NEPALI AS AN ERGATIVE LANGUAGE

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1. WHAT IS AN ERGATIVE LANGUAGE?

The definition of ergativity that I'm adopting is a broad one, outlined by Bernard Comrie in "The Ergative: Variations on a Theme."[1] It applies to such widely scattered languages as Chukchee (Siberia), Basque, Walbiri (Australia), Vejnakhian, and Georgian--to languages which are divergent from one another genetically and typologically. The following are characteristics of ergative languages:

1.1 The subject of an intransitive verb and the direct object of a transitive verb get the same mark (which may be -ø, as in Basque). In the paper this will be called the patient and its case the "nominative." There is no "accusative" case.

1.2 The subject (or agent) of a transitive verb gets a different mark; its case is the "ergative." (The ergative mark is often the same as the instrumental mark.)

Beyond these two characteristics, variation among ergative languages is considerable.

1.3 Some ergative languages don't have passive constructions; some, such as Georgian, do.

1.4 Some, such as Georgian and Punjabi, mark ergative noun phrases only with certain forms of the verb, with certain tenses or aspects; others mark them throughout.

1.5 In some ergative languages, Punjabi for example, the verb agrees only with the nominative marked patient noun phrase, never with the ergative marked one. In others, the verb agrees with its subject, and a subject may be in the ergative case.

2. SOME FACTS ABOUT NEPALI

Nepali is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in Nepal by approximately four million people. It has been for 800 years in close contact with languages of the Tibeto-Burman family, both the Bodish and the Himalayish branches. While there is considerable

dialect variation in Nepali, the language as spoken in Kathmandu, the capital, is becoming standardized. It is, according to Edward Bendix, "considered by some to be artificial or pundit speech, and differs more or less sharply from native speakers colloquial, depending on education, caste-clan group and geographical region."[2] The characterization of bahun chetrika kura (the speech of the Brahmans and Chetris) as a "language of the written word" is warmly denied, however, by T.W.Clark.[3] Whatever the accuracy of the characterization, Kathmandu Nepali is the primary data upon which this paper is based. My informant was Tulsi Upraity, who grew up in East Nepal and was educated in Kathmandu. In addition, I made considerable use of data from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Clause, Sentence, and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal[4], and from Clark's Introduction to Nepali , both of which are based on the speech of the capital. The material from the latter two sources was always checked with Mr. Upraity and any differences in judgment are noted in the paper.

Nepali possesses many features of ergativity, chief among them being the ergative case marker "-le", which is used to mark the subject of a transitive verb. The following three sentences may be freely translated "I sneezed."

(1) mx-lay hachũ̃-ø ayo.[5]
I-to sneeze came-pst,3s
A sneeze came to me.

(2) mxy-le hachũ̃-ø gxrẽ̃.
I-by sneeze did-pst,1s
I did a sneeze.

(3) mx-lay hachũ̃-le sxthayo.
I-to sneeze-by suffer-c-pst,3s
A sneeze caused me to suffer.

Though "hachuw" in (1) is the subject of an intransitive verb and in (2) is the object of a transitive verb, in both sentences it is in the same unmarked case--the nominative. Sentence (3),

however, is framed in such a way that "hachuw" is the agent (the sentence is causative); and it is marked with the ergative postposition.

What follows is an overview of some features of ergativity in Nepali. The last two (2.6 and 2.7) are somewhat problematical.

2.1. The agent of a transitive verb takes the ergative case postposition "-le."

2.2. There is no accusative case. The direct object of a transitive verb, like the sole argument or subject of an intransitive verb, is in the nominative case--unmarked in Nepali.

2.3. The ergative postposition is the same as the instrumental postposition:

(4) lxthi-le mxy-le sisi phuTaẽ.
stick-by I-by bottle broke-pst,ls
I broke the bottle with a stick.

2.4. Nepali possesses a passive.

2.5. The verb in Nepali agrees with its subject noun phrase, whether it is in the nominative or in the ergative case.

2.6. The morphological identification of subjects of intransitive verbs with objects of transitive verbs is only partial in Nepali--it works for inanimate noun phrases (-ø subject, -ø object); but not for animate ones (-ø subject, -lay object). Animate direct objects of transitive verbs are frequently (though not always) marked with the dative or goal postposition "-lay"; pronominal direct objects are always marked with "-lay." This perhaps weakens Nepali's claim to ergative status.

