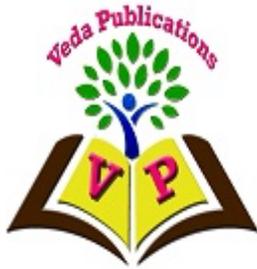




RESEARCH ARTICLE

**A STUDY ON GENDER DISTINCTION IN BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI**Thokchom Dhanapyari Devi¹ . Dr.Aheibam Linthoingambi Chanu²¹*(Research scholar, Dept of Linguistics, Manipur University, Manipur.)*²*(Senior Language Expert, Anuvadini Foundation AICTE, Delhi.)*Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2025.12306>**ABSTRACT**

The study primarily focuses on the morphological investigation of gender marking in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. The Bishnupriya Manipuri community speaks this Indo-Aryan language as their first language. The gender markers within several categories were highlighted in the study. The language does not have grammatical gender. The majority of male genders are unmarked in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. The morpheme 'jela/jelei' and the suffix /-i/ are used by Bishnupriya Manipuri to denote female gender. The customary assignment of specific masculine and feminine genders to human and non-human conceptions is one of the gender-specific forms of the language that the study also identifies. These are a few conclusions drawn from the initial inquiry. The study was based on data collected in Silchar, Cachar District, Assam.

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**1. GENDER**

In Bishnupriya Manipuri, most masculine genders are left unmarked in both human and non-human nouns. The lexemes /-manu/, /jelei/ jela/, and the suffixes /-i / are used in the language to differentiate between genders. Although the language designates the gender of certain plants and neutral items, all inanimate objects fall under the neuter gender.

2. RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

The gender distinction mechanism of the language has been researched by several academics.

K.P. Sinha conducted the first linguistic study of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in 1960. By examining the Bishnupriya Gender System, he claimed that grammatical gender was no longer present in the language. He describes how the word "jela" comes after common language expressions. Consider the case 'kukur ela' 'female dog'. He went on to say that the phrases /jela/ and /muni/ denote the masculine and feminine genders of a human noun. He also describes how the language uses suffixes to differentiate between genders.

Nayan Jyoti Kalita, Navanath Saharia and Smriti Kumar Sinha (Towards the Development of a Bishnupriya Manipuri Corpus) also analyses the gender system of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. The findings of their study is similar to that of K.P Sinha. They further describe that the suffixes /-i, -ani, -ni/ are added to the masculine form to make its feminine form. For instance: /k^hura: father's younger brother/- > /k^huri: wife of father's younger brother/

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study will be a modest attempt to morphologically examine and analyze the gender disparities in the language from a linguistic point of view.

4. METHOD OF GENDER DISTINCTION

The method of gender distinction is the process of assigning gender to different grammatical components. Like, Meiteilon, gender distinction of the language is limited in number. The language doesn't have complex system of grammatical gender. However, gender can be distinguished lexically and semantically. The methods of gender distinction are illustrated below:

BY SUFFIXING

Bishnupriya Manipuri uses the following feminine suffixes: /i/ to indicate feminine gender in both human and non-human nouns.

Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
tarun	'young boy'	taruni	'young boy'
raksas	washerman	raksasi	washer-woman
p ^h ut ^h op-dor	male thief	p ^h ut ^h op-dori	female thief
Kukur	male dog	mukur-i	female dog
mekur	male cat	mekur-i	female cat
mojur	peacock	mojur-i	peahen



b) Pair Terms

Human

In case of Nouns that occur in pairs of Feminine and Masculine, genders are morphologically unmarked in the language.

Masculine		Feminine	
Bishnupriya	Gloss	bishnupriya	Gloss
<i>baba</i>	Father	<i>ima</i>	Mother
<i>raja</i>	King	<i>rani</i>	Queen
<i>bejak</i>	Brother	<i>banak</i>	Sister
<i>heja/balda</i>	Husband	<i>meilak/geji</i>	Wife
<i>ipu</i>	Grandfather	<i>k^huri</i>	Aunt (elder)

Non-Human

In case of Nouns that occur in pairs of Feminine and Masculine, genders are morphologically unmarked in Bishnupriya Manipuri.

