


RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION IN BHOJPURI LITERATURE: A DISCOURSE-ANALYTICAL STUDY OF HINDU NARRATIVE TRADITIONS

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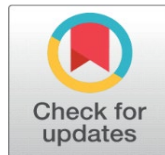
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ABSTRACT

This study examines Bhojpuri literature as a significant medium of religious communication through which Hindu beliefs, values, and narrative traditions are transmitted and sustained in everyday social life. It aims to understand how vernacular literary forms function as communicative practices that translate complex Hindu philosophical concepts into accessible, lived experiences. The research adopts a qualitative discourse-analytical approach. Selected Bhojpuri folk songs, devotional compositions, birha traditions, and lok-kathas containing Hindu religious themes were analyzed to identify recurring narrative patterns, symbolic structures, and communicative strategies. The analysis focuses on language use, metaphor, dialogic narration, and performative contexts to examine how religious meaning is constructed and circulated within community settings.

The findings reveal that Bhojpuri religious narratives communicate Hindu concepts such as dharma, karma, and bhakti through localized storytelling, emotional engagement, and culturally embedded metaphors rather than formal theological exposition. These narratives humanize divinity, encourage participatory interpretation, and integrate religious ethics into everyday life, thereby reinforcing collective religious consciousness and cultural continuity. The study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship in communication studies, religious studies, and cultural sociology by foregrounding vernacular literature as a vital site of religious communication. It challenges scripture-centric models of religious transmission and highlights the role of indigenous narrative traditions within Indian Knowledge Systems, offering a discourse-oriented framework for analyzing lived and popular forms of Hindu religiosity.

Keywords: Bhojpuri Literature, Religious Communication, Hindu Narratives, Discourse Analysis, Vernacular Culture



1. INTRODUCTION

Religion, across cultures and historical periods, has depended fundamentally on communication for its continuity and social relevance. Sacred ideas are not sustained solely through canonical scriptures but through narratives, symbols, rituals, and performative practices that circulate within communities and shape shared meanings [Ricoeur \(1981\)](#). In this sense, religion operates as a communicative system in which belief is produced, interpreted, and lived through language and cultural expression [Asad \(1993\)](#).

In the Indian context, the transmission of religious knowledge has historically occurred through vernacular and oral traditions alongside classical textual sources. Regional literatures have played a crucial role in translating philosophical and ethical concepts of Hinduism into accessible forms rooted in everyday life [Pollock \(2006\)](#). Bhojpuri literature, emerging from the socio-cultural landscape of eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar, represents a significant yet underexplored site of such vernacular religious communication. Its literary expressions—manifested in folk songs, devotional compositions, birha, lok-kathas, and ritual narratives—are deeply embedded in oral performance and communal participation.

Unlike formal theological discourse, Bhojpuri religious narratives do not emphasize doctrinal exposition. Instead, they communicate Hindu concepts such as dharma, karma, bhakti, and moral duty through emotionally resonant storytelling and culturally familiar metaphors. Deities like Rama, Krishna, and Shiva are portrayed not as distant transcendental figures but as relational and approachable presences, reflecting what scholars describe as “lived religion,” where faith is experienced through everyday practices rather than institutional authority [Orsi \(2003\)](#). Through this process, Bhojpuri literature humanizes the sacred and integrates religious ethics into social life.

From a communication studies perspective, Bhojpuri literature can be understood as a form of grassroots religious media that enables participatory meaning-making. Its oral and performative nature encourages dialogue, repetition, and collective interpretation, transforming audiences into active participants in religious communication [Narayan \(1995\)](#). These narratives thus function not only as cultural artifacts but as dynamic communicative events that sustain religious memory and identity.

Despite its cultural significance, Bhojpuri literature remains marginal within mainstream academic discussions on religious communication and discourse analysis. Existing scholarship has largely focused on classical texts or institutional forms of religion, often overlooking vernacular traditions as legitimate sites of meaning production. This study seeks to address this gap by examining Bhojpuri literature as a communicative system through which Hindu religious narratives are articulated, negotiated, and transmitted.