2.7. In Nepali, as in Georgian and Punjabi, the ergative postposition appears only with certain forms of the verb, in certain tenses or aspects. A large part of this paper will be a report of my attempt to describe the distribution of the "-le" marker with respect to the verb morphology.

3. THE PATIENT

One way to look at the phenomenon of transitivity is to say that the presence of a direct object or patient noun phrase triggers the appearance of the ergative marker on the subject or agent noun phrase. However, we find many sentences in Nepali where there exists an ergative marked noun phrase and no patient noun phrase at all. I'll consider these direct objectless sentences to be the result of two kinds of deletion --indefinite and anaphoric.

Indefinite or unspecified objects are frequently deleted in Nepali (as they are in English).

(5) mxy-le khãe.
I-by eat-pst, 1s
I ate (something).

(6) Hxri-le khelyo.
Hari-by play-pst, 3s
Hari played (something).

Often an object may be deleted anaphorically, because it's been previously mentioned in the discourse.

(7) dãi gxr-da, sanu khet xthxba thor-xi dhan chx bhxn-e
threshing do-ca, small field or little-em rice be-pr, 3s
manis-le matr-xi gxr-chxn. (NT p. 38, 17)
say-perc people-by only-em do-pr, 3pl
When they are (do) threshing, if there is only a small field, or only a small quantity of rice, only people do (it).

The patient "threshing" (dãi-∅) which appears at the beginning of the sentence is deleted anaphorically at the end, though it triggers the appearance of "-le" on "people" (manis-le).

In addition to direct objects which are single nouns, sentential direct objects also occur and serve to trigger "-le."

(8) ...kancha chora-le a-erx bhxnio: xghi-ko misri bhxn-da
...youngest son-by come-sa say-pst,es: before-of sugar say-ca
ta io misri jiad-xi miTho rxhe-chx. (NT p. 15, 6)
att this sugar much-em nice remain-pr, 3s
...the youngest son came and said, "This sugar lump is much

better than the one before."
In a similar construction, the single noun "that" (tes) can be substituted for the sentential direct object of "said."

(9) ...us-le pheri tes-xi bhxnio. (NT p. 17, 10)
...he-by again that-em say-pst,3s
...he said that again.

3.1. INANIMATE VERSUS ANIMATE PATIENTS

In the great majority of cases the inanimate direct object of a transitive verb is in the nominative case (-ø). I checked eighteen verbs from "Case Grammar and the Nepalese Language" by Vicki J. Abdulky[6] with my informant in the following frame: us-le kitab _____-pst, 3s "he Ved the book."[7] For all but two of them, kitab had to be unmarked. For the exceptions--baDnu "to distribute", and badhnu "to tie"--the unmarked case was acceptable, but the goal marker (-lay) was also permitted. Thus for inanimate nouns the morphological identification of subject of intransitive verb (-ø) and object of transitive verb (-ø) is virtually complete.

For animate pronouns and nouns, however, it's a different story. While pronouns are unmarked when they are subjects of intransitive verbs, they may never be unmarked when they are objects of transitive verbs. Goal marking (-lay) is obligatory. And for animate nouns a goal marked version is usually preferred, though unmarked animates may occur.

The following examples with pronouns are acceptable only with"-lay." (Acceptable sentences or parts of sentences are not marked; acceptable but not preferred with #; unacceptable with *.)

(9) mxy-le {us-lay / *u-ø} hxri-lay diẽ.
I-by {he-to / *he} Hari-to give-pst, 1s
I gave him to Hari.

(10) ...ajx mxy-le {us-lay / *u-ø} dekhẽ.
...today I-by {he-to / *he} see-pst, 1s Today I saw him.

The following examples with nouns are acceptable both with "-lay"and unmarked, but"-lay"occurs more frequently. A further

complication is that with animate nouns "-lay" carries with it an implication of definiteness, that is, of previous mention in the discourse. (The same is not true for inanimate nouns or for pronouns.[8])

(11) mxy-le {balxk-ø / balxk-lay} dekhĕ.

