

## Lesson 3

*Nominal system: general introduction – gender – number – absolutive, ergative, genitive, and locative cases*

**The nominal system of Classical Newari** has the categories gender, number, and case. Whereas gender and number are confined to the nominal system, case markers are a regular feature of the verb system as well, where they play a central role in the formation of converbs. 25

**Gender.** While no distinction is made between masculine, feminine, and/or neuter nouns, there is a clear morphological distinction between (1) inanimate, (2) animate/non-honorific, and (3) animate/honorific nouns (as in Modern Newari); this distinction manifests itself primarily in the use of different plural markers and different case markers for the ergative/instrumental and locative cases. 26

NB – The distinction between “honorific” and “non-honorific” should be taken with a grain of salt; in Modern Newari, the semantic difference does lie in the honorific degree, but according to Jørgensen, the difference between the two categories in Classical Newari is purely etymological, the “honorific” nouns being Sanskrit loans. For either interpretation there are examples and counter-examples, but it seems that Sanskrit loans generally tended to be reclassified as honorifics.

**Number.** There are two numbers, singular and plural. While inanimate nouns are not morphologically marked for plural number, there are different sets of markers for animate/non-honorific and animate/honorific nouns and pronouns respectively, which are given in *tab. 5*. There is generally a marked asymmetry in the number of attested cases for singular and plural (see below). 27

**Tab. 5: Plural markers**

	<i>Inanimate</i>	<i>Animate/ non-honorific</i>	<i>Animate/ honorific</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>
<i>Absolutive case</i>	{-∅}	{-ta} ~ {-to}	{-pani}	{-pani}
<i>“Oblique” cases</i>	{-∅}	{-ta}	{-pani}	{-mi}

NB – The animate/non-honorific plural marker {-ta} is frequently spelt <to> (but rarely in the “oblique” cases). Inanimate nouns can be marked for plural with Skr. loans like **s(a)kalā**, **samastā** “all” placed after the noun.

<b>che</b> “house”	<b>(che-skalā)</b> (“all the houses”)	<b>rājā</b> “king”	<b>rājā-pani</b> “kings”
<b>khicā</b> “dog”	<b>khicā-ta</b> “dogs”	<b>thwo</b> “he/she/it”	<b>thwo-pani</b> “they”

- 28 **Case.** The number of cases in Classical Newari is a matter of some debate; Jørgensen posited the existence of eight different cases (nominative, agentive, genitive, dative, locative, ablative, instrumental, sociative, and directive). The view taken here is that in any given paradigm, six “core” cases can be distinguished: absolutive, ergative/instrumental, genitive, dative, locative, and sociative.
- 29 **Absolutive case:** Newari being an ergative language, the argument of an intransitive/non-controlled VP and the patient of a transitive/controlled VP are both marked for absolutive case (see above); the case marker is {-Ø} in all genders and numbers. The absolutive case also functions as a vocative.

<b>che-Ø</b> “house”	<b>(che-skalā-Ø)</b> (“all the houses”)	<b>rājā-Ø</b> “king”	<b>rājā-pani-Ø</b> “kings”
<b>khicā-Ø</b> “dog”	<b>khicā-ta-Ø</b> “dogs”	<b>thwo-Ø</b> “he/she/it”	<b>thwo-pani-Ø</b> “they”

- 30 **Ergative/instrumental case:** On semantic grounds, it can be argued that only nouns and pronouns with animate reference can be marked for ergative case, whereas nouns with inanimate reference can only be marked for instrumental case. There are two allomorphs {-sē} (*var.* {-sen}) and {-n} (the latter two invariably spelt <sena> and <na>). Inanimate and animate/non-honorific nouns usually take {-n}, whereas animate/honorific nouns can be marked in the singular with either {-sē} or {-n} (with a clear preponderance of the latter). Plural animate/honorific nouns always take {-sē}. Personal pronouns usually take {-n} in the singular and {-sē} in the plural – with the exception of the HGH 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun **chalpol**, which always takes {-sē}.

Tab. 6: Ergative/instrumental case markers

	<i>Inanimate</i>	<i>Animate/ non-honorific</i>	<i>Animate/ honorific</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>
<i>Singular</i>	{-n}	{-n}	{-n}, {-sē}	{-n}
<i>Plural</i>	—	{-sē}	{-sē}	{-sē}
<b>che-n</b> “with the house”			<b>rājā-n, rājā-sē</b> “by the king”	<b>rājā-pani-sē</b> “by the kings”
<b>khicā-n</b> “by the dog”	<b>khicā-ta-sē</b> “by the dogs”		<b>thwo-n</b> “by him/her/it”	<b>thwo-pani-sē</b> “by them”

The most important function of the ergative/instrumental case is to mark the agent in a transitive sentence with a controlled verb.

(3.1) *rājā-n se-∅ bil-ā.*

“The king gave a fruit.”

(3.2) *mantriputra-n lhāl-ā.*

“The minister’s son spoke.”