By employing discourse analysis, the paper investigates how language, narrative structures, symbolism, and performance in Bhojpuri literature construct religious meaning within specific social contexts [Fairclough \(1995\)](#). In doing so, it contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship by situating Bhojpuri literary traditions within broader debates on communication, lived religion, and Indian Knowledge Systems.

2. BHOJPURI LITERATURE AS A VERNACULAR RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Bhojpuri literature constitutes a significant vernacular tradition through which religious meanings are articulated and circulated at the grassroots level. Unlike classical or standardized literary forms, Bhojpuri literary expressions emerge from everyday social practices and are closely tied to oral performance, collective memory, and community life. Within this tradition, religion is not communicated as abstract doctrine but as lived experience, embedded in the rhythms of agrarian life, family relations, festivals, and ritual practices [Narayan \(1995\)](#).

The religious dimension of Bhojpuri literature is most visible in its diverse oral genres, including devotional songs, birha, sohar, kajari, and lok-kathas. These genres function as informal yet powerful channels of Hindu religious communication, enabling the transmission of ethical values, mythological narratives, and devotional sentiments across generations. The prominence of orality allows these narratives to remain fluid and adaptive, responding to changing social contexts while preserving core religious meanings. Such adaptability aligns with broader understandings of vernacular religion as dynamic rather than static [Orsi \(2003\)](#).

Hindu deities and mythological figures occupy a central place in Bhojpuri religious narratives. Figures such as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, and various regional and folk deities are represented in ways that emphasize moral conduct, emotional

intimacy, and social responsibility. Rather than portraying divinity as distant or inaccessible, Bhojpuri literature situates the divine within familiar social relationships—such as those between parent and child, lover and beloved, or ruler and subject—thereby making religious ideals comprehensible and emotionally engaging. This narrative strategy facilitates what can be described as the vernacularization of Hindu theology Pollock (2006).

The communicative power of Bhojpuri religious literature lies in its ability to integrate sacred narratives with everyday language and symbolism. Agricultural metaphors, seasonal cycles, and domestic imagery are frequently employed to convey philosophical ideas related to karma, dharma, and devotion. Through such culturally grounded symbolism, religious communication becomes accessible without the need for formal religious instruction, reinforcing the idea that faith is learned through participation rather than textual authority Asad (1993).

Importantly, Bhojpuri literature functions as a collective cultural resource rather than an individual literary pursuit. Performances during festivals, life-cycle rituals, and communal gatherings transform religious narratives into shared communicative events. These performances strengthen social bonds and reinforce collective identity, ensuring the continuity of religious traditions through repetition and communal engagement Hymes (1974). In this way, Bhojpuri literature exemplifies a vernacular religious tradition where communication, culture, and belief are deeply intertwined.

By recognizing Bhojpuri literature as a legitimate and complex form of religious communication, this study challenges hierarchical distinctions between “classical” and “folk” traditions. It underscores the importance of vernacular cultural forms in sustaining Hindu religious life and contributes to a broader understanding of how religion is communicated, negotiated, and lived within indigenous knowledge systems.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates religious **communication theory** with **discourse analysis**, providing a lens to examine Bhojpuri literature as a dynamic medium of meaning-making. Rather than viewing religion solely as a system of beliefs or doctrines, this approach treats religion as a communicative practice, in which sacred meanings are produced, interpreted, and negotiated through language, narrative, and performance within cultural contexts Asad (1993).

Religious communication theory emphasizes that symbols, stories, and rituals are central to transmitting and sustaining religious meaning. Such communication is not merely about information transfer but involves **symbolic interaction, emotional engagement, and ethical interpretation**, allowing communities to collectively understand moral and spiritual principles Ricoeur (1981). In vernacular traditions like Bhojpuri literature, religious concepts such as dharma, karma, and bhakti are expressed through storytelling and culturally grounded metaphors rather than through formal theological exposition, reflecting what Orsi (2003) describes as “lived religion,” where faith is enacted in everyday life rather than mediated solely by institutions.