I-by {babies (general) / the baby (definite)} see-pst,1s

I saw {babies. / the baby.}

3.1. GOAL MARKED PATIENTS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

According to Comrie, Georgian marks the direct object of a transitive verb with the goal marker "-s". Georgian differs from Nepali in that it uses the goal marker only in tenses where it does not use the ergative marker. It also differs in that goal marking is unaffected by animacy. What is interesting, I think, is that the way that Georgian marks the goal is intimately bound up with the way that it marks the ergative.

In Punjabi the direct object of a transitive verb also may take a goal marker--what Comrie calls the indirect object marker--"-nu." This happens obligatorily when the patient is a pronoun, and may also happen when it's a definite noun. Interestingly, in Punjabi the verb, which can never agree with an ergative marked noun, can never agree with a goal-marked noun either. Instead, the verb will appear in the impersonal--third singular masculine. (Nepali also has numerous impersonal constructions[9], but does not require the verb to be impersonal when an ergative noun phrase is present, since the verb may agree with ergative nouns.)

3.2. "THE EMPTY PATIENT"--NP & GXRNU CONSTRUCTIONS

Nepali has a very productive process for creating verbs: an abstract noun phrase (which usually can be glossed with an English nominalization) is combined with some form of "gxrnu", "to make or do."[10] The abstract noun phrase functions as the unmarked object and triggers the ergative postposition in the appropriate tenses:

unnxt l gxrnu	to make progress
khoj: gxrnu	to make a search
nidh gxrnu	to make a decision
kosi gxrnu	to make a try
par gxrnu	to cross
biha gxrnu	to have a wedding
santoo gxrnu	to be satisfied
dãy gxrnu	to thresh
kxbul gxrnu	to make an oath
bicar gxrnu	to think
bheT gxrnu	to meet
kxra gxrnu	to talk
pas gxrnu	to register

It seems possible that one factor entering into the case marking of nouns is the avoidance of repetition. For example, when I was looking for occurences of unmarked animate objects, I found them most often in sentences which included another noun phrase which was marked with "-lay." In fact it seemed that the more arguments a predicate had, the more likely that one would be left unmarked.

Since the gxrnu construction automatically has one unmarked noun phrase, it offers an opportunity for further investigation along these lines.[11] Is it possible to have more than one unmarked noun phrase per sentence? Is there a tendency to put inanimate noun phrases which might otherwise be unmarked into oblique cases?

4. "-LÈ" AND THE TENSE / ASPECT SYSTEM

My initial hypothesis about tense/aspect was that "-le's" were confined to perfective constructions. This notion began to collapse almost immediately. Checking through Hari's Nepali Texts I discovered "-le's" in what Clark calls the simple indefinite tense--which is clearly not perfective. Then they showed up with certain of the modals in any and all tenses. They also appeared, seemingly at random, in some transitive optative sentences. And they appeared occasionally in a variety of non-

final clauses, infinitival and participial, forcing me to the conclusion that to find the pattern for "-le" would require a comprehensive approach to the entire verb morphology and an attempt to address the following very broad questions: Where is "-le" obligatorily marked? where excluded? where optional? Is there a pattern in the places where "le" appears? a morphological pattern? something to do with the semantics of tense/aspect? with some other semantic factor? Historically, is Nepali moving toward more use of "-le"? Why should certain tense/aspect environments hold out against the encroachment more than others?

After reviewing Clark's analysis of the Nepali verb (which is summarized below) checking it against the data in NT, and going over problems and questions with my informant, I came to the following conclusions:

(A) "-le" is associated with perfective aspect, though not excluded from non-perfective aspect.

(B) In certain constructions in the semantic area of permission/obligation, "-le" is marked in any tense: pxrnu, chx, -nx dinu, and the -ne infinitive.

(C) "-le" is excluded from the non-perfective more adamantly in multi-verbal concatenations than it is in single verb non-perfective constructions.

4.1. CLARK'S ANALYSIS--"-LE" AND THE PERFECTIVE

What follows is a summary of Clark's analysis; numbers in parentheses refer to pages in Introduction to Nepali. I've noted the areas where my informant disagreed; in particular, he questioned the notion that "-le" is used for emphasis.