**Genitive case:** The genitive case marker is {-yā} in the singular and {-s} (mostly spelt <sa>) in the plural; animate/honorific nouns occasionally take {-s} in the singular as well. In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, the genitive is usually marked by {-∅} in the singular, with the exception of the HGH 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun **chalpol**, which takes either {-yā} or {-s}.

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<b>che-yā</b> “of the house”		<b>rājā-yā, rājā-s</b> “of the king”	<b>rājā-pani-s</b> “of the kings”
<b>khicā-yā</b> “of the dog”	<b>khicā-ta-s</b> “of the dogs”	<b>thwo-yā</b> “his/her/its”	<b>thwo-pani-s</b> “their”
<b>je-∅</b> “my”	<b>je-pani-∅, je-mi-s</b> “our”		

The genitive case indicates possession; in sentences with nominal predicate, it can express the notion “to have”:

(3.3) थ्वया पुत्री जे ।

**thwo-yā putrī-Ø je-Ø.**

“I am *his* daughter.”

(3.4) जे पुत्र अती जुबाल ।

**je-Ø putra-Ø ati jubāla-Ø.**

“*My* son is a terrible gambler.”

(3.5) ओया काय धनदत्त नाम ।

**wo-yā kāya dhanadatta nām-Ø.**

“*He had* a son called Dhanadatta.”

32 **Locative case:** The locative case marker is {-s} (invariably spelt <sa>) for inanimate and animate/non-honorific nouns; animate/honorific nouns take the allomorph {-ke} added to the genitive case marker. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns (with the exception of **chalpol**) take the same allomorph, but added directly to the stem. In the plural, the locative case marker (allomorph {-ke}) is only attested for animate/honorific nouns and for pronouns.

<b>che-s</b> “in the house”	<b>rājā-yā-ke</b> “concerning the king”	<b>rājā-pani-s-ke</b> “concerning the kings”	<b>je-ke</b> “concerning me”
<b>khicā-s</b> “concerning the dog”	<b>thwo-yā-ke</b> “concerning him/her/it”	<b>thwo-pani-s-ke</b> “concerning them”	<b>je-mi-s-ke</b> “concerning us”

The primary function of the locative case is to express location or direction. With animate nouns, the locative case can also express possession, and mark the addressee of certain (but not all) *verba dicendi*.

(3.6) गंगातीरस पातरीपुत्र नाम नगर दस्यं चोड ।

**gaṅgāṭīra-s pāṭaliputra nām nagara-Ø da-sē coṅ-a.**

“*On the banks of the Gaṅgā*, there was a city called Pāṭaliputra.”

(3.7) कापालिक दक्षिणस्मानस वनः ।

**kāpālika-Ø dakṣiṇasmasāna-s won-ā.**

“The kāpālika went *to the southern cremation ground*.”

- (3.8) ओयाके विचित्र सारिका सौपर्णिका नाम ।  
**wo-yāke bicitra sārikā sauparṇikā nām-Ø.**  
 “She had (with her) a beautiful mynah bird called Sauparṇikā.”
- (3.9) छन्हुया क्षनस सुकन सालिकायाके ल्हालं ।  
**cha-nhu-yā kṣaṇa-s śuka-n sārikā-yāke lhāl-ā.**  
 “One day, the parrot spoke to the mynah bird.”

### Exercise 3

Identify the underlined words by number, case, and gender with the aid of the glossary; translations of the sentences are given in the key to the exercises.

- 1) राजास्यं कापालिक आदेश बिरं ।  
**rājāsē kāpālika ādeśa bilā.**
- 2) थ्व बेरस राजासके धारं ।  
**thwo belas rājāske dhālā.**
- 3) राजानं कृष्णचतुर्दशी कुन्हुया रात्रीस खड्ग जोडाव याकातं मेवन म खानकं स्मसानस कापालिकया समीपस बिज्याक ।  
**rājānā kṛṣṇacaturdaśī kunhuyā rātrīs khadga jonāwo yākatā mewon ma khānakā śmaśāṇaṣ kāpālikayā samīpaṣ bijyāka.**
- 4) थ्व खं डेडाव मन्त्रीपुत्रन राजकुमारयाके ल्हालं ।  
**thwo khā ṇēnāwo mantriputran rājakumārāyāke lhālā.**
- 5) छन्हुया क्षनस पद्मावतीन राजपुत्रयाके डेनें ।  
**chanhuyā kṣaṇaṣ padmābatīn rājaputrayāke ṇenā.**
- 6) थ्वगुली खंस राजा बिक्रमादित्यया बोहोलस चोड बेतालन राजायाके सेयकलं ।  
**thwoguli khāṣ rājā bikramādityayā boholaṣ coṇa betālan rājāyāke seyakalā.**

### Notes

- 3) **rājānā: {-ā}** is an emphatic marker – “the king (himself)”, “the king (and no one else)”, “as for the king, ...”, “the king”, see § 74 below.