Discourse analysis provides the methodological and conceptual tools to examine these communicative processes. By focusing on language, narrative structure, metaphor, dialogic interaction, and performative context, discourse analysis allows researchers to understand how meaning is constructed, stabilized, and transformed within social and cultural settings Fairclough (1995). In the context of Bhojpuri literature, discourse analysis highlights how oral narratives, song structures, and performative cues shape the audience’s understanding of religious ideals while maintaining adaptability across time and social settings Narayan (1995), Hymes (1974).

By integrating religious communication and discourse-analytical perspectives, this theoretical framework positions Bhojpuri literature as a vernacular communicative system. It emphasizes how narratives not only convey Hindu religious knowledge but also engage communities, foster ethical reflection, and sustain cultural memory. This approach situates vernacular literature at the intersection of religion, communication, and culture, contributing both to interdisciplinary scholarship in communication studies and to the understanding of Indian Knowledge Systems.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in discourse analysis to examine Bhojpuri literature as a form of religious communication. A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring meaning-making processes, symbolic representations, and narrative practices that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods.

The study is interpretive in nature, focusing on how Hindu religious meanings are constructed, communicated, and internalized through vernacular literary forms embedded in oral and performative traditions.

The research is positioned within cultural and interpretive paradigms of communication studies, where texts are understood as socially situated practices rather than isolated linguistic artifacts. Bhojpuri religious literature is therefore treated as communicative discourse shaped by historical, cultural, and social contexts [Fairclough \(1995\)](#).

4.2. DATA SOURCES AND CORPUS SELECTION

The primary data for this study consist of selected Bhojpuri folk songs, devotional compositions (bhajans), birha narratives, and lok-kathas that contain explicit Hindu religious themes. These genres were selected due to their widespread circulation, performative relevance, and sustained presence in religious and cultural life. Texts associated with major Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, and regional folk deities were prioritized to ensure thematic consistency.

The corpus was compiled from a combination of published anthologies of Bhojpuri folk literature, documented oral narratives, and transcribed performance texts available in secondary scholarly sources. Selection criteria included cultural popularity, narrative richness, and the presence of identifiable religious symbolism. This purposive sampling strategy aligns with qualitative research practices that emphasize depth and contextual relevance over representativeness [Hymes \(1974\)](#).

4.3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROCEDURE

The analysis follows a multi-stage discourse-analytical procedure. First, the selected texts were read and coded thematically to identify recurring religious concepts such as dharma, karma, bhakti, suffering, moral duty, and divine-human relationships. Second, linguistic and narrative features—including metaphor, repetition, dialogic structure, and symbolic imagery—were examined to understand how religious meanings are constructed and communicated.

Third, attention was given to performative and contextual elements, including references to ritual settings, communal participation, and emotional expression. This stage of analysis recognizes that Bhojpuri literature functions within an oral-performative ecology where meaning is co-produced by performers and audiences [Narayan \(1995\)](#). The analytical process was iterative, allowing themes and interpretations to be refined through repeated engagement with the data.

4.4. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ANALYTICAL RIGOR

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, multiple strategies were employed. Triangulation was achieved by analyzing different genres of Bhojpuri religious literature and cross-referencing interpretations with existing scholarly literature on vernacular religion and oral traditions. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the analysis by acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role and cultural positioning in relation to the texts [Ricoeur \(1981\)](#).

Thick description was used to contextualize narrative excerpts and symbolic patterns, enabling readers to assess the plausibility and transferability of the findings. While the study does not aim for statistical generalization, it seeks analytical generalization by contributing theoretical insights applicable to other vernacular and indigenous religious traditions [Asad \(1993\)](#).

4.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The study is limited by its reliance on documented texts rather than live ethnographic observation of performances. As a result, certain contextual nuances related to audience interaction and regional variation may not be fully captured. Additionally, the interpretive nature of discourse analysis means that findings are shaped by analytical perspective. Nevertheless, these limitations are balanced by the depth of textual and contextual analysis, making the methodology suitable for exploring religious communication in vernacular literary traditions.

5. NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN BHOJPURI HINDU TEXTS

Bhojpuri Hindu texts employ distinctive narrative strategies that enable complex religious ideas to be communicated through simple, emotionally resonant storytelling. Rather than presenting theology in abstract or

doctrinal terms, these narratives are structured around everyday experiences such as separation, longing, suffering, moral dilemma, and devotion. This narrative grounding allows Hindu philosophical concepts to be internalized as lived realities, aligning with the communicative logic of vernacular religion [Orsi \(2003\)](#).