LE OBLIGATORY

(98) Aorist Perfect (-ẽ -is -yo -yxw -yxw -e) "he has Ved, he did V, he Ved"

(194) First Perfective (-eko & paradigm chx) "he has Ved, he is Ving"

(243) Second Perfective (-e & paradigm chx) facts have just

become known to speaker "I see he Ved; why, he Ved" Clark has a nice dialogue contrasting this tense with the Aoriat Perfect and the First Perfect on p. 248.

(199) Third Preterite (-eko & paradigm thiyo: thiẽ thiis thiyo thiyẽ thiyxw thiyo) "he had Ved"

(244) Second Preterite (-e & reduced paradigm thiyo: delete -i-) in free variation with First Preterite "he had Ved"

LE EXCLUDED

(253, 256) Simple Preterite (reduced paradigm thiyo, attached to stem as chx is in Simple Indefinite) "he used to V"

(297) Imperfective Preterite (-dxy~-txy & paradigm thiyo) "he was Ving"

(258) Infinitival Preterite (-ne & paradigm thiyo) "he would have Ved" sometimes overlaps with Simple Preterite. My informant considered "-le" optional here.

(214) Infinitival Future (-ne & paradigm chx) "he will V". My informant considered "-le" optional here.

LE VARIABLE

(296) Imperfective (-dxy~-txy & paradigm chx) "he is still Ving" contrasts with First Perfective. LE OPTIONAL FOR EMPHASIS claim native grammarians; but Clark considers dialect a factor, advises the student to use LE: "He will not be considered wrong, though he may occasionally seem a little over-emphatic." Some speakers use LE more than others. Examples in NT--p. 31, 30; p. 26, 33; p. 22, 42.

(223) Aorist Future (-ũla -las -la -x̃wla -lan) future action, Clark's examples seem like emphatic predictions. LE NOT UNIFORM. (CPN calls this the "conditional.")

(126) Aorist Imperative (-ñ -es -es -x̃w -e -um) first and third persons are permissive or dubitative, second person is imperative. "may I V? please V," "whether or not to V" LE OPTIONAL FOR EMPHASIS. (CPN calls this the "optative.") See 5.2 of this paper for discussion.

(93-94) Simple Indefinite (-chu -chas -cha -chx̃w -chxw -chxn) action performed customarily at regular or irregular intervals

"he Vs"; action to be performed in the future, "he will V tomorrow" LE OPTIONAL (see discussion below).

The following is a summary of Clark's treatement of participles.

LE OBLIGATORY IF PARTICIPLE
IS TRANSITIVE

(160) Conjunctive Participle (-era) perfective, action prior to main verb. See NT p. 21, 32; p. 15,4; p. 9,6; p. 7,1.

(185) First Perfect Participle (-eko) perfective, used in relative clauses.

(237) Second Perfect Participle (-e)

LE OPTIONAL

(206) Infinitival Participle (-ne) used in relative clauses and as main verb.

LE OPTIONAL FOR EMPHASIS

(265, 279) Absolutive Participle (-i-) first member of a compound verb. See NT p. 11, 7.

(286) Imperfective Participle (-dxy~-txy, -da~-ta) usually translated by "while" subordinate clause.

4.1. THE SIMPLE INDEFINITE

The simple indefinite is a good illustration of "-le's" appearance in a non-perfective environment as well as a good illustration of its optionality. This tense has two uses--habitual aspect and punctual future. The habitual aspect usage occurs with "-le" and without it.

(12) ...koi-koi-le...tes-lay dai gxr-chxn. (NT p. 38, 17)
...some-by...that-to thresh do-pr, 3pl
...some thresh it.

(13) mx tx sxdhxi masu dhan chu. (NT p. 19, 7)
I att always meat eat-pr, 1s
I always eat meat.

(14) hxrxk din mx pac jxna-lay khan-chu. (NT p. 19, 9)
every day I five people-to eat-pr, 1s
Every day I eat five people.

The punctual future usage occurs with "-le" and without it.

(15) Ramo-le xli dinpxchi ghaDi pauchx. (Clark, p. 92)
Ram will get a watch in a few days' time.

