaste interaction until this elaborate piece of legislation was replaced by new laws under king Mahendra in 1963. Activities between castes that led to the ritual pollution of a person of high caste by a member of a less pure or an untouchable caste were sanctioned, with the size of fines and the measure of corporeal punishment all spelt out in excruciating and fascinating detail, particularly when caste transgression involved the defilement of a female in some way or form. The original manuscript of the *Mulukī Ain* also dealt candidly with same-sex intercaste pollution. When printing presses arrived in Nepal, this chapter was not included in published versions of the law, however, because these passages were not deemed suitable for a large audience. Fézas (1983) transliterated this chapter from the original manuscript of the *Mulukī Ain* and provided a French translation. Although punishments meted out appear draconian to modern Western sensibilities, what is clear in the context of the manuscript in its entirety is that intercaste pollution involving two men was far less severely sanctioned than intercaste pollution between the two sexes. One reason for this pronounced discrepancy was doubtless that the possibility of miscegenation and unwanted issue did not arise in the case of intercaste pollution involving two men. The many strictures against intercaste pollution did not prevent intimate same-sex intercaste friendships from arising and even flourishing. In fact, the fascinating institution of मीत *mīt* or मीत-साथी *mīt sāthī* 'bond friend' originated as a means to accommodate such a friendship socially by institutionalising such a bond between two young men in such a way that the conventional ramifications of the formal bond were beneficial to both communities and for the advancement of harmonious relations between these communities (cf. van Driem 2001: 610–612).

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pronominal reference defy any oversimplification in terms of three tiers. In daily practice, it can be observed that the dynamics of the Nepali pronominal system give expression to far more interesting and finely honed social sensibilities.

Just as the use of the honorific हजुर *hajur*, the use of kinship terms, either to substitute or to enhance the use of pronouns, is a pivotal feature of Nepali pronominal reference. This brings us to the realm of fictive kinship. Speakers ubiquitously resort to नाता लाएर (or लगाएर) बोल्ने चलन *nātā lāera* (or *lagāera*) *bolne calan* 'the practice of speaking whilst employing fictive kinship'. This mode of speaking not only embodies a cultural norm of social intercourse, but also renders it possible to address people in an easier and friendlier way. Roles between people become established upon first encounter and during early interaction, after which they tend to become anchored in the relationship and and then usually endure. This is why young adults and old adults can sometimes be observed to be using entirely different pronouns than the pronominal forms that one might be inclined to expect from just looking at them.

It is moot whether fictive kinship renders all speakers of Nepali one big happy family, but those who speak Nepali know very well from their own daily personal experience that the use of these forms of address is genial and *feels* quite different from addressing people in other languages. The use of kinship terms and their constant repetition in Nepali may strike speakers of other languages as incessant and repetitive, but this highly cordial aspect of Nepali grammar may in some way be connected to the effusively cheerful nature of Nepali culture.

The most commonly used kinship terms that are used fictively in a widespread fashion with reference to people of one's own generation are the sibling terms, दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother' (and the diversely flavoured stylistic alternatives दाजु *dāju* 'elder brother', दाज्यू *dājyū* 'elder brother', दादा *dādā* 'elder brother'), भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother', दिदी *didī* 'elder sister' and बहिनी *bahinī* 'younger sister'. However, pronominal use in terms of the choice of second person pronoun is not just simply congruent with the use of second person pronouns employed in addressing one's own biological siblings. Here too, Nepali affords many grades and nuances. The pronouns used with people addressed fictively as दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother', दाजु *dāju* 'elder brother', दाज्यू *dājyū* 'elder brother', दादा *dādā* 'elder brother' or दिदी *didī* 'elder sister' matches pronominal usage with respect to actual biological siblings in that the deferential तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* is used.

In addressing people who are referred to fictively as भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother' or बहिनी *bahinī* 'younger sister', the choice of second person pronoun is not straightforward. All three second person pronouns can be used, familiar तँ *tã*, intermediate तिमी *timī* or deferential तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. The choice is determined by numerous factors, such as the social status of the person addressed and of that person's family, the social distance between speaker and the person addressed. Therefore, in an official

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or formal setting or in the case of not being acquainted or only recently having made each other's acquaintance, a person addressed as भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother' or बहिनी *bahinī* 'younger sister' may very well also be addressed with the second person deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

The use of fictive kinship is ubiquitous and pervasive, and Nepalis speaking English will use the English word *brother*, for example, as a translation for दाइ *dāi* 'elder brother', दाजु *dāju* 'elder brother', दाज्यू *dājyū* 'elder brother', दादा *dādā* 'elder brother' and भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother', and then introduce people to their foreign friend as their 'brother'. Some Nepalis speaking English have even latched on to the form *bro'* as a translation of दाइ *dāi* and भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother', whilst manifestly remaining blithely unaware of the marked stylistic flavour of the form which they have mistaken for standard English. I once had to console and rectify the impressions in the mind of an unhappy Englishman who was horrified to discover that his Nepali friend had 'lied' to him about his brother. It turned out, the Englishman protested, that the youth in question was not actually his friend's brother at all. I was called upon to reassure the hapless Englishman that his Nepali friend had not been disingenuous. Yet fictive kinship boggled the mind of the Englishman, who could not imagine how this semiotic system could possibly pervade most social interactions and subtly shape the conceptualisation of social relations. The Nepali English terms 'cousin brother' and 'cousin sister' have been coined to disambiguate such usage, but in Nepali there is of course no such term as 'cousin', let alone 'cousin brother' and 'cousin sister'.

When two young men meet each other, they quickly establish their relative age. In addition to the name, a kinship term is used as part of the address, e.g. राजन दाइ *Rājan dāi* 'Rājan elder brother', कृष्ण भाइ *Kr̥ṣṇa bhāi* 'Kr̥ṣṇa younger brother'. In the actual case of Rājan and Kr̥ṣṇa, when they first met, they were both young and close in age, but Rājan assumed the fictive kinship role of elder brother, and Kr̥ṣṇa has consequently always addressed Rājan as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. However, the younger Kr̥ṣṇa was already past adolescence when they first met. Moreover, Kr̥ṣṇa came from faraway, and the close friendship which now exists between Rājan and Kr̥ṣṇa took a long time to develop. By that time, their pronominal usage had become fixed. Consequently, Rājan still addresses his friend as कृष्ण भाइ *Kr̥ṣṇa bhāi* using the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*, which, as if frozen in time, still reflects the acknowledgement of the distance that obtained between them during the initial period of their acquaintance.

Any number of cases could be adduced to illustrate the variability and dynamic nature of the pronominal system in practice. Kr̥ṣṇa addresses सुनिल Sunil and उपेन्द्र Upendra with the familiar form तँ *tã*. because they were both still children when Kr̥ṣṇa first met them. Both of them address Kr̥ṣṇa with the deferential तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. Now they are all adult, and Sunil and Upendra are taller than Kr̥ṣṇa. However,

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their pronominal usage persists in the form in which it was first established, as if forever echoing the past.

In another case, Śāligrām is an entrepreneur who runs a restaurant. He addresses all of his staff with the familiar तँ *tã* because they were all young adolescents when he first employed them. They all address the slightly older Śāligrām with तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, although a high level of familiarity has always existed between the entrepreneur and his staff. Only the relatively new staff member Arjun, even though he is younger than some of the other staff, is addressed by Śāligrām with the intermediate form तिमी *timī* because Arjun joined the team just two years ago as an adolescent. Moreover, although cheerful, Arjun's demeanour has always been a trifle more aloof. Meanwhile, the relationship between Śāligrām and Arjun has grown closer, and Śāligrām addresses Arjun as तिमी *timī* whenever in the company of others, but as तँ *tã* when nobody else is present.

Bābu is a young entrepreneur like Śāligrām. Bābu is older than Śāligrām, and so Śāligrām addresses Bābu as तपाई *tapāĩ̃*. However, Bābu also addresses Śāligrām as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. The two young men are close allies in local politics and maintain a cordial relationship. Various factors motivate Bābu to address the younger Śāligrām as तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. Śāligrām is of high caste, whereas Bābu is of low caste. When they met each other, the younger Śāligrām already had a thriving business, whereas Bābu had only just begun to establish himself as an entrepreneur. Śāligrām is both eloquent and speaks in a distinctive eastern Nepali fashion, quite distinct from the style of speaking in midwestern Nepal. Some of these factors evoke deference, whilst others accentuate distance. Both sets of social factors are ultimately acknowledged by the choice of the pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

