Manipur Kinship Terms

Manipur kinship terms may be studied in the following ways.

Kinship terms in Manipuri are bound in nature. As they express kinship relationships between two persons pronominal prefixes are always attached to them to make a free word. Manipuri has three pronominal prefixes to indicate three types of persons as – i- “first person”, n- ‘second person” and m-“third person”.

Manipur kin terms signifies the following points

a. Sex of the person addressed or/and referred to.

b. Sex of the linking relative and

c. Sex of the ego.

All these three points are equally significant in the study of Manipuri kinship terms.

Reference terms indicating different kin relations have different forms based on the sex ego. The word for younger brother in Manipuri has two forms depending on the male and female ego. \( m\text{\`a}n\text{\`a}u nupa \) is for a male ego while \( \text{\`m\`a}\text{\`u}pw\text{\`a} \) – \( \text{\`m\`a}\text{\`u}pw\text{\`a} nupa \) for a female ego. Words indicating male and female (nupa ‘male’ and nupi ‘female’) are added to the kin terms whenever the particular term cannot specify the sex of the kinsmen. For example, the bound forms –\( c\text{\`a} \) ‘child’, - \( \text{\`n\`a}u \) ‘younger brother of a male ego or younger sister of a female ego’, -\( \text{\`s\`u} \) ‘grand child’, etc. cannot specify the sex of the kinsmen. Nupa ‘male’ and nupi ‘female’ are always attached to them to differentiate the sex of the addressee or referred to. It may be mentioned that m- ‘generalized prefix’ is added to the bound forms to make a free word. Thus m\( \text{\`m\`a}c\text{\`a} nupa \) indicates ‘son’ while m\( \text{\`m\`a}c\text{\`a} nupi \) ‘daughter’, m\( \text{\`m\`a}n\text{\`a}u nupa \) refers to three kinship relations as (a) younger sister’s husband of a female ego, (b) younger brother of a male ego and (c) husband’s younger brother. Similarly, m\( \text{\`m\`a}n\text{\`a}u nupi \) has also three reference terms as (a) younger sister of a female ego, (b) younger brother’s wife of a male ego and (c) wife’s younger sister. To indicate the sex of a grand child m\( \text{\`m\`u} \text{\`s\`u} nupa \) ‘grandson’ and m\( \text{\`m\`u} \text{\`s\`u} nupi \) ‘grand daughter’ are used.

It may be observed the addition of nupa and nupi is not only used for distinguishing the sex of the kinsmen but also found attached to the kin terms referring to younger addressee. For example, m\( \text{\`m\`a}n\text{\`a}u \) can optionally take the word nupi as m\( \text{\`m\`a}n\text{\`a}u nupi \) which also refers to three kinship relations: (a) daughter-in-law, (b) elder/younger brother’s daughter of a female ego and (c) younger/elder sister’s daughter of a male ego.

Another point to be noted is that to show respect to the addressee (both in elder and younger) the following word ibu (i-is optionally deleted in address term) ‘male’ and ibemm (i- is optionally deleted in address term) ‘female’ are added both in reference and address terms. For example, the word for ‘grandmother’ is m\( \text{\`m\`a}b\text{\`o}k \text{\`m\`a}b\text{\`o}k \text{\`i}b\text{\`e}m\text{\`m\`a} \) which is for reference term and while address term is \( \text{\`m\`a}b\text{\`o}k \text{\`m\`a}b\text{\`o}k \text{\`i}b\text{\`e}m\text{\`m\`a} \). For a younger addressee the reference term for younger brother of a male ego may be m\( \text{\`m\`a}n\text{\`a}u \text{\`m\`a}n\text{\`a}uib\text{\`u} \) while the address term will be inau–inauib\text{\`u}.

It has been observed that Manipuri kinship terms are based on sex ego only in the
The kinship terms for ascending generations that of parents and grandparents are not based on sex ego thereby using common terms. For example, *mama* ‘mother’ does not have two different forms based on male and female ego whereas word for elder brother has two different words like *majamba* ‘elder brother of male ego’ and *mabuŋ* ‘elder brother of female ego’. Some more examples are illustrated below:

Common in reference term

- **mama** mother
- **mapa** father
- **mamabok** mother’s elder sister/ father’s elder brother’s wife
- **mandomca** mother’s younger sister/father’s younger brother’s wife
- **mapan** father’s elder brother/mother’s elder sister’s husband
- **maton** paternal uncle/ mother’s younger sister’s husband
- **mamau** maternal uncle/ father’s sister’s husband/ brother’s wife’s father
- **mane** paternal aunt/mother’s brother’s wife
- **manembok** mother-in-law
- **makubok** father-in-law
- **mabok** grand mother

**mapu-mapubok**

grandfather

The reference terms mentioned above have their corresponding address terms also. For instance, the address term for mother is *ima* ‘my mother’, *nana* ‘your mother’ and *mama* ‘his/her mother’. The address term for elder brother is *tada, tamo, tachou* (eldest brother) for both male and female ego. Word for elder sister is also common for both male and female ego i.e. *ice* ‘my elder sister’, *nace* ‘your elder sister’ and *mace* ‘his/her elder sister’. In this context, it may be noted that the pronominal prefixes are not attached to some kinship terms which are not indigenous Manipuri words such as *tado* ‘elder brother’, *mamau* ‘maternal uncle’.

The kinship relation of the ego’s generation referring to the preceding generation is not based on the sex ego as shown in the above examples. On the other hand, while referring to the ego’s generation by the preceding generation the male and female ego is taken into account. The kinship relationship of father’s sister to a female will be *mama–mamaunupi* and for a male it will be *mayanupa*.