(16) tos-lay nx mar-chu (NT p. 22, 39)
that-to I kill-pr, 1s
I will kill him.

The only conclusion I can reach about the distribution of "-le" here is (A) above.

4.2. PERMISSION/OBLIGATION

Like the "modals" of obligation (chx, pxrchx) and of permission (dinn) which will be discussed below (5.2), what Clark calls the infinitival participle (stem & -ne) possesses the meaning component of obligation, more particularly of intentionality. For me there's a semantic relationship between a modal construction like "Ram is to be a minister" and infinitival-participle constructions like "the rice to be eaten by us" or "what is the child to say now." There's a shared component of designatedness; both Ram and the rice and the child are in a sense designated for some purpose.

(17) xni aphu-le kha-ne rx bec-ne dhan... (NT p. 39, 26)
and own-by eat-inf and sell-inf rice
the rice which they plan to eat and the rice which they plan to sell

(18) mxy-le ke bhxn-ne ni tx xbx? (NT p. 25, 18)
I-by what say-inf att att now
What should I say now?

(19) mxy-le ke kha-ne? (from my informant)
I-by what eat-inf
What am I (supposed, intended) to eat?

(20) txy-le kha-ne bhat tx lx chx
you-by eat-inf rice below be-pr, 3s
The rice you are to eat is below.

(21) nx mmmru bhxne, bagh-le kha-ne (NT p. 20, 12)
neg obey-opt,1pl if, tiger-by eat-inf
If we don't obey, the tiger is to eat us.

4.3. MULTI-VERBAL CONSTRUCTIONS: SENSITIVITY TO TENSE/ASPECT/ TRANSITIVITY--OF THE NON-FINAL VERB, OF THE MAIN VERB

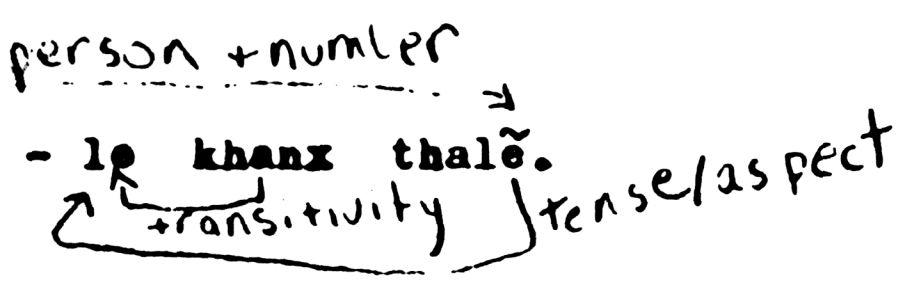
In this section I'll look at concatenations of non-final verb and main verb and attempt to answer the following question: what conditions must be met for "-le" to appear?

I know of no certain way to decide whether a main verb which always appears with a non-final or complementary verb is transitive or intransitive. Using the appearance of "-le" as proof of transitivity when addressing oneself to the question posed above would of course be circular. One might argue that the mere fact that a main verb takes an infinitive complement is enough to make it transitive. However, if this were the case we'd expect to find "-le" (in the appropriate tense/aspect) with all main verbs which take infinitive complements--and of course we don't.

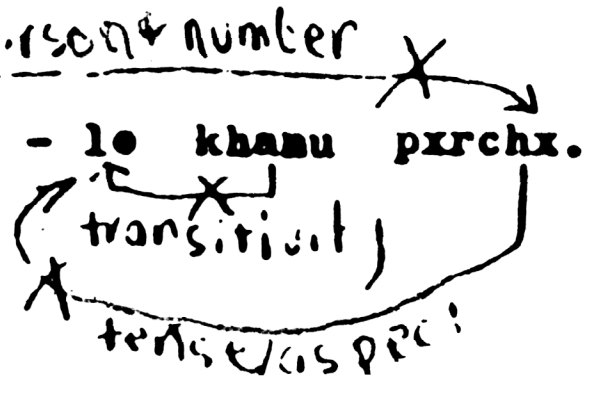
Consider the following simple concatenation:

(22) nxy-le khanx thalè.
I-by to eat began-pst, ls
I began to eat.