Respectful terms for those of elder generations include बुवा *buvā* 'father', आमा *āmā* 'mother', हजुर-बुवा *hajur-buvā* 'grandfather' and हजुर-आमा *hajur-āmā* 'grandmother'. An old word for हजुर-बुवा *hajur-buvā* 'grandfather' is बाजे *bāje* 'grandfather', which, though less deferential in modern Nepali, is still used in some families to address one's grandfather, but the form बाजे *bāje* represents a not at all deferential way of addressing an elderly man who is not kin. In Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and in Nepal east of the Aruṇ, in addition to हजुर-आमा *hajur-āmā* 'grandmother', the older term बज्यू *bajyū* or बोजु *boju* 'grandmother' is affectionately and reverentially used. In Nepal west of the Aruṇ, however, the terms बज्यू *bajyū* or बोजु *boju* 'grandmother' are not generally known. Instead, west of the Aruṇ, the kinship term बजै *bajai* or बज्यै *bajyai* 'grandmother' is in use, but this form is not deferential, and so polite speakers use the form हजुर-आमा *hajur-āmā* 'grandmother' instead. The term जिजु-बाजे *jiju-bāje* or जिज्यू -बाजे *jijyū-bāje* means 'great-grandfather' and the term जिजु-बजै *jiju-bajai* or जिज्यू-बज्यै *jijyū-bajyai* denotes 'great-grandmother'. On traditional paperwork, a

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Nepali citizen is sometimes required to supply the name of his father, paternal grandfather and paternal great-grandfather.[10]

A speaker might not wish to use terms of reference as respectful as बुवा *buvā* 'father', आमा *āmā* 'mother', हजुर-बुवा *hajur-buvā* 'grandfather' and हजुर-आमा *hajur- āmā* 'grandfather' to certain members of senior generations. Moreover, these terms may not be chosen by speakers when the person in question is neither as old as one's parents nor, in terms of age, quite a member of one's own generation. For this purpose, other kinship terms can be used, with the relatively neutral term of address मामा *māmā* 'uncle' (i.e. mother's brother) being amongst the most popular. The pronoun used with non-kin thus addressed is the deferential तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, matching the pronoun used for the factual biological relatives of older generations. Similarly, although the term बाजे *bāje* 'great-grandfather' as a fictive kin term is pejorative or condescending, it would still be natural to speak to a person thus addressed using the deferential pronominal form तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

Kinship terms are likewise used for people younger than oneself. Children are addressed with the affectionate term नानी *nānī*, which is not actually a kinship term, although Tripāṭhī and Dāhāl (vs 2040: 719) suggest, rather improbably, that this word derives etymologically from the term नन्द *nanda* 'husband's younger sister'. A Nepali speaker, whether male or female, both refers to and addresses his or her own children as छोरा *chorā* 'son' and छोरी *chorī* 'daughter'. Moreover, a female Nepali speaker likewise refers to and addresses the children of her sisters as छोरा *chorā* 'son' and छोरी *chorī* 'daughter'. If the female speaker is older than her sister, then the speaker herself will be addressed by these offspring as ठूली आमा *ṭhūlī āmā* 'big' or 'great mother', and, if the female speaker is younger than her sister, then the speaker herself will be addressed by these offspring as सानी आमा *sānī āmā* or सानीमा *sānīmā* 'small' or 'little mother'. One's own offspring as well as one's sister's offspring are addressed by a female speaker using the familiar pronoun तँ *tã*.

Through the pervasive system of fictive kinship, one may also address a child that is not kin with the terms छोरा *chorā* 'son' or छोरी *chorī* 'daughter', but a speaker will not wish to adopt such an affectionate paternalistic or maternalistic stance towards every child. It would be appropriate to address the offspring of a very close friend, a close colleague or a neighbour with whom the speaker has established a fictive kin relationship as छोरा *chorā* 'son' or छोरी *chorī* 'daughter'. Otherwise the general affectionate term of address for children, viz. नानी *nānī*, is available. The

10. On separate occasions, I heard two Nepali lawyers who complete paperwork for foreign investors express their astonishment at the fact that foreigners usually do not know their paternal grandfather's and paternal great-grandfather's given names. Both men separately surmised that most people from the West must come from broken families. Fortunately, your humble author on such occasions knew his own genealogy by heart.

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most usual choice of pronoun to use with someone whom a speaker would address fictively with the kinship terms छोरा *chorā* 'son' or छोरी *chorī* 'daughter' is तँ *tā*. This is also the pronoun used towards people whom one would address as नाति *nāti* 'grandson' and नातिनी *nātinī* 'granddaughter', पलाती *palātī* 'great-grandson' and पलातिनी *palātinī* 'great-granddaughter' or as खलाती *khalātī* 'great-great-grandson' and खलातिनी *khalātinī* 'great-great-granddaughter'.

In essence, all other kinship terms can, *mutatis mutandis*, likewise be applied to non-kin. However, the more specialised kinship terms with a very narrow range of natural *denotata*, such as the in-law terms जेठी सासु *jeṭhī sāsu* 'wife's elder sister', नन्द *nanda* 'husband's younger sister' or साढु भाइ *sāḍhu bhāi* 'husband of wife's younger sister', are seldom used in fictive kinship, unless of course the term in question is felt in any given situation to be an appropriate and apt choice in light of the particular prevailing circumstances. Moreover, it is a common and ubiquitous practice that any kinship term gets transferred by association. For example, in the case cited above of the close friendship between Rājan and Kr̥ṣṇa, a female speaker who refers to Rājan as देवर *devar* will also apply this term to Kr̥ṣṇa, who is forever at Rājan's side. Similarly, a speaker will be inclined to call any man काका *kākā* who happens to be a close and regular associate of his or her father's younger brother.

As already noted in connection with the fictive use of the pronouns denoting younger siblings, i.e. भाइ *bhāi* 'younger brother' and बहिनी *bahinī* 'younger sister', any one of the three second person pronouns can be used with fictive kin thus addressed, i.e. familiar तँ *tā*, intermediate तिमी *timī* or deferential तपाई *tapāĩ*. The choice in any given case will depend on the many diverse factors that determine the perception of social distance and might prompt the polite expression of deference. Therefore, the chosen second person pronoun will reflect how these factors come into play within the specific relationship which obtains between the speaker and the person in question.

As noted above, a female speaker equates her sister's offspring terminologically with her own. However, a female speaker refers to her brother's son, as भदो *bhado* or भदाहा *bhadāhā* 'brother's son' (female speaking), and to her brother's daughter as भदै *bhadai* 'brother's daughter' (female speaking). The husband of the female speaker in question may also refer to these same nephews-in-law and nieces-in-law using the same terms as those used by his wife. In turn, these nephews and nieces will address the female speaker as फुपू *phupū* and her spouse as फुपाजु *phupāju*, फुपाज्यू *phupājyū* or फुपा *phupā*. The female speaker is likely to use either the familiar pronoun तँ *tā* or the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī* when addressing these nephews and nieces, the choice once again being contingent upon the perceived social distance between the speaker and the particular individual in question.

A male speaker addresses his sister's offspring as भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' (male speaking) and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' (male speaking). The wife of the male

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speaker may also refer to these same nephews-in-law and nieces-in-law using the same terms as those used by her husband. In turn, these nephews and nieces will address the male speaker as मामा *māmā* and his spouse as माइजु *māiju* or माइज्यू *māijyū*. There is a Nepali proverb सात जुवाई एक भान्जा *sāt juvāī ek bhānjā* 'seven brothers-in-law [are together worth just] one sister's son'. This adage underscores the traditional importance of the relationship between a maternal uncle and his nephew (i.e. his sister's son), which also manifests itself periodically during the rituals performed on religious feast days.

Traditionally, a male speaker addresses his भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, especially in conservative families. In the traditional social order by which men are the breadwinners and women toil arduously in the household, the respectful nature of the relationship between the maternal uncle and his nephew and nieces stems from the practice of patrilocality and therefore from the general deference accorded to the family which has taken in one's sister. A भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' might routinely refer to their maternal uncle's household with the special abbreviated form मामा घर *māmā ghar* 'maternal uncle's house' rather than using the full form मामाको घर *māmā-ko ghar* 'house of maternal uncle'.

Sometimes nowadays, however, a male speaker can be observed to address his भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' with the intermediate pronominal form तिमी *timī*, whereas his wife, who is their माइजु *māiju*, will nonetheless usually address her husband's भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*. In his capacity as maternal uncle, a male speaker and his nephew or niece are members of different families and of different paternal lineages as a result of the patrilocal and patrilinear nature of the kinship system. Because the male speaker's sister has been married out to another family, a man's भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' are more often than not likely to be distant physically and may very well live in another village or even yet further away. As a consequence, even in less traditional families, wherever only infrequent contact occurs between a male speaker and his भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter', it is likely that a male speaker will use the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, which reflects this distance.

By contrast, a male speaker addresses his brother's sons as भतीज *bhatīj* or भतीजो *bhatījo* 'brother's son' (male speaking) and his brother's daughters as भतिजी *bhatijī* 'brother's daughter' (male speaking). A male speaker may also address his brother's offspring simply as छोरा *chorā* 'son' and छोरी *chorī* 'daughter'. Once again, the wife of the male speaker may likewise address the same nephews-in-law and nieces-in-law using the same terms as those used by her husband. If the male speaker is older than his brother, then the male speaker will be addressed by these nephews and nieces as ठूलो बुवा *ṭhūlo buvā* 'big' or 'great father', and his wife will be addressed

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as ठूली आमा *ṭhūlī āmā* 'big' or 'great mother'. If the male speaker is younger than his brother, he will be addressed by these nephews and nieces as काका *kākā*, कान्छा बुवा *kānchā buvā* or कान्छा बाबु *kānchā bābu* 'junior father', and his wife will be addressed as काकी *kākī* or सानीमा *sānīmā* 'small' or 'little mother'. The traditional and usual choice of second person pronoun for a male speaker to use in addressing his भतीज *bhatīj* or भतीजो *bhatījo* 'brother's son' or भतिजी *bhatijī* 'brother's daughter' is the familiar pronominal form तँ *tā* because these nephews and nieces will live in the same village as a consequence of patrilocality, and they will tend to be members of the close family.

