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**The Role of the Suffix ‘- bi’ in Manipuri**

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**Abstract**

This is an investigation of the different functions of the suffix -bi in Manipuri. It gives different shades of meanings in different environments. Generally the suffix -bi denotes the benefactive and request meanings but there are also extended meanings which indicate persuasive, less polite and self-possession, suggestive and aspectual action, etc., depending upon its environments. An attempt is made in the present paper to unravel the semantic properties of the suffix -bi, which explicates many semantic nuances.

**Introduction**

In Manipuri the suffix -bi is used in different context of situation. It explains about the different roles in different context. It has been classified into seven types of different meaning, categories. The various semantic nuances are given below:

I.	-bi	‘benefactive’
II.	-bi	‘politeness’
III.	-bi	‘suggestive and aspectual action’

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12 : 1 January 2012

P. Madhubala, Ph.D.

The Role of the Suffix ‘- bi’ in Manipuri

IV.	-bi	‘capability’
V.	-bi	‘less polite and self possession’
VI.	-bi	‘doubtful and uncertainty action’
VII.	-bi	‘persuasive’

**Table-I**

**I. Benefactive:** It denotes the speaker’s action of doing something for someone.

For example:

1. t<sup>h</sup>əbək - si əy - nə magi - dəmək təw -bi - bə - ni  
work - this I -AG he of only do - BEN - NMZ - COP  
‘I do this work for him only.’
2. layrik - si əy - nə magi - dəmək pu - bi - bə - ni  
book -this I -AG he of only carry - BEN - NMZ - COP  
‘I carry the book only for him only.’
3. əy - nə wa - si magi -dəmək hay -bi -bə -ni  
I -AG word - this he of only speak -BEN -NMZ COP  
‘I speak this only for him.’

The above sentences show the speaker’s action of doing something for someone. The verbal form pubibəni ‘carry’, indicates that the benefactive marker -bi is directly added to the verbal root pu- and further followed by the nominizer -bə and -ni copula.

## **II. Politeness**

It denotes the speaker’s language usage is of refined manner. In Manipuri, when the request marker -bi is added to the verbal form, it indicates polite form of expression. The polite form of expression always occurs with –yu command marker. The polite form of expression may be of two types: (a) action has to be taken by the hearer for his own benefit (b) action has to be taken by the hearer for the benefit of the speaker.

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12 : 1 January 2012

P. Madhubala, Ph.D.

The Role of the Suffix ‘- bi’ in Manipuri

**(a) Action has to be taken by the hearer for his own benefit.**

For example:

4. ca -du əmuk - tə pay - bi - yu  
tea - the once -only hold -REQ - COM  
'Please have the tea.'

5. siŋju - si ca - bi - yu  
vegetable dish -this eat - REQ -COM  
'please have the vegetable dish (hotchpotch ).'

There are other types of verbal forms which are used by the speaker in a more formal and cordial way. The lists of the verbal forms are given below.

habə	'to eat'
leŋbə	'to move'
ceppə	'to sleep'
p <sup>h</sup> anbə	'to smoke'
cayt <sup>h</sup> əbə	'to bathe'
leŋk <sup>h</sup> ətpa	'to get up'
p <sup>h</sup> anba	'to drink (tea, water, etc.) '
t <sup>h</sup> onbə	'to dress'

The following sentences illustrate the phenomenon:

6. pannə - si ha - bi - yu  
betelnut - this eat - REQ - COM  
'please have the betelnut.'

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12 : 1 January 2012

P. Madhubala, Ph.D.

The Role of the Suffix '- bi' in Manipuri

7. luk ha - bi - yu  
rice eat - REQ - COM  
'please have the meal.'
8. som - də leŋ - bi - yu  
direction LOC move - REQ - COM  
'please go this way (along this direction).'

**(b) Action has to be taken by the hearer for the benefit of the speaker.**

For example:

9. lay əmə yek - pi - yu  
picture one draw - REQ - COM  
'please draw a picture (for me).'
10. əca - pot əmə ləy - bi - yu  
eat - thing one buy - REQ - COM  
'please buy any edible thing (for me).'
11. pot əsi t<sup>h</sup>aŋ - bi - yu  
thing - this lift - REQ - COM  
'please carry this thing (for me).'

**III. Suggestive Aspectual Action:**

It denotes the speaker's suggestion over an event. When the benefactive suffix –bi occurs with intentive marker -ge it indicates the meaning of suggestive aspectual action. The speaker performs the action just immediately after the utterance or action to be taken after some time. For example:

12. əy layrik - tu pa - bi - ge  
I book - the read - BEN - INTEN  
'I will read the book (for you).'

