

BHOJPURI.

*Lāṣhī-mē guṇa bahuta haī,
Naddī nāra-agāha jala,*

*Tahē bachāwai aṅga,
Dushmana dāwāgira,
Kaha Giri-dhara Kabi-rāya,
Saba hathyāra-kē chhāri*

*sadē rākhihā saṅga,
tahē bachāwai aṅga.*

*jhapaṣa kuttō-kē mārai :
hōe tina-hū-kē jhārai.
bāta bādhā yaha gāṣhī.
hātha-mē rākhihā lāṣhī.*

The Bhojpuri National Anthem.

(Thus paraphrased by Mr. W. S. Meyer, I.O.S.)

Great the virtues of the Stick !
Keep a Stick with you alway—
Night and day, well or sick.

When a river you must cross,
If you'd save your life from loss,
Have a stout Stick in your hand,
It will guide you safe to land.

When the angry dogs assail,
Sturdy Stick will never fail.
Stick will stretch each yelping hound
On the ground.

If an enemy you see,
Stick will your protector be.
Sturdy Stick will fall like lead
On your foeman's wicked head.

Well doth poet Girdhar say
(Keep it carefully in mind)
' Other weapons leave behind,
Have a Stick with you alway.'

Bhojpuri, or, if the word were strictly transliterated, Bhoj'puri,¹ is properly speaking the language of Bhojpur, the name of a Town and Pargana in the north-west of the District of Shahabad. It is a place of some importance in the modern history of India. The town is the original head-quarters of the Dumraon Raj, and the battle of Buxar was fought at Bagh'sar a few miles to its west. Politically, it belongs rather to the United Provinces than to Biḥār, although it is at the present day included within the boundaries of the latter province. It was from its neighbourhood that the famous Bundelkhand heroes, Albā and Ūdan, traced their origin, and all its associations and traditions point to the west and not to the east.

The language called after this locality has spread far beyond its limits. It reaches, on the north, across the Ganges, and even beyond the Nepal frontier, up to the lower ranges of the Himalayas, from Champaran to Basti. On the South, it has crossed the Sone, and covers the great

¹ The word Bhojpuri has obtained currency in English, and it would be an affectation of purism to spell the name 'Bhoj'puri.'

Ranchi plateau of Chota Nagpur, where it ultimately finds itself in contact with the Bengali of Manbhum, and with the Oṛiyā of Singhbhum.

Of the three Bibārī dialects, Maithilī, Magahī, and Bhojpurī, it is the most western.

The language boundaries. North of the Ganges, it lies to the west of the Maithilī of Muzaffarpur, and, south of that river, it lies to the west of the Magahī of Gaya and Hazaribagh. It then takes a south-easterly course, to the south of the Magahī of Hazaribagh, till it has covered the entire Ranchi Plateau, including the greater part of the Districts of Palamau and of Ranchi. Here, it is bounded on the east by the Magahī spoken in the sub-plateau parganas of Ranchi and by the Bengali of Manbhum. On the south it is here bounded by the Oṛiyā of Singhbhum and the Native State of Gangpur. The boundary then turns to the north, through the heart of the Jashpur State, to the western border of Palamau, along which line it marches with the form of Chhattisgarhī spoken in Sargūjā and western Jashpur. After passing along the western side of Palamau, the boundary reaches the southern border of Mirzapur. It follows the southern and western borders of that District up to the river Ganges. Here it turns to the east, along the course of that stream, which it crosses near Benares, so as to take in only a small portion of the north Gangetic portion of Mirzapur. South of Mirzapur, it has still had Chhattisgarhī for its neighbour, but on turning to the north, along the western confines of that District, it has been bounded on the west, first by the Baghēli of Baghelkhand, and then by Awadhī. Having crossed the Ganges, its boundary line lies nearly due north to Tāṇḍā on the Gogra, in the District of Fyzabad. It has run along the western boundary of the Benares District, across Jaunpur, along the west of Azamgarh, and across Fyzabad. At Tāṇḍā, its course turns west along the Gogra and then north up to the lower ranges of the Himalayas, so as to include the District of Basti. Beside the area included in the above language frontier, Bhojpurī is also spoken by the members of the wild tribe of Thārūs, who inhabit the Districts of Gonda and Bahraich.