5.1. DIALOGIC STORYTELLING AND PARTICIPATORY MEANING-MAKING

One of the most prominent narrative strategies in Bhojpuri religious literature is dialogic storytelling. Narratives frequently unfold through conversations between divine and human characters, family members, or community voices. This dialogic form reduces hierarchical distance between the sacred and the secular, allowing listeners to engage with religious narratives as participants rather than passive recipients. From a discourse-analytic perspective, dialogue functions as a mechanism of inclusion, enabling collective interpretation and shared moral reasoning [Bakhtin \(1981\)](#).

Such dialogic structures are particularly evident in narratives involving figures like Krishna and Rama, where ethical dilemmas are negotiated through conversation rather than divine decree. This communicative openness fosters interpretive flexibility and reinforces the idea that religious understanding emerges through interaction and reflection rather than authority alone.

5.2. EMOTIONAL NARRATIVIZATION OF DEVOTION AND SUFFERING

Emotion plays a central role in Bhojpuri Hindu narratives. Devotion (bhakti) is often communicated through expressions of longing, separation, and emotional vulnerability. Suffering is not portrayed as abstract punishment but as a relational experience that deepens moral awareness and spiritual connection. These emotional narratives serve a communicative function by transforming theological concepts into affective experiences that resonate across social boundaries.

Discourse analysis reveals that repetition, rhythm, and lyrical intensity are frequently used to amplify emotional engagement. Such strategies enhance memorability and reinforce collective emotional participation, making religious communication experiential rather than instructional [Narayan \(1995\)](#).

5.3. LOCALIZATION OF MYTHOLOGICAL NARRATIVES

Bhojpuri religious texts often localize pan-Indian Hindu myths by situating them within familiar social and cultural contexts. Mythological events are reimagined through the lens of village life, agricultural rhythms, and domestic relationships. This localization process allows divine narratives to reflect the moral and social realities of the community, making religious ideals relatable and actionable.

From a communicative standpoint, this strategy represents the vernacularization of myth, wherein universal narratives are adapted to local linguistic and cultural frames [Pollock \(2006\)](#). Through this process, Hindu mythology becomes a living discourse rather than a distant sacred history.

5.4. METAPHORICAL FRAMING OF ETHICAL CONCEPTS

Metaphor is a key narrative device in Bhojpuri Hindu literature. Abstract ethical concepts such as karma and dharma are frequently explained through metaphors drawn from agriculture, kinship, and nature. For example, moral action is likened to sowing seeds, and devotion is framed as nurturing a relationship. These metaphors function as cognitive tools that translate philosophical ideas into accessible forms of understanding [Ricoeur \(1981\)](#).

Such metaphorical framing strengthens religious communication by embedding ethical reflection within everyday experience, allowing listeners to interpret moral principles through familiar life situations.

5.5. NARRATIVE REPETITION AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Repetition is another significant narrative strategy in Bhojpuri religious texts. Recurrent phrases, refrains, and storylines contribute to the formation of cultural memory and reinforce key religious values. In oral traditions, repetition serves not only as a mnemonic device but also as a communal affirmation of shared beliefs [Hymes \(1974\)](#).

Through repeated performance across festivals and rituals, Bhojpuri narratives sustain religious continuity and collective identity. Discourse analysis highlights how repetition stabilizes meaning while still allowing variation and reinterpretation, ensuring both tradition and adaptability within religious communication.

5.6. HUMANIZATION OF THE DIVINE

Perhaps the most distinctive narrative strategy in Bhojpuri Hindu texts is the humanization of divinity. Gods and goddesses are portrayed with emotional depth, relational complexity, and moral vulnerability. This narrative choice collapses the distance between the divine and the devotee, enabling an intimate form of religious communication grounded in empathy and identification.

