

Bhawana Upadhyay

## Gender Perspective in Nepali Language

Women in Nepal find themselves in a vicious circle that drives the discrimination against their gender. Their generally low status means they have no access to and control over productive resources. Their lack of decision-making capacity deprives them of all kinds of power and starts the cycle of lower socio-political status and discrimination. This discrimination is also indicated in the usages of the Nepali language. In a patriarchal society like Nepal, women are considered as subordinates to men and the expressions, words and gestures used for them do not usually command any respect.

As explained above, due to patriarchal mindset, most often women regardless of their age are addressed as **Bahini** whereas males are always called **Sir**, which is an English word and demonstrates special respect.

*Sir = use for man regardless of his age or position*

*Bahini = younger sister = Bahini, meaning younger sister is used instead of Madam for women regardless of their age and positions*

*For example: Hajur = your highness (used with high respect)*

*Tapai = you (with respect)*

*Timi = equal treatment (usually used for friends)*

*Ta = used for someone whom you disrespect (this is usually used for a woman, lower caste person, helper, younger person, etc)*

In Nepalese society, most often we use *Hajur* to address our husbands with high respect but husbands never use *Hajur* to call their wives. They usually use *Ta* to address their wives.

Likewise, the word **Rastrapati** has been seen as controversial by some activists. The real meaning of **Rastrapati** is the President. The prefix –**Pati** means husband is Nepali. So the argument was about why use the word **Pati**, after **Rastra**, which means nation. There was also a demand from few activists that President in Nepali should be translated into common gender. The associated prefix – **Pati** represents the patriarchal mindset of Nepali society. The activists argue that this indicates that woman can never become the President.

Likewise, the age-old proverbs and songs are also known for dominating and discriminating against women.