Bhojpuri compared with the other Bihārī dialects. The area covered by Bhojpurī is, in round numbers, some fifty thousand square miles. At home, it is spoken by some 20,000,000 people as compared with the 6,235,782 who speak Magahī, and the 10,000,000 who speak Maithilī. So far, therefore, as regards the number of its speakers, it is much more important than the other two Bihārī dialects put together. This division of the dialects of Bihārī into two groups, an eastern, consisting of Maithilī and Magahī, and a western, Bhojpurī, commends itself on both linguistic and ethnic grounds. The two eastern dialects are much more closely connected with each other than either is connected with Bhojpurī. In grammatical forms, Maithilī and Magahī have much in common that is not shared by Bhojpurī, and, on the other hand, Bhojpurī has peculiarities of declension and conjugation which are unknown to the other two. There is a difference of intonation, too, between the east and the

Pronunciation compared. west, which is very marked to anyone who is familiar with the languages of Eastern Hindōstān. In Maithilī, the vowel *a* is pronounced with a broad sound approaching the 'o in *hot*' colour which it possesses in Bengali. Bhojpurī, on the contrary, pronounces the vowel with the clear sharp-cut tone which we hear all over Central Hindōstān. Contrasted with this the dialect also possesses a long drawled vowel, which is written in many different ways,

but which is always pronounced like the *aw* in *awl*.¹ This last sound also occurs both in Maithilī and in Magahī, but not nearly to so great an extent, and moreover, when it does occur in these dialects, it is not so liable to be noticed owing to the broad sound of the frequently occurring vowel *a*, with which it is, as pronounced in the east, easily confounded. In Bhojpurī, on the contrary, the contrast between this drawled *á* and the clear-cut sound of the common *a* is so very marked, and the drawled *á* is of such frequent occurrence, that it gives a tone to the whole language which is recognised at once.

In the declension of nouns, the favourite Bhojpurī postposition of the genitive is *ke*, while in the Eastern dialects it is either *k* or *kar* or *kēr*. Besides this, the genitive of a Bhojpurī substantive has an oblique form, a thing unknown to Maithilī or Magahī. As regards pronouns, Bhojpurī has a word for 'your honour',—viz. *raure*,—which does not occur in the east. In the conjugation of verbs, the Bhojpurī verb substantive, *bāṭē*, he is, does not appear in the other two, while the form of the verb substantive which may be called common to the three dialects,—*hai*, he is,—is throughout its conjugation pronounced so differently in Bhojpurī that it can hardly be recognised as the same verb. In the conjugation of the finite verb, Bhojpurī has a present tense,—*dēkhī-lā*, I see,—which is peculiar to itself, and is not met in the other two dialects. Finally,—Bhojpurī has cast aside all that maze of verbal forms which appals the student when he first attempts to read Maithilī or Magahī. All those forms which depend upon the person of or the degree of respect to be shown to the object, which are so characteristic of these two dialects, are absent from Bhojpurī, and instead we have a simple conjugation, with rarely more than one form for each person.

Bhojpurī has three main varieties,—the Standard, the Western, and Nagpuriā. It has also a border sub-dialect called Madhēsī, and a broken form called Thārū. Standard Bhojpurī is spoken mainly in the Districts of Shahabad, Ballia, and Ghazipur (Eastern half), and in the Doab of the Gogra and the Gandak. As its name implies, Western Bhojpurī is spoken in the Western Districts of Fyzabad, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Benares, the western half of Ghazipur, and South-Gangetic Mirzapur, while Nagpuriā is spoken in Chota Nagpur. Madhēsī is spoken in Champaran, and Thārū Bhojpurī along the Nepal frontier from that district to Bahraich.

Standard Bhojpurī extends over a large area, and exhibits some local peculiarities. The most noticeable is the preference of the more southern Districts of Shahabad, Ballia and Ghazipur, and of the southern part of Saran, for the letter *r* instead of *ṛ* in the conjugation of the auxiliary verb. Thus, while the Northern Standard Bhojpurī prefers to say 'bāṭē' for 'he is,' the Southern prefers *bārē*. In the centre and north of Saran, there is a peculiar form of the Past tense of the verb, in which *u* is substituted for the *l* which is usually typical of Bihārī; but this anomaly does not go further north, and in Eastern Gorakhpur, the language differs but little from that of Shahabad. Still further to the north-west, in Western Gorakhpur and in Basti, there are a few other divergencies from the Standard, but they are not of importance, and are mainly due to the influence of the neighbouring western

¹ This is the sound which I transliterate by *á*.

variety of the dialect. Natives, who are quick to recognise any divergence of dialect, call the language of Eastern Gorakhpur Gorakhpurī, and the language of the west of that district and of Basti, Sarwariā.¹

Western Bhojpurī is frequently called Pūrbī, or the Language of the East, *par excellence*. This is naturally the name given to it by the inhabitants of Western Hindōstān, but has the disadvantage of being indefinite. It is employed very loosely, and often includes languages which have nothing to do with Bhojpurī, but which are also spoken in Eastern Hindōstān. For instance, the language spoken in the east of the District of Allahabad is called Pūrbī, but the specimens of it which have been sent to me are clearly those of a form of Eastern Hindī. It altogether wants the characteristic features of Bhojpurī,—the present in *-lā* and the Past in *-al*,—and instead has the well-known Eastern Hindī Past in *-is*. I have hence decided to abandon the term Pūrbī altogether, and to use instead the term ‘Western Bhojpurī,’ which, while not so familiar to Natives, has the advantage of being definite, and of connoting exactly what it is wanted to express.