Since a female speaker equates the offspring of her sisters terminologically with her own offspring, it is natural that she refers to and addresses the spouses of these offspring as बुहारी *buhārī* 'son's wife' and जुवाईं *juvāĩ* 'daughter's husband', addressing the former with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī* and the latter with the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ*. Similarly, a female speaker refers to the spouses of her brother's offspring as भदाहा बुहारी *bhadāhā buhārī* 'wife of brother's son' (female speaking) and भदाहा जुवाईं *bhadāhā juvāĩ* 'husband of brother's daughter' (female speaking), addressing the former simply as बुहारी *buhārī* and using the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī* and addressing the latter simply as जुवाईं *juvāĩ* whilst using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ*.

A male speaker refers to the spouses of his sister's offspring as भान्जे बुहारी *bhānje buhārī* 'wife of sister's son' (male speaking) and भान्जे जुवाईं *bhānje juvāĩ* 'husband of sister's daughter' (male speaking), addressing the former simply as बुहारी *buhārī* and the latter simply as जुवाईं *juvāĩ*. Whereas a male speaker usually addresses any kin whom he terms his बुहारी *buhārī* with the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī*, a male speaker will usually address his भान्जे बुहारी *bhānje buhārī* 'wife of sister's son' (male speaking) with the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ*. As is usual for kin whom a speaker terms as his जुवाईं *juvāĩ*, a भान्जे जुवाईं *bhānje juvāĩ* 'husband of sister's daughter' (male speaking) is likewise addressed using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ*. By contrast, if called upon to explain the nature of the relationship, a male speaker may refer to the wife of his brother's son as भतिजी बुहारी *bhatijī buhārī* 'wife of brother's son' (male speaking), but he will address her simply as बुहारी *buhārī* and speak to her using the intermediate pronoun तिमी *timī*. Similarly, a male speaker will refer to and address the husband of his brother's daughter simply as जुवाईं *juvāĩ* 'daughter's husband' and speak to him using the deferential form तपाईं *tapāĩ*.

In the context of language communities sharing a history of Hindu civilisation, it is noteworthy that animals are addressed with the familiar pronoun तँ *tā*, whereas gods or goddesses are addressed in prayer using the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ*. In the prayers said out loud by some speakers, an aberrant choice of second person pronoun can be observed to occur, particularly when a person has been influenced by Hindi pronominal usage in prayers, where speakers of Hindi

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generally address deities with the familiar Hindi pronoun तू *tū* or sometimes with the form तुम *tum*, but not with the distant form आप *āp*.

Finally, the issue of fictive kinship brings us to a rival subsystem for addressing and referring to a subset of in-laws in use in some Nepali language communities in western Nepal involving the terms सोल्टी *solṭī*, roughly 'male in-law relation', and सोल्टिनी *solṭinī*, roughly 'female in-law relation'. These terms are not original to the Kathmandu valley and are quite unfamiliar to most Nepali speakers from east of the valley. However, these terms are heard used as fictive kinship terms of address in informal registers of speech in certain social *milieux* in the Kathmandu valley, where members of the older generation still recognise the terms to be of distinctly western Nepali provenance.

Turner (1931: 624) recorded the form सोल्टि *solṭi* and reported that the term was in use amongst Gurung and Tamang in the meaning of either male cross cousin or the brother of the spouse of one's sibling. Yet studies on the Gurung kinship system, although all relatively superficial to date, record no such terms (e.g. Pignède 1966; Doherty 1974; Glover et al. 1977), nor do extant studies on the Tamang kinship system (von Fürer-Haimendorf 1956; Höfer 1969; Hall 1978). Popularly, these kinship terms are associated in the minds of some Nepali speakers with the Magar, but the terms are not recorded in extant studies on the Magar kinship system either (Oppitz 1982; Buḍā Magar 1966; Grunow-Hårsta 2013; Regmi 2013, 2014). Rather, Vinding (1979: 209.211) records the Thakali forms सोल्टी *solṭī*, denoting male cross cousins and brothers of the spouse of one's sibling, and सोल्टीस्या *solṭīsyā*, denoting female cross cousins and sisters of the spouse of one's sibling.

In earlier and later editions of their Nepali dictionary, Tripāṭhī and Dāhāl (vs 2040) provide an indigenous etymology for these forms, suggesting that the term सोल्टा *solṭā* derives from the kinship term सालो *sālo* augmented by an otherwise unidentified and unexplained suffix टा *ṭā*. To the contrary, the form सोल्टा *solṭā* looks like what may have been an early attempt at rendering the form morphologically masculine and so to indigenise a borrowed term that to a Nepali speaker felt like a feminine form denoting a male referent. In fact, a सोल्टा *solṭā* is far more commonly referred to as सोल्टी *solṭī*. Furthermore, the Nepali form सोल्टिनी *solṭinī* is manifestly a regular Nepali feminine form derived from सोल्टी *solṭī*. In other words, rather than adopting the Thakali feminine form सोल्टीस्या *solṭīsyā*, denoting female cross cousins and the sisters of the spouse of one's sibling. Nepali speakers simply derived the form सोल्टिनी *solṭinī* to denote the wife of a सोल्टी *solṭī*.

Tripāṭhī and Dāhāl defined the form सोल्टा *solṭā* as a term by which a female speaker can refer to the younger or older brothers of the wife of her younger or older brother. In other words, the western Nepalese form सोल्टी *solṭī* conflates the separate terms for brothers-in-law of a female speaker's brother through his wife, traditionally distinguished by the terms जेठान *jeṭhān* and सालो *sālo*. For a male

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speaker, this western Nepalese system is reversed in that he refers to the elder and younger sisters of his elder or younger sister's husband as सोल्टिनी *solṭinī* and to their husbands as सोल्टी *solṭī*. The western Nepalese form सोल्टिनी *solṭinī* therefore conflates the sisters-in-law of a male speaker's sister through her husband, traditionally distinguished by the terms भिनाज्यू *bhināj̃yū* and जुवाईंनी *juvāĩnī*. In effect, therefore, the terms सोल्टी *solṭī* and सोल्टिनी *solṭinī* refer to siblings of the spouses of siblings, thereby replacing the richer traditional inventory of kinship terms shown in Diagrams 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b.

This system is not observed throughout western Nepal, but in those areas of Nepal where this rival subsystem exists for designating certain types of siblings-in-law, the institution of सोल्टेरो *solṭero* or सोल्ट्यौलो *solṭyaulo* refers to a gift which is given by one सोल्टी *solṭī* to another. The use of the terms सोल्टी *solṭī* and सोल्टिनी *solṭinī* have quite naturally been seized upon for use in fictive kinship. These non-native kinship terms evidently entered the Nepali language at the interface between the *Khas kurā* speaking Aryan communities and the Thakali communities of the Kālī Gaṇḍakī valley, amongst whom cross cousin marriage was the prevalent tradition, as it was amongst the Gurung, Limbu and many other Trans-Himalayan language communities indigenous to Nepal.

The awkward self

Clark (1963: 71) called the use of the reflexive pronoun आफु *āphu* 'self, oneself' with respect to a second person a 'high grade honorific' usage. Korolëv (1968: 1260) called आफु *āphu* 'self' a 'strong polite' pronominal form of the second person. Both writers noted the semantic peculiarity of the usage, whilst Clark ascribed the usage especially to rural speakers outside of the Kathmandu Valley. Neither author described how this form is actually used. The usage is, in fact, infrequent. The use of आफु *āphu* 'self' is not just observed rurally, but more generally in situations in which people are unsure of which pronoun to use. This might even include clumsy situations between people who used to know each other.

For instance, two friends may have been on a certain footing with each other but then not have seen each other subsequently for many years. Perhaps one of the two has gained a very high social status, whereas the other has not. When they meet after many years, both of them are older but life has treated each of them differently, and suddenly a new hierarchical relationship obtains between two persons who had previously been on a more casual or even on a once fleetingly intimate footing. The old pronominal usage may no longer feel appropriate. Yet what would under normal circumstances have represented the obvious choice of second person pronoun somehow no longer feels right, for the distance of time has engendered a

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new social distance. One or both of the speakers might under these circumstances resort to the use of आफु *āphu* 'self'. The use of आफु *āphu* 'self' is deferential in two senses, for the form avoids making a choice and therefore defers the need to select between the three second person pronouns तँ *tã*, तिमी *timī* and तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*.