Impressionistically one could say that there are different directions of sensitivity or concord among the three words in the sentence:



The "nxy" determines the person and number of the main verb. The transitivity of the non-final verb "khanx" determines whether the "-le" will appear, in conjunction with the tense/aspect of the "thalè." If either the non-final verb were intransitive, or the final verb were non-perfective, then "-le" could not appear. At an opposite extreme from the example above is the following sentence:



I-by to-eat must

I must eat.

The "mxy" has no effect on the person or number of the verb; "pxrnu" is impersonal and always appears in third singular. The transitivity of the "khanu" has no effect on the appearance of the "-le"; it appears even with intransitive infinitives. Nor does the tense/aspect of the "pxrchx" have any effect on the appearance of the "-le"; "-le" appears in all tense/aspects.

Between the two extremes of (23) and (24) there seems to be the full range of logically possible interactions, many of which are illustrated in the chart below.

FOR LE TO APPEAR:	Must the non-final verb be transitive?	Must the main verb be perfective?	Is the verb impersonal?
V-nx sxknu to be able to V	yes	yes	no
V-nx pa̰wnu to be able to V (permission, possibility)	yes	yes	no
V-nx hunchx~hunnx to be all right to V	yes	no, must be simple indef.	yes
V-nu pxrchx to have to V	no	no	yes
V-nx dinu to allow to V	no	yes	no
V-nx thalnu to start to V	yes	yes	no
V-nx chaDnu to stop Ving	yes	yes	no
V-nu chx to have to V	no	no	yes
V-nx any V to V in order to V	yes	yes	no
V-i-sxknu to V to completion	yes	yes	no
V-i-dinu to V for someone	yes	yes	no
V-i-halnu tp V emphatically	yes	yes	no

The data used in drawing up this chart came from Clark. The rightmost column on the impersonality of the verb is a condition on

grammaticality of the concatenation rather than a prerequisite for "-le" to appear.

As I noted in conclusion (A) above, le is excluded from non-perfective tenses more adamantly in multi-verbal constructions than it is in single verb constructions. In the simple indefinite, for instance, when there's only a single verb "-le'e" appears le is optional. (See 4.1) In multi-verbal constructions, however, my informant refused to accept any "-le'e" in the simple indefinite tense.

5. ERGATIVITY AS A SEMANTIC PHENOMENON: THE CHOICE OF CASE

Comrie wishes to define ergativity as essentially a syntactic phenomenon. However, he points out that in some ergative languages semantic factors play a role in determining the case of some particular noun phrase. In Bats, for example, a speaker can choose the ergative or the nominative case in an intransitive sentence with a resulting difference in meaning. The selection of the ergative marker (in a sentence like "As wože", "I fell") suggests that it was the subject's fault for falling, while the choice of the nominative ("So wože", "I fell") makes no such suggestion.[12]

The "-le" marker is not used with intransitive verbs in Nepali. However, an interesting feature of ergativity in Nepali is the fact that although the agent of a transitive sentence (in the appropriate tenses) is placed in the ergative case obligatorily, there are a few transitive situations where the ergative mark may be used optionally.

It seems to me that there are several conceivable situations with respect to optionality. In situation (A) both "-le" and "-ø" are equally acceptable for one speaker. In situation (B) they are unequally acceptable; the speaker has a strong or a weak preference for one or the other. In situation (C) there is recognized dialect variation from speaker to speaker. It would be possible for (A), (B), or (C) to obtain with the "-le"/"-ø" choice making no difference in meaning. It would also be possible for

(A), (B), or (C) to obtain with the case choice making a real, even if subtle difference in meaning.

All of these possibilities exist in Nepali. Situation (A) is rare. Situations (B) and (C) are common enough, but for the case choice to make a difference in meaning is the exception rather than the rule.

5.1. AVOIDING AMBIGUITY

In situation (A) or (B) when there's no meaning difference the avoidance of ambiguity may be a factor in case choice. To illustrate:

(25) io gai{-le / -ø} khanchx.

this cow{-by / -ø} eat-pr, 3s

This cow eats.