As compared with Standard Bhojpurī, the following are the principal points of difference in Grammar. In Standard Bhojpurī, the termination of the Genitive is *ke*, with oblique form *ka*; in the Western dialect it is *ka* or *kāi*, with an oblique form *kē*. The latter has also an Instrumental Case ending in *an*, which is altogether wanting in the Standard language. In Western Bhojpurī, the adjective is liable to change according to the gender and case of the noun which it qualifies. This is much rarer in the Standard form of the language. The use of the pronouns in the two forms of speech differs considerably. The forms of the demonstrative pronouns vary, and the word *tūh* can be used as an honorific pronoun of the second person in the West, which is not the case in the East. In the East the oblique form of nouns and pronouns usually ends in *ā*, while in the West, it always ends in *ē*. The Verb Substantive has two forms in both sub-dialects, but the *hāwōi*, I am, of the East has become *hawī* in the West. As forms of this verb are of frequent occurrence, and as the difference of pronunciation is very marked, the result of this last point is that the ‘tone-colour’ of each of the two sub-dialects shows considerable diversity from that of the other. In the conjugation of the verb, there are two marked differences. Nothing is more marked in Standard Bhojpurī than the nasal tone which is given to the termination of the first person plural, which, being also used for the singular, is of frequent occurrence. Thus a man of Shahabad says *ham kailē* for ‘I did’. In Western Bhojpurī this nasal is dropped in the plural, and we only have *ham kaili*. Moreover, in the latter, the first person plural is not nearly so often used for the Singular, as in the Standard. The termination of the third person plural also differs considerably in the two forms of speech. In the Standard it ends in *-an* or in *-ani*, and in the West it ends in *-aĩ*. The above are only the most noteworthy points of difference between the two main forms of Bhojpurī. There are many other minor ones, for which the reader is referred to the grammatical notes prefixed to the specimens. See, especially, pp. 249 and ff.

The Nagpurīā of Chota Nagpur differs from the Standard type principally in the fact that it has borrowed grammatical forms from the neighbouring Chhattisgarhī of the east of the Central Provinces.

Nagpurīā.

¹ an explanation of this last name, see pp. 238 and ff.

Instances are the use of the termination *-har*, to give definiteness to a noun, and the suffix *-man* to form the plural. There are other divergencies from the Standard which will be found described on pp. 280 and ff. It may be noted that Nagpuriā is sometimes known by the people who speak it as Sadān or Sadrī and is called by the Muṇḍa tribes of Chota Nagpur 'Dikkū Kāji.'

The Madhēsi of Champaran is the language of the '*Madhya-dēśa*,' or 'Middle country,' between the Maithili of Tirhut and the Bhojpuri of Gorakhpur. As its name implies it is a border form of speech possessing some of the characteristics of each dialect. Its structure is, however, in the main that of Bhojpuri.

Madhēsi.

The Thārūs who inhabit the Tarai along the Nepal frontier have no speech of their own. Wherever we find them they have adopted more or less completely the language of their Aryan neighbours. Those who are found in the British districts from Bahraich to Champaran speak a corrupt form of Bhojpuri, mixed here and there with aboriginal words which will repay the investigations of the ethnologist. It is worth noting that the Thārūs of Bahraich and Gonda speak Bhojpuri, although the local Aryan language is not that language, but is Eastern Hindī.

Thārū Bhojpuri.

The area in which Bhojpuri is spoken is shown in the map facing page 1.

The following are the figures which show the number of speakers of Bhojpuri within the area in which it is a vernacular. The totals are given for each sub-dialect. For details, district by district,

Number of speakers.

the reader is referred to the various sections dealing with each sub-dialect:—

Southern Standard	4,324,293
Northern Standard, viz.:—	
Dialect of Saran	1,504,500
Gorakhpuri	1,307,500 ¹
Sarwariā	3,353,151 ¹
	TOTAL
	6,165,151
Western Dialect	3,939,500
Nagpuriā	594,257
Madhēsi	1,714,036
Thārū Bhojpuri	39,700
	TOTAL
	<u>16,776,937</u>

Besides the above, there is the population of the Nepal Tarai, which, of necessity, cannot be numbered. A moderate estimate would put the Bhojpuri speakers of that tract at three millions, so that we are justified in estimating the whole number of people who speak Bhojpuri at home, as in round numbers 20,000,000.