The use of आफु *āphu* 'self' with respect to the second person remains uncommon because the usage is clumsy. Use of the reflexive form आफु *āphu* with respect to a second person does not represent usual pronominal usage as much as the avoidance of natural pronominal usage in order to avoid having to settle on a register. This device enables the two persons in question to delay deciding on a choice. Such usage is not sustained in natural situations between two individuals over long periods. Today, in the virtual world of electronic media, however, the form आफु *āphu* 'self' is attested in various new genres of social intercourse such as group chat or on social media websites, where the appropriate pronoun is uncertain or undecidable because the person addressed might quite often even be entirely unknown to the speaker.

Another pronominal usage which is quite common is the first person plural as a form of address when the speaker either does not wish to or feels no need to define his or her social relationship with regard to the person being addressed. For example, when Nepali construction workers returning to Nepal for home leave find themselves queuing up for the same flight at an airport on the Arabian peninsula, they may express curiosity about the actual provenance of familiar faces from the construction site where they work with whom they otherwise maintain no social relationship. The following conversation fragment is just one out of many such typical exchanges heard at Muscat airport:

हाम्रो कतातिर?
hāmro katā-tira?
Whereabouts is our [place of origin/destination]?
गुल्मी। अनि हाम्रो कतातिर?
Gulmī, ani hāmro katā-tira?
Gulmī, and so whereabouts is our [place of origin/destination]?
प्यूठानतिर।
Pyūṭhān-tira
around Pyūṭhān

The use of the first person plural to address a second person semantically includes the speaker, and this sense of inclusion stemming from the implication of both being in the same boat neither implies nor precludes deference. However, in certain social contexts the usage might be interpreted as patronising or condescending, particularly when the person being addressed in this way feels that some expression of deference is due. Neither the practice of resorting to आफु *āphu* 'self' and आफ्नो *āphno* 'one's own' nor the use of the first person plural हामी *hāmī* 'we' and हाम्रो *hāmro*

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'our' typically represent terms of address used in long-term enduring relationships, in which exchanges occur on a routine or daily basis. Rather, these usages represent improvisations that obviate the need of establishing a second person pronominal usage and thereby defer the need of defining the social relationship between the two people in the conversation. The use of the inclusive first person plural may, however, crop up incidentally in interactions of people between whom a particular pronominal usage has already long been established, simply as a stylistic device.

Royal or courtly forms

There is a yet higher register of deference and distance in Nepali grammar than the forms hitherto discussed, and these forms may be labelled either 'royal' or 'courtly'. Clark (1963: 271) says that such forms are 'used in court and high social circles with reference to senior persons'. Historically, such forms are indeed used at the royal court of the शाह Śāh dynasty king, who bore the title of श्री ५ *śrī pāñc* 'five times Lord', and at the courts of the hereditary राणा Rāṇā prime minister, who bore the title of श्री ३ *śrī tīn* 'thrice Lord', as well as at the many courts maintained by the extensive and powerful Rāṇā family. In the *Nepālī Bṛhat Śabdakoś*, Vasudev Tripāṭhī and Ballabh Maṇi Dāhāl (1983: 928) specified that the verb बक्सनु *baksanu* 'bestow, grant, deign' belongs to the register of विशेष आदरार्थी प्रयोग *viśeṣ ādarārthī prayog* 'special honorific usage', and indeed the Nepali royal or courtly forms can aptly be qualified as honorific.

Morphologically, the forms of the royal conjugation consist of the participle in <-i> of a main verb in combination with the mediopassive forms of the auxiliary verb बक्सनु *baksanu* 'bestow, grant', i.e. बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'be granted, be bestowed, be deigned'. The verb बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'be deigned' is a member of a larger set of Nepali verbs that govern a verbal complement taking the form of a participle in <-i>. The royal paradigm is rendered impersonal by the use of the mediopassive, which is formed by infixation of the mediopassive morpheme <-i->, so that there can be no person and number agreement with any syntactic constituent, whether overt or implicit, denoting a royal referent.

As a consequence, the paradigm contains only third person singular forms, thereby rendering these forms all the more distant and deferential. The forms of the mediopassive auxiliary verb बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'be deigned' therefore show no grammatical agreement either with the royal person or with his highness or majesty, i.e. बक्सियो *baksiyo* 'it was deigned', बक्सिन्छ *baksincha* 'it is deigned', बक्सिएला *baksiela* 'it might be deigned', and so forth. Rather such forms are morphologically third person singular forms showing no agreement with any syntactic constituent other than with the activity denoted by the verb itself.

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The royal conjugation exists for all verbs, but Clark provided the royal conjugated forms for the verb हुनु *hunu* 'to be', incorporating the participial form होइ *hoi* of the verb हुनु *hunu* 'to be'.[11] To replicate Clark's eclectic choice of verbal category labels, the affirmative and negative 'simple indefinite' forms are होइबक्सिन्छ *hoibaksincha* and होइबक्सिन्न *hoibaksinna*, which Clark described as being 'higher in the honorific scale than' हुनुहुन्छ *hunuhuncha* and हुनुहुन्न *hunuhunna*. Clark furthermore provided the 'aorist injunctive' forms होइबक्सियोस् *hoibaksiyos* and नहोइबक्सियोस् *nahoibaksiyos*, the 'aorist perfect' forms होइबक्सियो *hoibaksiyo* and होइबक्सिएन *hoibaksiena*, the 'first perfect participle' होइबक्सिएको *hoibaksieko* and नहोइबक्सिएको *nahoibaksieko* and the 'second perfect participle' होइबक्सिए *hoibaksie* and नहोइबक्सिए *nahoibaksie*. Clark noted that this courtly paradigm has third person singular forms only, but neglected to clarify why, the reason of course being, as explained above, that the conjugation is entirely mediopassive, without any person and number agreement with any syntactic constituent that might denote a royal referent.

Since the first Nepali grammar by Ayton in 1820, various authors have devised diverse labels to affix to the Nepali verbal categories, such as the tenses, participles, and gerunds. Yet there is no consistency between linguists in the use of such labels. Until such time as an authoritative and comprehensive Nepali grammar with apt labels for grammatical categories has been produced, it strikes me as most precise to refer to the participial form built by suffixation of the ending <-i> to the verb stem simply as the participle in <-i>.[12]

When inviting or requesting a member of the royal family to deign to engage in an activity, the participle in <-i> of the main verb is combined with the optative third person singular form of the mediopassive verb बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'deign', i.e. बक्सियोस् *baksiyos* 'may [subject] deign [to]/may [subject] bestow upon us [that]'. The optative is a Nepali verbal category, which Clark (1963) labelled the 'aorist injunctive'

11. The verb हुनु *hunu* 'to be', which exhibits several distinct verb stem forms, has two participial forms in <-i>, i.e. होइ *hoi* and भइ *bhai*, which are used differently.

12. Recently, I seized an opportunity to recommend Boyd Michailovsky's (1996) coinage 'inferential' for the Nepali tense category that many scholars have ineptly, and sometimes even jocularly, been calling the 'unknown past' or the 'past unknown' (van Driem 2017), an English rendering of Nepali अज्ञात भूत *ajñāt bhūt*. Clark (1963) called the Nepali inferential the 'second perfect' because this tense is built using the form which he chose to call the 'second perfect participle', consisting of the verb stem ending in <-e>. Korolëv (1965, 1968) treated the inferential as 'contracted forms' of the 'present perfect' formed using the participle in <-eko>, a Nepali verbal category which Clark labelled the 'first perfect' tense. Korolëv was the first to describe the mirative semantic character of this Nepali verbal category. Clark had, however, described the mirative character of the forms रहेछ *rahecha* 'it turned out that, it appears that' and रहेनछ *rahenacha* 'it did not turn out that, it does not appear that', which he explained are 'second perfect tense' forms of the verb रहनु *rahanu* 'be, abide [in a state], remain [in a state]'.

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and Korolëv (1965, 1968) labelled the желательное наклонение *želatel'noe naklonenie* 'optative mood'. In practice, I have for years improvised by using the functionally explanatory English label 'optative' for the second and third person forms of this Nepali paradigm, and the label 'adhortative' for the first person forms of the same paradigm. The following is a not very eloquent sentence requesting a member of the royal family to be seated.

बसि बक्सियोस्।
basi baksiyos
May [Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] deign to sit down.

The reason that the above utterance is not particularly eloquent is because it was uttered by someone with little acquaintance with court parlance. The more formal and eloquent expression with reference to a member of the royal family is formed by substituting the verb बस्नु *basnu* 'sit' with the form राजभइ *rājabhai*. Etymologically the form राजभइ *rājabhai* is the participle in <-i> of a verbal expression *rāja hunu* 'be the sovereign', but the term राजभइ *rājabhai*, roughly 'royal presence', represents a fossilised and hitherto apparently lexicographically undocumented form which today has begun to feel semantically partially opaque.

राजभइ बक्सियोस्।
rājabhai baksiyos
May [Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] deign to be seated. / May the royal presence be bestowed.

Similarly, when inviting a member of the royal family to enjoin in a repast or tiffin, the particular expression जिउनार गर्नु *jiunār garnu* 'partake of food' is used.

जिउनार गरि बक्सियोस्।
jiunār gari baksiyos
May it be deigned [by Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] to enjoin in the food.