The attachment of *i-* (first person pronominal prefix) to a kin term referring to a second/third person shows the expression of politeness or respect towards the addressee. For example, *naggi ima* ‘your mother’ *mabakki ima* ‘his/her mother’ is a respect form which shows that the speaker is polite towards the addressee. It may also be referred to a
younger addressee showing politeness or in a formal situation e.g. while talking in a television show or radio talk. Address forms like naγi nama-nama shows the rudeness of the speaker towards the addressee even if the later is younger.

One particular kinship term may have even six kinship relations of either paternal or maternal except ‘father’ and ‘mother’. For example, mabai ‘elder brother-in-law of a male ego’ has five kinship references as (a) elder sister’s husband (b) father’s sister’s son (elder to the speaker) (c) wife’s elder brother, (d) mother’s brother’s son (elder to the speaker), (e) daughter-in-law’s father (elder to the speaker) and (f) daughter’s father in-law (elder to the speaker).

The word masen ‘younger brother-in-law of a male ego’ has the same kinship references as (a) younger sister’s husband (b) father’s sister’s son (younger to the speaker) (c) wife’s younger brother, (d) mother’s brother’s son (younger to the speaker), (e) daughter-in-law’s father (younger to the speaker) and (f) daughter’s father in-law (younger to the speaker).

Both the above terms mabai and masen shows cross-cousin reference.

One may use ibai, nabai or mabai as address term while in case of masen only the reference term retains. The reason behind this is because of the younger age of the addressee and in such cases people address name of the person referred to.

List of the kinship relations of the existing generation.

**Elder male ego**

majamba – ‘elder brother, wife’s elder sister’s husband, mother’s sister’s son’

mabai – ‘elder sister’s husband, father’s sister’s son (elder to the speaker), wife’s elder brother, mother’s brother’s son (elder to the speaker), daughter-in-law’s father (elder to the speaker), daughter’s father-in-law (elder to the speaker)’

mace – ‘elder sister’s, wife’s elder brother’s wife’s, mother’s sister’s daughter, daughter-in-laws mother of a male ego’

mataima – ‘elder brother’s wife, wife’s elder sister, father’s sister’s daughter, mother’s brother’s daughter’

**Younger male ego**

manaunup a – ‘younger brother, wife’s younger sister’s husband, mother’s sister’s son’

masen – younger sister’s husband, father’s sister’s son (younger to the speaker), wife’s younger brother, mother’s brother’s son (younger to the speaker), daughter-in-law’s father (younger to the speaker), daughter’s father in-law (younger to the speaker)’
mæcan–mæcanupi – younger sister, mother’s sister’s daughter, daughter-in-law’s mother, daughter’s mother-in-law

manaunupi – ‘younger brother’s wife, wife’s younger sister, father’s sister’s daughter, mother’s brother’s sister’

**Elder female ego**

mæpuroiβa- ‘husband’

mæce - ‘elder sister, mother’s sister’s daughter, father’s brother’s daughter, husband’s elder brother’s wife, mother’s brother’s son’s wife, father’s sister’s son’s wife’

mænæμma - ‘elder brother’s wife, father’s sister’s daughter, mother’s brother’s daughter, daughter-in-law’s mother of a female ego, daughter’s mother-in-law’

mæbuŋ - ‘elder brother, mother’s sister’s son, father’s brother’s son, daughter’s father-in-law of a female ego, daughter-in-law’s father’

mætai – ‘husband’s elder brother, sister’s husband, father’s sister’s son, mother’s brother’s son’

**Younger female ego**

mæupwa–mæupwanupa – ‘younger brother, mother’s sister’s son, husband’s sister’s husband, father’s brother’s son, daughter’s father-in-law of a female ego, daughter-in-law’s father’

mænaunupa – ‘husband’s brother, sister’s husband, father’s sister’s son, mother’s brother’s son’

mænaunupi – ‘younger sister, father’s brother’s daughter, husband’s sister, mother’s brother’s daughter’

mæcanupi – ‘younger brother’s wife, husband’s sister, father’s sister’s son, mother’s brother daughter’

**Descending generation**

**Male ego**

mæcanupa – ‘son, brother’s son’

mæcanupi – ‘daughter, brother’s daughter’

mæmak – ‘daughter’s husband, sister’s son, son’s wife’s brother’
mamau – ‘son’s wife, sister’s daughter, son’s wife’s sister’

masunupa – ‘grandson’

masunupi – ‘granddaughter’

Female ego

macanupa – ‘son, sister’s son’

macanupi – ‘daughter, sister’s daughter’

majanupa – ‘daughter’s husband, brother’s son’

mamau – ‘son’s wife, brother’s daughter’

masunupa – ‘grandson’

masunupi – ‘granddaughter’

Ascending generation

There is no distinction in male and female ego in case of ascending generations. They are illustrated below:

Elder

mama – ‘mother’

mapa – ‘father’

mamabok – ‘mother’s sister, father’s brother’s wife’

mapan – ‘father’s brother’

makubok – ‘husband’s/wife’s father’

mambok – ‘husband’s/wife’s mother’

mane – ‘father’s sister, mother’s brother’s wife, brother’s wife’s mother, sister’s husbands mother’

mama – ‘mother’s brother, father’s sister’s husband, brother’s wife’s father, sister’s husband’s father’

mandon – ‘father’s brother’s wife, mother’s sister’