Such representations align with the broader tradition of Hindu devotional literature, yet Bhojpuri narratives intensify this intimacy through vernacular language and familiar cultural settings. From a discourse perspective, the humanization of the divine functions as a powerful communicative strategy that fosters emotional attachment and ethical imitation [Asad \(1993\)](#).

6. PERFORMANCE, ORALITY, AND COMMUNITY RECEPTION

Performance and orality are central to the communicative power of Bhojpuri religious literature. Unlike written religious texts that rely on individual reading and interpretation, Bhojpuri Hindu narratives are primarily experienced through collective performance. Singing, recitation, storytelling, and ritual enactment transform literary expressions into shared communicative events where meaning is produced through interaction between performer, audience, and cultural context [Hymes \(1974\)](#).

6.1. ORALITY AS A MODE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

Orality in Bhojpuri literature functions not merely as a medium of transmission but as a mode of meaning-making. Oral narratives allow flexibility, improvisation, and emotional modulation, enabling performers to adapt religious stories to specific social situations. From a discourse-analytic perspective, orality facilitates dialogic exchange, repetition, and audience response, all of which contribute to the co-construction of religious meaning [Narayan \(1995\)](#).

This oral mode supports the continuity of Hindu religious narratives even in contexts where access to formal education or sacred texts may be limited. Religious knowledge is thus acquired through listening, participation, and memory rather than textual authority, reinforcing the communal nature of faith transmission.

6.2. PERFORMANCE AS COMMUNICATIVE EVENT

Performance transforms Bhojpuri religious narratives into embodied forms of communication. Gestures, voice modulation, rhythm, and emotional expression add layers of meaning that extend beyond verbal content. These performative elements intensify affective engagement and foster a sense of immediacy, allowing participants to experience religious narratives as present and relevant rather than distant or historical.

Communication theory recognizes such performances as multimodal events in which verbal and non-verbal cues work together to shape interpretation. In Bhojpuri religious performances, the sacred is enacted rather than merely narrated, reinforcing what scholars identify as experiential or lived religion [Orsi \(2003\)](#).

6.3. COMMUNAL SPACES AND RITUAL CONTEXTS

Bhojpuri religious performances typically occur within communal spaces such as temples, village courtyards, festival grounds, and domestic rituals. These spaces provide a social framework within which religious communication is embedded in collective life. Festivals, seasonal rituals, and life-cycle ceremonies serve as recurring platforms for the performance of religious narratives, ensuring their continuity and relevance.

From a communicative standpoint, these contexts shape how narratives are received and interpreted. The collective setting encourages emotional synchronization and shared moral reflection, strengthening community bonds and reinforcing cultural identity [Asad \(1993\)](#).

6.4. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AND RECEPTION

Community reception plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning of Bhojpuri religious narratives. Audiences are not passive recipients but active participants who respond through singing along, verbal affirmation, emotional expression, and ritual engagement. This participatory reception enhances the dialogic nature of religious communication and allows for collective interpretation.

Discourse analysis highlights how audience response contributes to the stabilization and transformation of narrative meaning. Through repeated performances, communities affirm shared values while also allowing space for reinterpretation, adaptation, and localized emphasis [Hymes \(1974\)](#).

6.5. PERFORMANCE, MEMORY, AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Performance and orality are closely linked to the formation of cultural and religious memory. Repetition across time and space ensures that Bhojpuri religious narratives remain embedded in collective consciousness. Memory in oral traditions is not static but performative, renewed through each act of narration and participation.

This process supports the continuity of Hindu religious traditions while allowing flexibility and innovation. Religious communication in Bhojpuri literature thus operates as a living system, sustained through performance, reception, and communal reinforcement rather than institutional control [Pollock \(2006\)](#).

7. BHOJPURI LITERATURE AND HINDU POPULAR RELIGION

Bhojpuri literature offers a compelling lens through which Hindu popular religion can be understood as a lived, communicative practice rather than a strictly institutional or scriptural system. Popular religion, as reflected in Bhojpuri narratives, emphasizes everyday devotion, emotional connection, and moral engagement over doctrinal precision. This form of religiosity aligns with scholarly understandings of lived religion, where belief is enacted through practice, narrative, and communal participation [Orsi \(2003\)](#).