When inviting a member of the royal family to partake of a drink, usually the verb पिउनु *piunu* 'drink' is simply used.

पिइ बक्सियोस्।
pii baksiyos
May it be deigned [by Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] to partake of the beverage.

When inviting a member of the royal family to go or to come, the verbs जानु *jānu* 'go' and आउनु *āunu* 'come' are substituted with the verb पाल्नु *pālnu* 'proceed'. It has long been noted that an elaborate stylistic system of lexical substitution of a common

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term with a more elevated term is the very mainstay of Tibetan honorific language. In other languages, such as Nepali or English, carefully selected word choice also serves to convey deference on the part of the speaker.

पालि बक्सियोस्।
pāli baksiyos
May it be granted [by Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] to proceed.

The verb पाल्नु *pālnu* 'proceed' can also be used deferentially to commoners, albeit without the use of the auxiliary बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'deign'. The verb पाल्नु *pālnu* 'proceed' must not be confused with the homophonous verb पाल्नु *pālnu* 'to raise', e.g. offspring, livestock. Naturally, in the style register employed with royal personages, the use of lexical alternatives of an elevated stylistic register is frequent.

In the old days of the पञ्चायती व्यवस्था *pañcāyatī vyavasthā* 'pañcāyat system', the official state newspaper, the गोरखापत्र *Gorkhāpatra* and its English counterpart, the *Rising Nepal*, would be brimming with front-page news regarding the activities undertaken by His Majesty and other royal personages. Several pictorial volumes have attempted to conserve a photographic record of this stratum of Nepali society (Shrestha 1986; Sever 1993; Rāṇā et al. 2002; Sirhandi 2009), most resplendent in the Rāṇā period before the dingy Nārāyaṇhiṭī palace became a regal setting in 1961.

Yet few studies have undertaken to document the use of courtly language. The archives of the गोरखापत्र *Gorkhāpatra* and other documents of the period can be profitably studied in this regard. Since Their Majesties regularly travelled to all parts of the kingdom to visit the people and inaugurate and monitor development projects, His Majesty's movements and travels were narrated, using the expression सवारी गर्नु *savārī garnu* 'travel' or सवारी हुनु *savārī hunu* 'to grace with one's presence', whereby the noun सवारी *savārī* 'conveyance' derives from the Persian سفري *safari* 'travel, travelling'. Since the Persian ultimately derives from the Arabic سفر *safar* 'travel', the Nepali word सवारी *savārī* is etymologically remotely connected to the Swahili loanword *safari* in English.

Often, however, in routine interaction, the diction used with members of the royal family was not necessarily very much distinct from normal polite speech other than the conjugation of the verb with the aid of the mediopassively inflected auxiliary verb बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'be deigned, be bestowed' in combination with a participle in <-i>.

विस्तारमा बयान गरि बक्सियोस्।
vistār ma bayān gari baksiyos
May it please [Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] to describe [the matter] in detail.

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आराम गरि बक्सियोस्।
ārām gari baksiyos
May it be deigned [by Your Majesty/Your Royal Highness] to rest / to be at ease.

The mediopassive nature of the बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'be deigned, be bestowed' necessitates that His Majesty be marked by a postposition बाट *bāṭa* 'through, by, via, by means of' in any context in which it is appropriate that the royal personage be explicitly mentioned as the agent of the activity denoted by the mediopassive verb.

सम्माननीय प्रधानमन्त्री श्री मनमोहन अधिकारीको सिफारिस
Sammānanīya pradhān mantrī śrī Manmohan Adhikārī ko siphāris
बमोजिम श्री ५ महाराजाधिराज वीरेन्द्र वीर विक्रम शाहदेवबाट
bamojim śrī 5 mahārājādhirāj Vīrendra Vīr Vikram Śāh Dev bāṭa
मौजुदा प्रतिनिधि सभालाई मिति २०५२।२।३० देखि विघटन गरी बक्सी
maujudā pratinidhi sabhā lāī miti 2052 Jeṭh 30 dekhi vighaṭan garī baksī
सम्वत् २०५२ मंसीर ७ गते प्रतिनिधि सभाको लागि निर्वाचन हुने मिति
samvat 2052 Māsīr 7 gate pratinidhi sabhā ko lāgi nirvācan hune miti
तोकी बक्सिएको छ।
tokī baksieko cha.
In accordance with the recommendation of the honourable Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Adhikārī, it having been deigned by the five times Lord and Great King of Kings Vīrendra Vīr Vikram Śāh Dev to dissolve the existing House of Representatives from the 30th of Jyeṣṭha 2052 [i.e. 13 June 1995], it was granted to designate the 7th of Mārgaśīrṣa 2052 [i.e. 23 November 1995] as the date for the election of the House of Representatives.[13]

For linguists of Nepali, old issues of the गोरखापत्र *Gorkhāpatra* furnish a valuable corpus of prose written in this now moribund style register. Since the abolition of the monarchy in 2008, the loss of the style register can now be observed. In a piece written in *Online Khabar* on the 4th of Kartik 2073 (i.e. 20 October 2016), one semiliterate journalist wrote:

हे पूर्व-राजा आँखा धेरै नचम्काइ बक्सियोस्।
he pūrva-rājā, ãkhā dherai nacamkāi baksiyos
Hey, former king, may it not be deigned that [you] flash [your] eyes too much.

The lack of erudition on the part of the writer is in evidence in his other formulations, which strike educated Nepalis accustomed to proper usage as ungrammatical.

13. In accordance with the particulars of modern Nepali phonology, the name of His Late Majesty was usually romanised in English as 'Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev'.

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When he writes that the former king attended a particular public gathering, the journalist writes उपिस्थत भए *upasthit bhae* 'was present', using the plural ending, as if this were the correct deferential grammatical ending. In such instances, the imperfect usage is not disrespectful as such, but strikes educated Nepalis as grammatically uncouth. One out of a choice of grammatically correct forms which the writer might have used would have been सवारी भइ बक्सियो *savārī bhai baksiyo* 'deigned to grace [the meeting] with his presence'. This usage on the part of a writer in an online paper reflects the fact that now an entire generation has grown in the country that currently styles itself as the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal rather than the Kingdom of Nepal.

Grammar and history repeat themselves

After Bhimsen Thāpā, who had been languishing in prison for two years, was cruelly tricked into committing suicide in 1839, a power struggle ensued for nearly a decade amongst the royals and nobles during the reign of the effete king Rājendra. The jockeying for power continued until the Kot Massacre at the army headquarters near Hanumān Ḍhokā on 14th of September 1846, where 32 ministers and noblemen were slain by the bodyguards of Jaṅg Bahādur Kũvar, who at the age of 29 was appointed prime minister by the junior queen in the the midst of the carnage which he had orchestrated. From that point onward, Jaṅg Bahādur Kũvar became the *de facto* ruler of Nepal. In 1849, he decreed that the Kũvar were as much of high caste as the Rājpūt, the putative caste of the ruling Śāh dynasty, and he adopted the new surname Rāṇā. Jaṅg Bahādur made his prime ministership a hereditary position and adopted the grandiose title of *Śrī 3 Mahārāj* 'the thrice Lord great King', whereas the figurehead kings of the Śāh dynasty were allowed to sport the largely ceremonial title of *Śrī 5 Mahārājadhirāj* 'the five times Lord great King of Kings'.

This clever set-up institutionalised a display of greater deference to the ruling dynasty, whereas real power resided with the Rāṇā family, heralding 104 years of oligarchic rule known as the Rāṇā period, which lasted until the Restoration in 1951. During World War II, there was much anti-Rāṇā agitation, and an independent Nepali press began to flourish in exile. One such anti-Rāṇā group, the *Nepāl Prajā Pariṣad* 'Nepal People's Council', maintained clandestine connections with the democracy advocate, H.M. king Tribhuvan, and this group spread propaganda leaflets for their cause in Kathmandu in 1941.

In retaliation, Juddha Śamśer Rāṇā put to death four of their leading members, and their deaths are still annually commemorated in Kathmandu at *Śahid Smārak* 'Martyrs' Memorial' from the 10th to 16th of Māgh. In the ensuing years,

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the king's position became increasingly precarious, and on the 6th of November 1950, H.M. king Tribhuvan Vīr Vikram Śāh and his family fled to the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. The king's youngest grandson Jñānendra was left behind in the palace as a precaution to ensure perpetuation of the dynasty should anything overcome the king and the rest of the royal family. The Rāṇā government proclaimed Jñānendra king the following day,[14] and after negotiations with the Indian Embassy, king Tribhuvan and the royal family were permitted to be flown by the Indian Air Force from Kathmandu to India.

