Online Seminar on the Occasion of *Matribhasha Diwas*

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Life of a Mother-Tongue: Counting Bhojpuri in Bihar

**Abstract**

This paper would take a look at the life of Bhojpuri after its official entry in decennial censuses as a dialect/mother-tongue variety. I specifically attend to census records post-independence to understand the inconsistencies of language classification and its consequences on Bhojpuri. I argue that official reproduction of Bhojpuri as a mere ‘variety’ of a language placed it within a language-dialect hierarchy. Though experts have shifted their position on language-dialect relationship, this has not changed well-drawn conventions in the Census exercise. One finds an ambiguous persistence of language-dialect distinctions. However, the Census also bears witness to the growing and consistent demographic significance of Bhojpuri, especially in Bihar. I argue that this growth has unsettled the delicate management of Hindi-Bhojpuri relations.

Monday, 21 February, 7PM

All are welcome to attend.