In Bhojpuri literary traditions, Hinduism is communicated through familiar social relationships and culturally resonant experiences. Deities are portrayed as accessible figures who share emotional bonds with devotees, respond to human suffering, and participate in moral dilemmas. Such representations foster intimacy between the divine and the devotee, making religious communication personal and relational rather than distant and hierarchical. This intimacy reflects the core logic of popular religion, which privileges experiential faith over institutional mediation [Asad \(1993\)](#).

The communicative structure of Bhojpuri literature also enables the integration of classical Hindu ideas with local belief systems. Elements of pan-Indian mythology coexist with regional symbols, folk deities, and localized rituals, creating a plural and adaptive religious discourse. This synthesis allows Bhojpuri literature to function as a bridge between classical Hindu traditions and grassroots religious practices, reinforcing cultural continuity while accommodating diversity [Pollock \(2006\)](#).

From a discourse perspective, Bhojpuri religious texts articulate ethical norms and social values through narrative rather than prescription. Concepts such as dharma, duty, sacrifice, and moral responsibility are communicated through stories of familial loyalty, social justice, and personal struggle. These narratives encourage moral reflection by situating ethical choices within recognizable social contexts, thereby reinforcing community norms and shared values without invoking formal religious authority [Ricoeur \(1981\)](#).

Popular Hindu religion in Bhojpuri literature is also marked by its inclusivity. The oral and performative nature of these narratives allows participation across social boundaries of caste, gender, and literacy. Religious communication thus becomes a collective cultural resource rather than an exclusive domain of religious elites. This inclusiveness strengthens social cohesion and affirms the role of vernacular traditions in democratizing religious knowledge [Hymes \(1974\)](#).

Moreover, Bhojpuri literature serves as a repository of cultural memory that preserves religious practices and moral frameworks across generations. Through repeated performance and communal reception, popular Hindu beliefs are reinforced, adapted, and transmitted within changing social conditions. This dynamic process underscores the resilience

of popular religion as a communicative system capable of sustaining religious meaning beyond institutional structures [Narayan \(1995\)](#).

By situating Bhojpuri literature within the framework of Hindu popular religion, this study highlights the significance of vernacular discourse in shaping religious life. Bhojpuri literary traditions demonstrate that Hinduism, as lived by communities, is communicated as much through songs, stories, and performances as through scripture. Recognizing these forms expands scholarly understanding of religious communication and affirms the centrality of indigenous narrative traditions within Indian Knowledge Systems.

8. DISCUSSION

The present study set out to examine Bhojpuri literature as a medium of religious communication within Hindu narrative traditions, employing discourse analysis to understand how religious meaning is produced, circulated, and sustained in vernacular contexts. The findings discussed in the preceding sections collectively demonstrate that Bhojpuri literature functions not merely as a cultural artifact but as an active communicative system that shapes religious consciousness, ethical orientation, and community identity.

8.1. REFRAMING RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION BEYOND TEXTUAL ORTHODOXY

One of the key implications of this study is the need to rethink religious communication beyond scriptural and institutional paradigms. The analysis reveals that Bhojpuri religious narratives operate through dialogic, affective, and performative modes rather than through doctrinal exposition. This aligns with [Orsi \(2003\)](#) notion of lived religion and challenges communication models that privilege elite textual traditions. Religious meaning in Bhojpuri literature emerges through storytelling, repetition, metaphor, and emotional resonance, suggesting that communication scholarship must account for vernacular and oral forms as legitimate sites of religious discourse.

8.2. VERNACULARIZATION AS A COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGY

The study highlights vernacularization as a central strategy through which Hindu religious ideas are localized and made accessible. Bhojpuri adaptations of Hindu myths do not simply translate Sanskrit narratives; they reinterpret them within regional social realities, linguistic registers, and moral frameworks. This process resonates with [Pollock \(2006\)](#) concept of vernacular literary cultures while extending it into the domain of religious communication. Vernacularization emerges as an adaptive communicative practice that enables continuity of tradition alongside cultural specificity.