Pressure by the Indian government and a guerrilla war waged by the troops of the newly established Nepali Congress Party in the Terai and eastern hills forced the Rāṇā regime to capitulate. On the 15th of February 1951, king Tribhuvan returned in triumph and assumed power. The monarch did not persecute his former adversaries, with whose family the royal family shared a complex web of blood ties. Though they lost much, the Rāṇā family consequently continued to play a major role in Nepalese political life. This palace revolution transpired in the year 2007 of the *Vikram Saṃvat* era used in the Nepali calendar and is accordingly known as *sāt sāl ko krāntī* 'the revolution of the year 7'. Soon thereafter, the caste system as codified in the original *Mulukī Ain* was rendered obsolete on the 30th of Kārttik 2011 (i.e. 15 November 1954) by the new Interim Constitution, which barred discrimination on the basis of religion, caste and sex and guaranteed equal protection under the law to all Nepali citizens, although obviously age-old customs and traditional ways of thinking were not swept away just by the flourish of a pen.

The monarchy would probably not have come to an end notwithstanding the disruptive and antagonistic actions of the Nepalese Maoists. Instead, the monarchy was rendered vulnerable and apparently dealt a mortal blow by the cataclysmic events which unfolded on Friday evening, the 19th of Jeṭh 2058 (i.e. 1 June 2001), commonly known today as the दरबार हत्याकाण्ड *darbār hatyākāṇḍ* 'palace massacre'. Several books and popular accounts were published on the tragic events afterwards. However, historians will have to defer to the informative and noteworthy report of the inquiry conducted by the उच्चस्तरीय समिति *Uccastarīya samiti* 'high-level committee' (2058). The text is also fascinating as a linguistic corpus replete with regally conjugated forms and courtly Nepali speech, suffused with an impertinently generous smattering of English. The use of titles in the document is entirely in keeping with the usage of the period in both the spoken and written Nepali of the time.

The use of titles once used to be an integral part of the grammatical competence of an educated Nepali speaker. In the days immediately following the palace tragedy, one of the several measures taken by the government cannot be properly

14. The name Jñānendra is usually romanised in English as 'Gyanendra'.

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appraised today by those lacking certain sensitivities in a domain of language usage that was still very much alive at that time, unless it is understood how important the use of titles and deferential speech was to the grammar of the period. In the news black-out that ensued immediately after the events, the rationale behind blocking the Indian news channels was entirely different than the reasoning behind blocking the Anglo-American media. Hindi is a language which many Nepalis understand due to their exposure to Bollywood films and as a consequence of many lexical similarities between the two languages.

The usage of the Hindi television news readers was not disrespectful as such, but nonetheless made a highly uncouth and discourteous impression on Nepali ears because members of the royal family were referred to brusquely as राजा *rājā 'king'*, रानी *rānī* 'queen', राजकुमार *rājakumār* 'prince' and so forth, without any use of deferential titles. This casual contemporary Hindi usage struck educated Nepali ears as rude in the extreme, particularly at a time of national tragedy. Those in His Majesty's Government who blocked the Indian television media at this time expressed privately that silencing this coarse and insensitive use of language was their principal motive in blocking the Hindi media.

The loss of grammatical competence in this highly specific domain since the tragic events of June 2001 is by no means ubiquitous and does not affect all strata of society. The erudite have not yet suffered from an erosion of grammatical proficiency. Yet the unprecedented calamitous events which unfolded in 2001 catalysed a process which led to the demise of the monarchy and thereby to the demise of a stratum of Nepali grammar. Even so, this courtly style register has not vanished entirely. New forms have come into existence in recent years that have cropped up spontaneously and supplanted the royal forms, although these new forms are conspicuously derived directly from these very courtly forms. In the new Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the new obsequious forms are used whilst addressing powerful government officials or even a locally powerful functionary like a superintendent of police.

The new servile forms of usage represent contractions of the formal royal optative forms, evidently according to the following pattern of derivation.

> खाइसियो *khāisiyo* 'please eat' < खाइसियोस् *khāisiyos* < खाइ बक्सियोस् *khāi baksiyos*
> बसियो *basiyo* 'please sit' < बसियोस् *basiyos* < बसि बक्सियोस् *basi baksiyos*

A courtly imperative using the mediopassive form of the auxiliary बक्सिनु *baksinu* 'be deigned' is contracted to yield forms that imperfectly resemble mediopassive optative forms of the verb, as it were, without an auxiliary. Finally, and most recently, the *Auslaut* of the third person optative ending <-os> was dropped, thereby creating what might be called a new 'obsequious imperative' for use in addressing officials of the new order. I have witnessed the frank puzzlement of elder Nepali

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speakers with long memories upon their first hearing such forms, but these new forms are currently veritably in use amongst some speakers.

Both in grammatical terms as well as in terms of its social ramifications, the rise of this new 'obsequious imperative' appears to be straight from the pages of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. When comrade Napoleon himself became the prime minister, between late 2011 and early 2013, he set the prodigal precedent of appointing a then record-breaking cabinet of no less than 49 spendthrift ministers, all most admirably adept at walking on their hind legs, who received multiple regal allowances and would on a daily basis have all vehicular traffic brought to a halt whenever any of them chose to go careening uselessly about the Kathmandu valley in their exorbitantly purchased vehicles, accompanied by police escorts (Sālokya 2011).

Finally, another domain of retention of the use of royal forms is jocular usage, when jesting amongst peers. Courtly forms are also retained in some artificial styles of speech used in prayers. Sometimes people undertake to use courtly forms to show deference within the family in particular ceremonial contexts, although the effect created by such usage strikes the highly educated as burlesque. Predictably, in speech registers such as jest, prayer or pretentiousness, the forms are quite often used incorrectly because few amongst the young generation have acquired a proper mastery of this traditional register of Nepali grammar.

Languages change inexorably with time, and Nepali constitutes no exception. Aside from the loss of this subdomain of Nepali morphology, the Nepali language has changed in numerous respects since the पञ्चायती काल *pañcāyatī kāl* 'Pañcāyat period'. Today many people of the younger generation have difficulty distinguishing between अ *a* [ə] and आ *ā* [a] when these vowels occur in word-final position, whereas their grandparents' generation never had any doubt about this phonemic distinction. More generally, Nepali, as it is spoken today, sounds different from the way that the language sounded in the Pañcāyat period, at which time it would have been unimaginable to hear newsreaders speaking Nepali in many of the styles of diction and types of pronunciation heard today. Moreover, in the mouths of certain speakers, modern Nepali suffers from a tendency that can also be observed elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent and even beyond, whereby the crisp apical Nepali phoneme /r/ is realised phonetically with a growling Anglo-Saxon rumble.

Some Nepali speakers even cultivate an Anglo-Saxon twang in their speech. Although ostensibly cosmopolitan, Nepali that sounds this way is usually not heard from erudite, highly educated and well-travelled Nepalis, who sometimes speak very good English. Rather, the global English twang is a feature of the Nepali spoken by the social parvenu, who, paradoxically, quite often does not speak much English at all. In particular, Nepali stewardesses and some female Nepali ground staff appear to be professionally afflicted with this condition so much so that the deformation of their pronunciation in some cases severely compromises the

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intelligibility of their Nepali. It can be readily observed that the phonetic distortion of the Nepali spoken by stewardesses and female ground staff cannot be attributable to any mastery of English pronunciation, since any command of English is in most cases conspicuously lacking. Instead, each of these highly idiolectical speech styles represent personal phonetic affectations that could not be observed in female Nepali speakers of their profession three decades ago.

In the realm of morphology, it can be observed that some young speakers, even native speakers of high caste, on occasion use a conjugated verb form with the third person singular ending in sentences with a first person singular subject. Since this transgression against conventional verbal concord is not committed consistently by such young speakers, the observed variation is presumably somehow semantically motivated. Nonetheless, this phenomenon may herald a trend towards the type of Nepali often heard in the speech of some Nepali speakers in Darjeeling and Sikkim, but more particularly in southern Bhutan, where the paradigms of verbal agreement have undergone erosion in the speech of many speakers, depending often on their level of education, ethnicity, caste and socio-economic background. At any rate, the royal register in Nepali verbal morphology is today most rapidly being lost because of the murders perpetrated by the deranged crown prince, whose odious crimes sounded the death knell of an era.

A famous and interesting prediction was made by a Nepali court astrologer in the 1950s, which merits repeating in English for historical reasons. Known as ज्ञानेन्द्रको ३ पटक राजा हुने कुण्डली 'the horoscopic prediction that Jñānendra will be king thrice', this astrological forecast made little sense at the time when it was first pronounced, after the abbreviated reign of Jñānendra as a three-year-old monarch, which began on the 7th of November 1950 and lasted only until February 1951. The court astrologer's prediction made in the 1950s was all the more noteworthy and riddlesome at the time, since H.R.H. prince Jñānendra was not first in the line of succession of H.M. king Mahendra.

After the palace massacre in 2001, Jñānendra ruled for a second time, from the 4th of June 2001 until the abolition of the monarchy on the 28th of May 2008. The many astrologers who in recent years have predicted the return of Jñānendra to the throne for yet a third time cannot be credited with any of the originality of the famous court astrologer of the 1950s, whose fascinating and detailed obituary I recall reading in a Nepali newspaper years ago, and who first went out on a limb to make what at the time must have struck everyone as the most implausible of astrological predictions. If Jñānendra were in reality to accede to the throne for yet a third reign, then the now moribund courtly register in Nepali grammar might once again verily begin to flourish anew.