For the reasons stated when dealing with Maithili, *vide ante* pp. 14 and ff., it is impossible to ascertain the number of people whose native language is Bhojpuri, but who live in parts of India where Bhojpuri is not the vernacular. All that can be done is to give for the Provinces of Bengal and Assam the following estimated figures. No figures of any kind are available for the rest of India.

¹ Include some speakers of Thārū Bhojpuri and Demrā.

Table showing the estimated number of speakers of Bhojpuri, within the Lower Provinces of Bengal, but outside the Area in which Bhojpuri is the Vernacular Language.

Name of District.	Number of Speakers.	REMARKS.
Burdwan	12,800	
Bankura	1,600	
Birbhum	9,200	
Midnapur	40,600	
Hooghly	4,900	
Howrah	19,000	
24-Parganas	23,000	
Calcutta	71,600	
Nadia	3,600	
Jeasore	1,500	
Murshidabad	40,900	
Khulna	1,600	
Dinajpur	7,300	
Rajshahi	4,000	
Rangpur	17,900	
Bogra	9,400	
Pabna	7,000	
Darjeeling	4,500	
Jalpaiguri	9,300	
Kuch-Bihar (State)	4,800	
Dacca	11,600	
Faridpur	2,300	
Backergunge	900	
Mymensingh	24,800	
Chittagong	1,200	
Noakhali	162	
Tipperra	2,200	
Bhagalpur	7,406	
Cuttack	350	
Puri	340	
Balasore	920	
Jashpur State	200	
TOTAL	346,878	

Table showing the estimated number of speakers of Bhojpurī within the Province of Assam.

Name of District.	Number of Speakers.	REMARKS.
Cachar Plains	18,400	
Sylhet	18,500	
Goalpara	3,100	
Kamrup	900	
Darrang	3,200	
Nowgong	1,800	
Sibsagar	10,300	
Lakhimpur	9,000	
Naga Hills	130	
Khasi and Jaintia Hills	350	
Lushai Hills	50	
TOTAL	65,730*	* Nearly all these are tea-garden coolies.

The following is, therefore, the total number of speakers of Bhojpurī recorded in the above tables :—

Number of people speaking Bhojpurī at home	20,000,000
" " " " elsewhere in the Lower Provinces	346,878
" " " " in Assam	65,780
Total	<u>20,412,608</u>

Bhojpurī has hardly any indigenous literature. A few books have been printed in it. Those which I have met will be found mentioned in the list of Texts given under the head of Authorities. So far as I am aware, no portion of the Bible has been translated into the dialect. Numerous songs are current all over the Bhojpurī area, and the national epic of Lōrik, which is also current in the Magahī dialect, is everywhere known.

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A.—EARLY REFERENCES.

I know of no early references to the Bhojpuri language. Bhojpur, itself, is frequently mentioned by Muhammadan historians, and its wild inhabitants are referred to in no complimentary terms. Nor is the word Pūrbī, so far as I am aware, met with in any early writer, as the name of a language. The following article, taken entire from Yule's 'Hobson Jobson,' illustrates the use of the word from the earliest times as a geographical and ethnical title.

Poorub, and Poorbeea, ss. Hind. *Pūrab*, *Pūrb*, 'the East,' from Skt. *pūrva* or *pūrba*, 'in front of,' as *paścha* (Hind. *pachham*) means 'behind' or 'westerly' and *dakshina*, 'right-hand' or 'southerly.' In Upper India the term usually means Oudh, the

Benares division, and Behar. Hence POORBEEA (*pūrbiyā*), a man of those countries, was, in the days of the old Bengal army, often used for a sepoy, the majority being recruited in those provinces.

1558. " Omsam (Humayun) Patriah.....resolved to follow Xerchan (Sher Khan) and try his fortune against him..... and they met close to the river Ganges before it unites with the river Jamona, where on the West bank of the river there is a city called Canose, one of the Chief of the kingdom of Dely. Xerchan was beyond the River in the tract which the natives call PUEBA. " *Barros*, IV. ix. 9.

1616. " Bengala, a most spacious and fruitful province, but more properly to be called a kingdom, which hath two very large provinces within it, PUEB and Patan, the one lying on the East, the other on the West side of the river." *Terry*, Ed. 1665, p. 357.

1666. " La Province de Halabas s'appelloit autrefois PUEOP " *Thevenot*, v. 197.

1881. "My lands were taken away,

And the Company gave me a pension of just eight annas a day ;

And the POORBEAS swaggered about our streets as if they had done it all..... ".

Attar Singh loquitur, by 'Sowar,' in an Indian paper, the name and date lost.

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The character in general use in writing Bhojpuri is the Kaithī, for the alphabet of which, see the plate facing p. 11. The Dēva-nāgarī is also used by the educated classes. Examples of both these alphabets will be found in the following specimens.

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