8.3. NARRATIVE ETHICS AND MORAL COMMUNICATION

Another significant discussion point concerns the ethical dimension of Bhojpuri religious narratives. Rather than prescribing moral codes, these texts communicate ethical values through narrative exemplification. Dharma, devotion, sacrifice, and social responsibility are embedded within familial and communal situations, allowing listeners and readers to engage in moral reasoning. This supports [Ricoeur \(1981\)](#) argument that narrative functions as a key medium for ethical understanding. From a communication perspective, Bhojpuri literature illustrates how moral persuasion operates through identification and empathy rather than authority.

8.4. ORALITY, PERFORMANCE, AND COMMUNAL MEANING-MAKING

The findings emphasize that religious communication in Bhojpuri literature is inseparable from performance and audience reception. Songs, recitations, and ritual storytelling transform texts into shared experiences, reinforcing collective identity and participatory belief systems. This observation supports [Hymes \(1974\)](#) ethnography of communication, wherein meaning is co-produced by speakers and audiences within cultural contexts. The performative dimension thus amplifies the social reach of religious discourse and sustains its relevance across generations.

8.5. POPULAR RELIGION AND COMMUNICATIVE INCLUSIVITY

The study further contributes to debates on popular religion by demonstrating how Bhojpuri literature democratizes religious knowledge. Its accessibility across caste, gender, and literacy boundaries challenges hierarchical models of religious authority. Religious communication here functions as a communal resource rather than a controlled institutional message. This finding aligns with [Asad \(1993\)](#) critique of rigid religious classifications and underscores the importance of studying non-elite religious expressions within communication research.

8.6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION STUDIES

By integrating discourse analysis with religious communication, this study expands the conceptual scope of communication theory. It foregrounds vernacular literature as a critical site for examining how meaning, belief, and ethics circulate in society. The Bhojpuri case demonstrates that communication processes embedded in indigenous narrative traditions are central to understanding media, culture, and religion in non-Western contexts. This has broader implications for decolonizing communication studies and recognizing indigenous knowledge systems as epistemologically valid.

8.7. CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)

Finally, this discussion situates Bhojpuri religious literature within the broader framework of Indian Knowledge Systems. The narratives examined reveal a knowledge tradition that integrates spirituality, ethics, social norms, and aesthetics. By framing Bhojpuri literature as a communicative knowledge system, the study challenges the marginalization of vernacular traditions in academic discourse and affirms their role in sustaining Hindu philosophical and cultural values at the grassroots level.

9. CONCLUSION

This study examined Bhojpuri literature as a dynamic medium of religious communication within Hindu narrative traditions. Through discourse analysis of folk songs, devotional compositions, birha, and lok-kathas, the paper highlighted how vernacular narratives transmit religious meaning, ethical values, and cultural knowledge across generations. The findings demonstrate that Bhojpuri literature operates as a participatory communicative system, wherein religious concepts such as dharma, karma, and bhakti are humanized, localized, and emotionally internalized. By employing dialogic storytelling, metaphor, repetition, and performative strategies, these narratives foster collective reflection, moral engagement, and community identity.

The study also underscores the critical role of orality, performance, and audience participation in sustaining religious discourse. In Bhojpuri popular religion, narratives are enacted and received within communal contexts, creating a shared space for interpretive engagement. This emphasizes the significance of lived religion and vernacular traditions in complementing or even challenging scriptural and institutionalized modes of religious authority. Such findings contribute to communication studies by demonstrating that religious meaning is not only transmitted through texts but also co-constructed through social interaction, performance, and affective engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, the paper integrates discourse analysis with religious communication, revealing vernacular literature as a crucial site for understanding the interplay of language, culture, and spirituality. The study also contributes to Indian Knowledge Systems by foregrounding the epistemic and ethical significance of Bhojpuri narratives, highlighting their capacity to sustain cultural memory and moral frameworks within indigenous communities. Future research may adopt comparative regional approaches or examine the mediation of Bhojpuri religious discourse through digital platforms, thereby extending understanding of vernacular religious communication in contemporary society. Overall, this study affirms that Bhojpuri literature functions as both a cultural and communicative repository of Hindu popular religion, bridging tradition and lived experience through accessible, participatory, and emotionally resonant narratives.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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