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Appendix. Kinship diagrams

In the kinship diagrams, triangles represent males and circles represent females. The square in Diagrams 7a and 7b represents a speaker whose gender does not affect the kinship terms or choice of pronominal forms used. Each triangle or square is labelled with a kinship term in a caption underneath. Although only a single term is given in each caption, some of the kinship terms in the diagrams have synonyms or variants, which are discussed in the main text. Sometimes the form of address differs from the form used to refer to a particular kin relation. In the diagrams, older generations are depicted above younger generations, and age within generation along the horizontal axis increases from right to left, and decreases from left to right. The speaker – or 'ego' in the jargon of anthropologists discussing kinship diagrams – is indicated in blue colour.

The pronominal forms indicated within most triangles and circles are relatively fixed, such as the use of the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* in addressing members of older generations, senior siblings within one's own generation and one's husband as well as the use of the familiar second person pronoun तँ *tã* with respect to junior siblings, one's offspring or one's wife. However, in some cases, the second person pronoun given within a triangle or circle merely represents the traditional and most usual choice of pronominal form. A more complete discussion of the alternatives and the factors determining the choice of pronominal form is provided in the main text.

For example, a male speaker traditionally addresses his भान्जा *bhānjā* 'sister's son' and भान्जी *bhānjī* 'sister's daughter' with the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃*, but some speakers use the intermediate form तिमी *timī*. The more traditional or the more distant the relationship of the male speaker to these relations is in practice, the more natural the use of the deferential pronoun तपाईं *tapāĩ̃* becomes for the speaker in addressing this subset of nephews and nieces. Similarly, a female speaker will usually address her भदो *bhado* 'brother's son' and भदै *bhadai* 'brother's daughter' with the familiar pronoun तँ *tã*, but if the perceived social distance between the female speaker and these nephews and nieces is great, then the intermediate form तिमी *timī* may afford a more natural pronominal choice.

In Diagrams 7a and 7b, dotted lines depict alternative lines of descent between generations. Without the dotted lines, each of these diagrams could have been turned into four diagrams. Diagrams 7a and 7b illustrate that cousins are terminologically equated with siblings, whether on father's side of the family or on mother's side of the family, and regardless of whether the connecting aunt or connecting uncle is elder or younger than one's parent.

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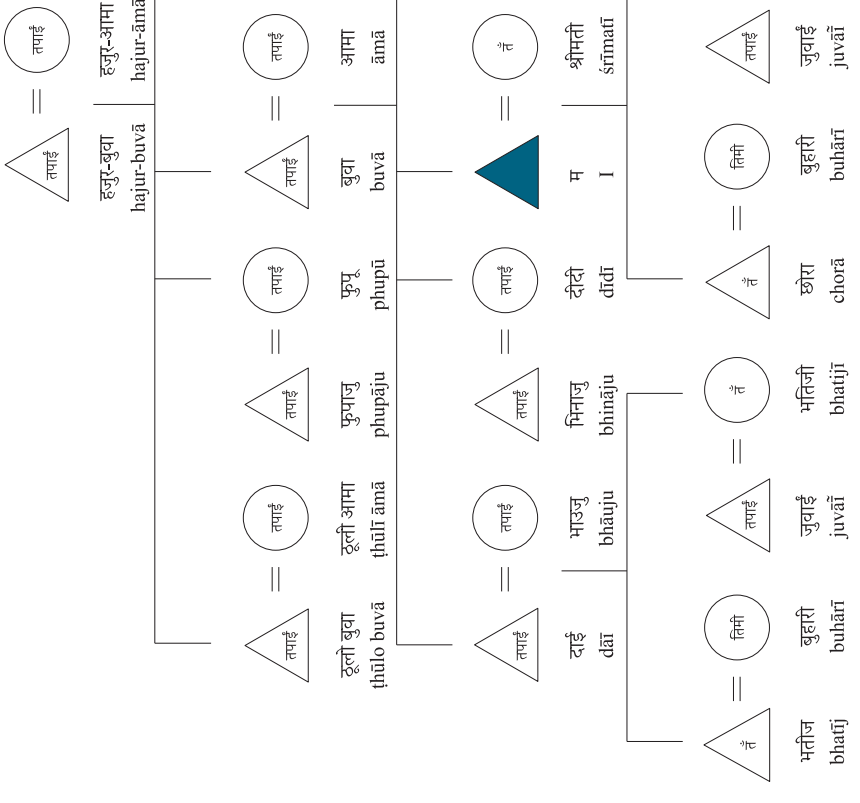
तपाईं
तपाईं
हजुर-बुवा
hajur-buvā
हजुर-आमा
hajur-āmā
तपाईं
तपाईं
तपाईं
तपाईं
तपाईं
ठूलो बुवा
ṭhūlo buvā
ठूली आमा
ṭhūlī āmā
फुपाजु
phupāju
फुपू
phupū
बुवा
buvā
आमा
āmā
काका
kākā
काकी
kākī
फुपाजु
phupāju
फुपू
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दाई
dāī
भाउजु
bhāujju
भिनाजु
bhināju
दीदी
dīdī
म
I
श्रीमती
śrīmatī
भाई
bhāī
बुहारी
buhārī
जुवाइँ
juvāĩ
बहिनी
bahinī
तपाईं
तपाईं
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Diagram 1b. Paternal relatives and offspring of male siblings (female speaker)

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Diagram 2a. Maternal relatives and offspring of female siblings (male speaker)

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Diagram 2b. Maternal relatives and offspring of female siblings (female speaker)

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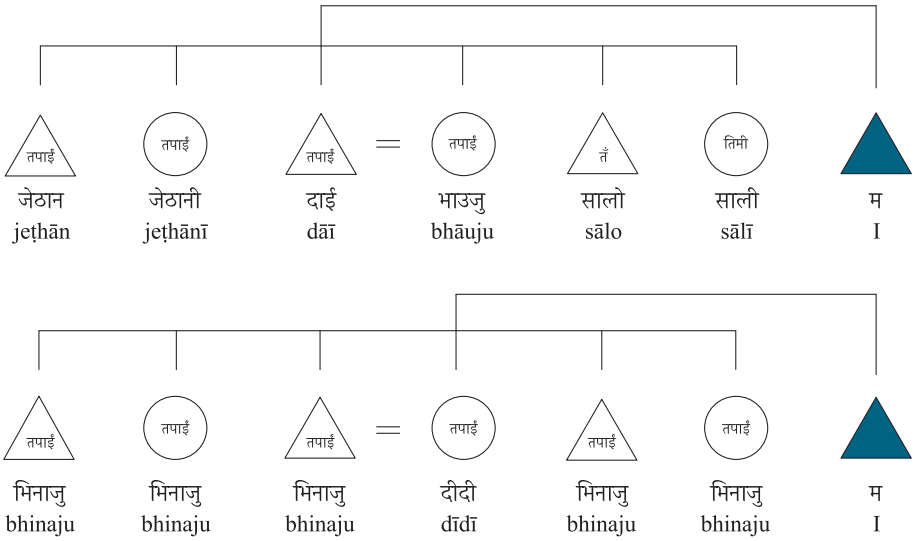

Diagram 3a. Elder sibling's spouse and the siblings of elder sibling's spouse (male speaker)

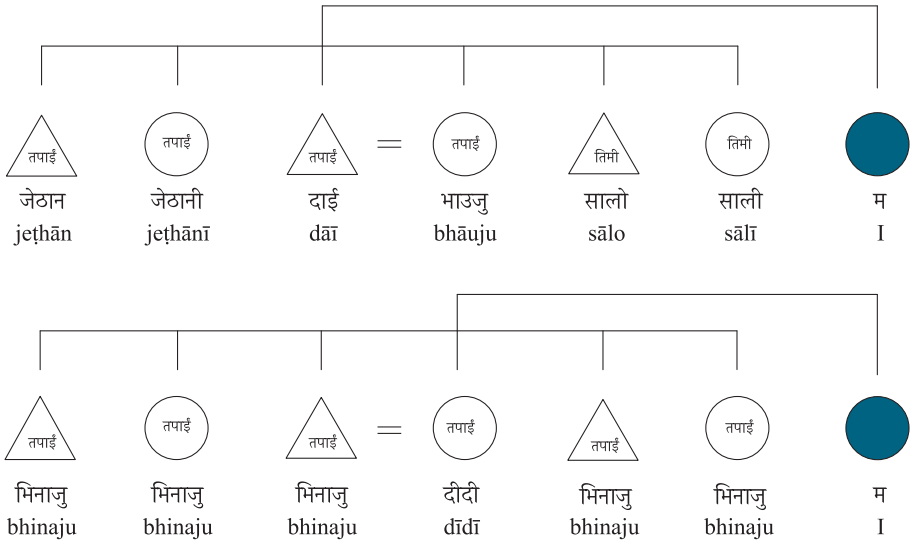

Diagram 3b. Elder sibling's spouse and the siblings of elder sibling's spouse (female speaker)