Masculine	Feminine	Gloss
<i>lava</i>	<i>ɟava~tɟava</i>	buffalo
<i>muruk</i>	<i>murgi</i>	hen
<i>cagol</i>	<i>cagi</i>	horse
<i>deha</i>	<i>dehi</i>	cow

Bishnupriya Manipuri has pronominal gender for 3rd person like English 'He/she walks' and Assamese 'xi/tai k^huɟ karhe' (he/she walks). It distinguished between genders by using opposing terms

Masculine		Feminine	
Bishnupriya	Gloss	Bishnupriya	Gloss
<i>ta</i>	he	<i>tei</i>	she

c) Uses of attributive words

Another way to differentiate gender in this language is to add attributive phrases for different sexes (male or female) to a common noun. These attributive words can appear before the common noun. This is a reasonably successful strategy for determining gender in this language, as demonstrated below:

For human

In Bishnupriya Manipuri, the qualifying words /*ɟelei*/ or /*ɟela*/ and /*muni*/ are used before and after a common noun to make gender distinction

Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
<i>hoba</i>	good boy	<i>hoba ɟela-</i>	good girl
<i>muni-go</i>		<i>go</i>	
<i>sik^hito</i>	educated	<i>sik^ho ɟela-</i>	educated
<i>muni-go</i>	boy	<i>go</i>	girl
<i>muni gai-</i>	male	<i>ɟela gai-</i>	female
<i>go</i>	singer	<i>go</i>	singer
<i>muni-</i>	people	<i>ɟela-manu</i>	people
<i>manu</i>	(male)		(female)
<i>muni-sou</i>	male	<i>ɟela-sou</i>	female
	child		child

For animal

Masculine gender is not marked for the non-human nouns in Bishnupriya Manipuri. However, the lexeme /*ɟelei*/ or /*ɟela*/ used to indicate feminine gender.

Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
<i>kukur-go</i>	male	<i>kukur-ɟelei</i>	female

	dog		dog
<i>bak-go</i>	male tiger	<i>bak-jela</i>	female tiger
<i>mekur-go</i>	male cat	<i>mekur-jela</i>	female cat

Bishnupriya	Gloss
<i>lerikula</i>	story teller
<i>palaoli</i>	traditional drummer
<i>dakula</i>	band party

For plant

In Bishnupriya Manipuri also the plants that can bear fruits falls under the category of feminine and those that cannot bear fruits are treated to be masculine gender. The language uses the lexeme /*munija*/ to indicate masculine gender. However, the feminine gender for the plants is not morphologically marked in the language.

For instance:

munija k^habol jari the papaya plants that cannot bear fruits

munija kola gacari the banana plants that cannot bear fruits

Specific form of gender: The language traditionally allocated specific masculine and feminine genders to some human and non-human concepts. No gender indicators of any type can be used to transform these words into the opposite gender.

Specific masculine gender: The nouns given below have no female correspondence. These nouns are traditionally treated as masculine gender.

Specific feminine gender: The nouns given below have no male correspondence. These nouns are traditionally treated as feminine gender.

Specific gender distinction in flower: Flowers with names that finish in the morpheme /*-rei~lei*/ are traditionally classified as feminine. For instance:

Bishnupriya	Gloss
<i>sena-rei</i>	marigold
<i>numit-lei</i>	sunflower
<i>singa-rei</i>	jasmine

In contrast, it is customary to classify the other flowers that do not have the morpheme /*-rei~lei*/ under the masculine gender. For instance:

Bishnupriya	Gloss
<i>gulap</i>	rose
<i>t^hambal</i>	lotus

Neutral gender: There are certain specific human and non-human nouns that are gender neutral. These words fall under the common or neutral gender group. For instance:



Bishnupriya	Gloss
<i>lenka</i>	friends
<i>nei</i>	relatives
<i>rasdari</i>	Singer
<i>bujan</i>	Senior citizen
<i>sou</i>	child

Gender in natural things

In the context of natural gender, items that evoke feelings of beauty and serenity as well as those that provide us with nourishment are classified as feminine. Nonetheless, items that exude toughness and strength are classified as masculine.

Bishinupriya	Gloss	Gender
<i>akas^h</i>	sky	male
<i>prithibi</i>	earth	female
<i>tergara</i>	mountain	male
<i>cando</i>	moon	girl
<i>bou</i>	wind	wind
<i>gat</i>	river	girl

CONCLUSION

Like other indo-aryan languages such as Oriya, Assamese the gender system in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language is primarily based on natural gender with exceptions made specifically for living objects. Bishnupriya Manipuri uses lexical and morphological markers to indicate gender, in contrast to languages with intricate grammatical gender systems. Gender differentiation is expressed through three primary processes: the inclusion

employing gender-specific descriptive adjectives for people, animals, and birds; using opposing words in kinship terms; and using suffixes (-i). Certain nouns are inherently masculine or feminine and cannot be changed, while others maintain their gender neutrality in the absence of additional modifiers or context. Existing literature supports Bishnupriya Manipuri's emphasis on semantic gender over syntactic gender. Despite its simplicity, the Bishnupriya Manipuri gender system is rich in linguistic and cultural significance, reflecting the manner in which language expression is influenced by social and biological factors.

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