According to my informant, both alternatives are acceptable. In a context where there might be confusion, one would choose the "-le" to disambiguate--that is, to prevent the sentence from meaning "This (one, person) eats cow." The sentence below can only mean "This cow eats."

(26) io gai-le khanchx.

Similarly:

(27) ...io katha-le bhxn-dx-chx. (NT p. 22, 42)
...this story-by say-hab-pr, 3s

Sentence (27) can only mean "...this story says". It would be correct with "katha-ø", but ambiguity would be possible.

(28) Io katha-ø bhxn-dx-chx.

this story say-hab-pr, 3s

This story says

or

This (one, person) says a story.

A further illustration, Hari encloses one "-le" in NT in parentheses:

(29) ...birua-hxru-lay hami nepali-(le) jxmxra bhxndx chx̃u. (NT p. 26, 33)

...plant-pl-to we Nepali-(by) jamara say-h-pr, 1pl
My informant explained that with the "-le" the sentence means "we Nepalis call these plants jamara." But without it, it could mean "we call these plants Nepali jamara."

5.2. CASE CHOICES WHICH AFFECT MEANING

When I began this investigation I was interested in finding a situation comparable to the one described by Comrie as existing in Bats. I checked for verb pairs whose distinguishing factor was deliberateness on the part of the agent (such as "dekhnu"-to notice or see by accident, and "hernu" to see on purpose or look at) to see if they marked their subjects differently. They don't.

I also questioned the informant directly about data from Introduction to Nepali in which Clark claims that "-le" is optional and that its appearance makes the sentence more "emphatic." I tried to determine whether Clark meant contrastive emphasis on the subject (ie., "he" rather than someone else) or emphasis in the manner of Ving (ie., deliberately, forcefully, completely). The informant was reluctant to discuss meaning differences in Clark's examples, and indeed denied that emphasis of any kind was involved.

Then, happily, I happened upon some data in CPN on two modal constructions which mean something like English "must"--impersonal constructions with "chx" and "pxrchx." The case choice, however, was not the anticipated ergative versus nominative, but rather ergative versus goal. (Impersonal verbs in Nepali regularly mark their animate arguments with "-lay", the goal postposition. See footnote 7). Nothing in the way the case alternatives were presented in CPN suggested that there would be any difference in meaning between them. My informant, however, said that there was a meaning difference, though a small one.[13] The sentences with "-lay" implied that there was a pressure of obligation from other people on the goal-marked noun phrase. The sentences with "-le" implied

no such external pressure, but rather an internalized necessity or obligation.

(30) mx(y){-le / -lay} mxntri hunu pxrchx.

I {-by / -to} minister be-inf must-pr, 3s

I should be a minister.

(31) mx(y){-le / #-lay} mxntri hunu pxrio.

I had to be a minister. (An appropriate context for the "-lay" version would be answering an accusation--ie. "Why didn't you come?" "I had to return the books." This context was volunteered by the informant, and seems to be in line with the notion that "-le" is associated with volition or deliberateness.)

(32) mx(y){-le / #-lay} mxntri hunu chx.

I {-by / -to} minister be-inf be-pr, 3s.

I am to be a minister, I have to be a minister.

(33) mx(y){-le / #-lay} mxntri hunu thiyo.

I {-by / -to} minister be-inf be-pst, 3s.

I was to be a minister.

The "pxrnu" construction is discussed in Clark (p.146). He points out that there are three case choices for "pxrnu"; that when it takes an intransitive infinitive it may occasionally leave its subject unmarked. I found examples of all three possibilities in NT.

(34) ...ex jxngxl-ko raja mx-ø hunu pxrchx. (NT p. 19, 3)

...this jungle-of king I be-inf must-pr, 3s

I am to be king of this jungle.

(35) tini-hxru-lay hernx hu-dxi-nx, hami-le. (NT p. 30, 23)

he-pl-to look-inf be-pr, 3s-neg, we-by

We are not to look at them.

The free translation given for the following sentence seems to support the hypothesis that "-lay" is used when the subject is

less in control.

(36) hami-lay tx jhxn ritt-xi hinnu pxrchx ke.
we-to att more empty-em to walk must-pr, Je what
At least we can walk empty (without a load)

In addition to the "must" constructions there is one other less important construction where case choice affects meaning--the optative.