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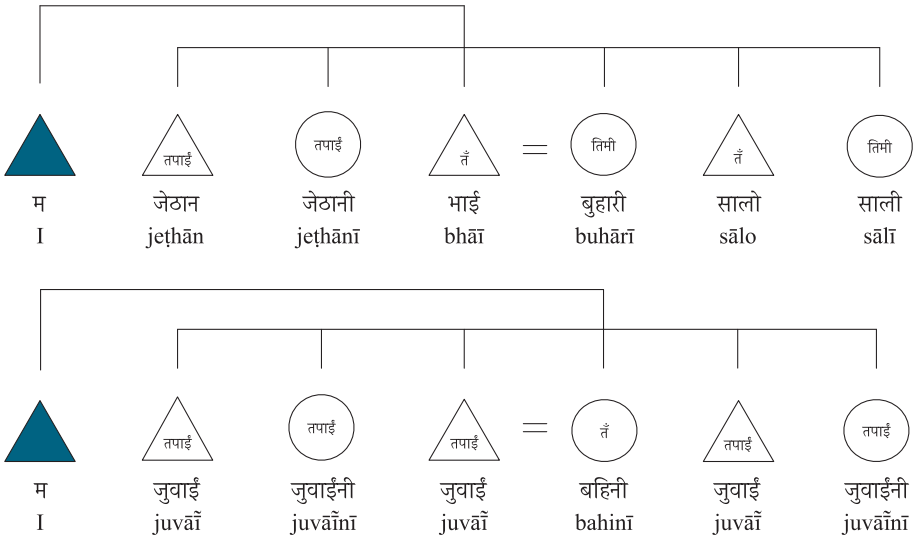

Diagram 4a. Younger sibling's spouse and the siblings of younger sibling's spouse (male speaker)

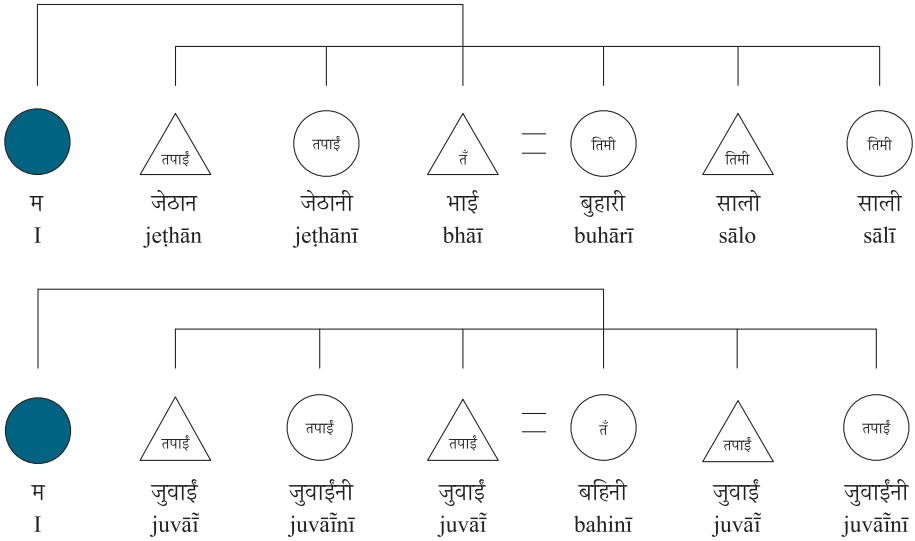

Diagram 4b. Younger sibling's spouse and the siblings of younger sibling's spouse (female speaker)

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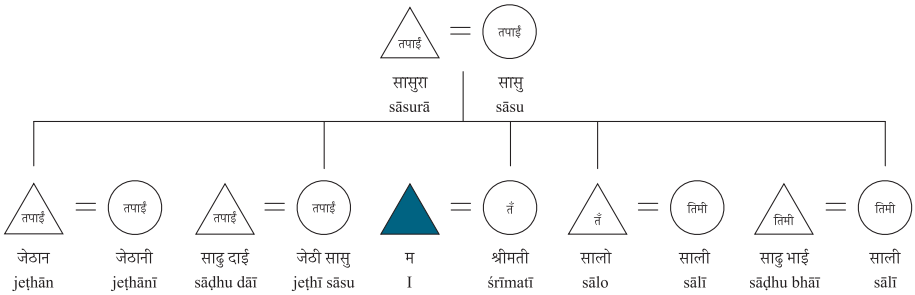

Diagram 5a. The siblings of spouse, the spouses of spouse's siblings and the parents-in-law (male speaker)

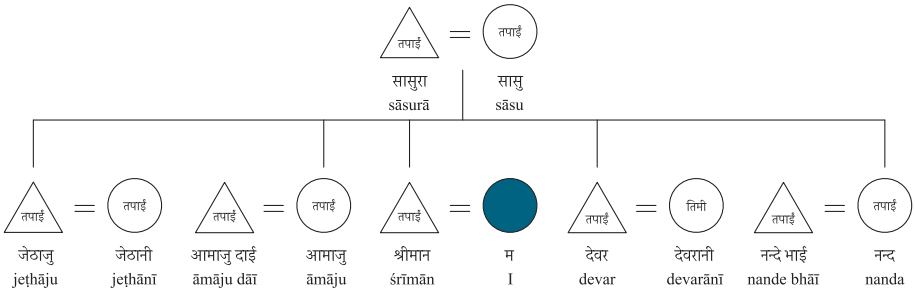

Diagram 5b. The siblings of spouse, the spouses of spouse's siblings and the parents-in-law (female speaker)

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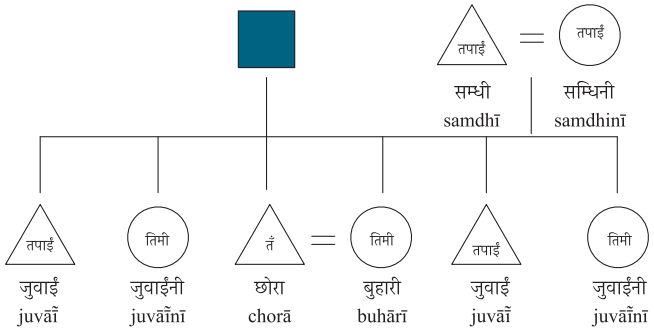

Diagram 6a. The siblings and parents of son's spouse (male or female speaker)

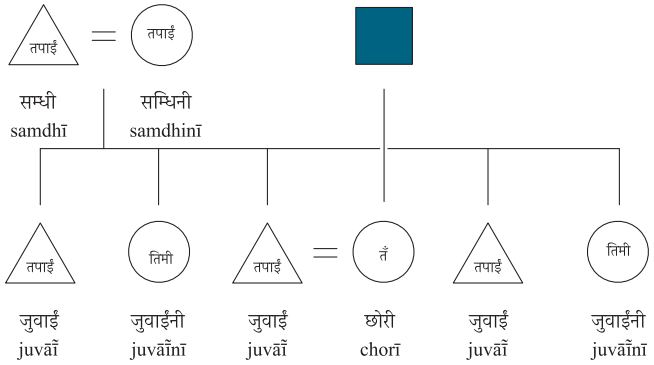

Diagram 6b. The siblings and parents of daughter's spouse (male or female speaker)

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Diagram 7a. paternal cousins (male or female speaker)

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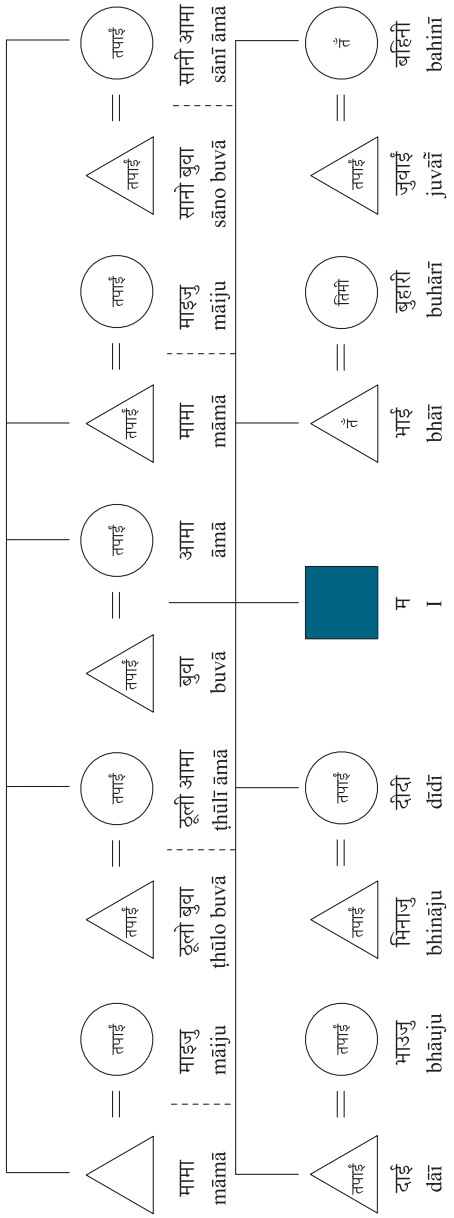

Diagram 7b. maternal cousins (male or female speaker)

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