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 1 January 2012

P. Madhubala, Ph.D.

The Role of the Suffix '- bi' in Manipuri

13. əy baltin - du t<sup>h</sup>aŋ - bi - ge  
 I bucket - the lift - BEN - INTEN  
 'I will carry the bucket (for you).'

14. əy cak t<sup>h</sup>oŋ - bi - ge  
 I rice cook - BEN -INTEN  
 'I will cook the rice (for you).'

#### IV. Capability:

It denotes the speaker's ability of doing or facing the circumstances. Here, the speaker is using extensive referential clues in order to show the capability of doing or facing the circumstances. For example:

15. ka -du mi cəŋ -bə ki -nəy ədubu əy - di tum - bi - ge  
 room -the man enter - NZR fear -RECI but I -EMPH sleep - BEN - INTEN  
 'Everybody afraid the room but I can sleep (there) in.'

16. əy puk - ti t<sup>h</sup>al - le ədubu lem - də -nə - bə ca - bi - ge  
 I stomach full - PERF but left over -NEG -CAU -NMZ eat - BEN - INTEN  
 'My stomach is full but I can eat for not to left over.'

17. nəŋ wa - rəm mənɪ ədunə əy p<sup>h</sup>i - du su -bi - ge  
 you tire - past - COMP so I cloth - the wash - BEN - INTEN  
 'You must be tired so I can wash the cloth (for you).'

#### V. Less polite and self possession:

When the request suffix -bi occurs with command negative marker, it also denotes less polite and self-possession. There is some kind of irritation on the part of the speaker. In order to reduce the degree of his rudeness to the hearer or action doer. For example:

18. əy - gi pot pay - bi - nu  
 I - of thing hold - REQ -COM NEG  
 'Don't touch my belongings.'

19. əy - gi p<sup>hi</sup> sok - pi -nu  
I - of cloth touch - REQ - COM NEG  
'Don't touch my cloth.'

20. əy - gi wa ŋaŋ - bi -nu  
I of word speak - REQ - COM NEG  
'Don't speak about me.'

#### **VI. Doubtful and uncertainty action:**

It denotes the speaker's assumption of a doubtful and uncertainty action over an event. When the request marker -bi occurs with the interrogative marker -bra, it indicates the meaning of an assumption of a doubtful and uncertainty action which was performed already. For example:

21. ma -nə ya - bi - bra  
he - AG agree - BEN - INTR  
'Did he accept?'

22. ma - nə ta - bi - bra  
he -AG. listen - BEN - INTR  
'Did he listen (to go)?'

23. ma -nə ŋaŋ - bi - bra  
he - AG speak - BEN - INTR  
'Did he speak (the matter)?'

24. nəŋ yaw - bi -bra  
you join - BEN -INTR  
'Did you join?'

#### **VII. Persuasive:**

It denotes the speaker's persuasion to induce the hearer to do the action immediately. When the request marker -bi occurs with persuasive marker -ro, it indicates the meaning of persuasion to the hearer to do the action immediately. For example:

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12 : 1 January 2012

P. Madhubala, Ph.D.

The Role of the Suffix '- bi' in Manipuri

25. somdə leŋ - bi - ro  
direction move -REQ - PRSU  
'Please go this way'
26. cep - pi - ro  
sleep - REQ - PRSU  
'Please do sleep'
27. ca -bi - ro  
eat -REQ -PRSU  
'Please eat'
28. hay - bi -ro  
speak -REQ - PRSU  
'Please speak (immediately).'

### Conclusion:

The present paper attempts to cast the different functions of -bi suffix which is highly complicated to demonstrate not only in Manipuri Grammar but also in dictionary. Manipuri grammarians used to examine the functions of Manipuri suffixes which are extensively extended with different functions denoting upon its environments.

### Abbreviations:

AG	'agentive'
ASP	'aspect'
BEN	'benefactive'
CAU	'causative'
COM	'command'
COMP	'completive'
COP	'copula'
EMPH	'emphasis'
INTEN	'intensive'
INTR	'interrogative'
NMZ	'nominalizer'
PERF	'perfective'
PRSU	'persuasive'
RECI	'reciprocal'

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 1 January 2012

P. Madhubala, Ph.D.

The Role of the Suffix '- bi' in Manipuri

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