In CPN Bandhu marks subjects in the optative with "-le" in all persons and numbers except the first singular. It gives the English gloss "it would be nice if.." in all persons and numbers except the first singular. The first singular is glossed with a question: "Should I...?" According to my informant, however, it is possible to mark a first singular subject with "-le".

(37) mx kha-ũ.
I eat-opt,1s
Do I eat?, Should I eat?

(38) mxy-le kha-ũ.
I-by eat-opt, 1s
It would be nice if I ate. I wish I could eat.

Note that (37) is translated with a question. However, when "-le" is introduced in (38), a question translation is very inappropriate. Similarly,

(39) mx chara jxsto uD-ũ.
I bird like fly-opt, 1s
Do I fly like a bird? Should I fly like a bird?

(40) mxy-le chara jxsto uD-ũ.
I-by bird like fly-opt, 1s
I wish I could fly like a bird.

Thus in the optative, the presence of "-le" very significantly affects the meaning of the sentence.

FOOTNOTES

1. Bernard Comrie, The Ergative: Variations on a Theme, Lingua 32. 239-253 (1973).

2. Edward Bendix, Indo-Aryan and Tibeto Burman Contact as Seen through Nepali and Newari Verb Tenses, to appear in Contact and Convergence in South Asian Languages, edited by F.C. Southworth and M.L. Apte, p. 1.

3. T.W. Clark, Introduction to Nepali, Cambridge, W. Heffer and Sons Ltd, (1963), p. ix.

4. Churamani Bandhu, Clause Patterns in Nepali, in Clause, Sentence and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal, edited by Austin Hale and David Watters, vol. II, 1-80. (This will be abbreviated in the paper as CPN.) (1973)
Maria Hari, Nepali Texts, in Clause, Sentence and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal, edited by Austin Hale, vol. III, 3-52. (This will be abbreviated as NT.) (1973)

5. I'll follow the CPN transcription (using "i's" and "u's" rather than "y's" or "w's") when I'm using their data. Otherwise "y" and "w" will be used when there is an adjacent vowel. Capital letters will be used for the retroflex series (T, Th, D, Dh). An "x" will be used for schwa. The grammatical glosses are from NT, 3-4, with the following exception--"-le" will be glossed with "by" rather than with "ag" or "ins".

a	adjectivizer (-do)
ag	agent
att	attitude particle
aux	auxiliary verb
aux h	auxiliary, honorific
c	causative infix (-aa-)
ca	concurrent action
cl	classifier (suffix or particle)
def	definite (aspect)
em	emphasis (suffix or particle)
f	future (tense), indefinite future
fe	feminine

h	habitual
hon	honorific
h.s.	honorific suffix
imp	imperative
imp.h	imperative honorific , inf infinitive
neg	negative
opt	optative
pas	passive
perc	perceptive (aspect)
perf	perfective (aspect)
pl	plural suffix
pr	present (tense)
prog	progressive (aspect)
pst	past aorist (tense)
pst.r	past remote (tense)
pur	purpose
rec	recipient
rel	relative
s	singular
sa	sequence action
sp	specification (particle)
v	verbal suffix, (used only for -i-, absolute participle suffix)

6. Vicki J. Abdulky, Case Grammar and the Nepalese Language, unpublished M.A. thesis, Cornell University, 1-35, (1969), pp. 32-33.

7. us-le kitab birsyo.
   he-by book forgot-pst, 3s
   " " bujhyo. "understood"
   ' ' chaDyo. "left"
   chanyo. "chose"
   chapyo. "printed"
   chipyo. "hid"
   coryo. "stole"
   ganyo. "counted"
   janyo. "knew"

jityo. "won"
lxgyo. "took away"
lekhyo. "wrote"
liyo. "took"
nasyo. "destroyed"
nikayo. "took out"
paDhyo. "read"
pxkryo. "caught"
sxmjhyo. "remembered"

8. In the frame "mxy-le _____ dekhẽ", "I-by _____ see-pst, 1s", definiteness is expressed in the following ways--

for animate nouns:

mxy-le kitab-ø dekhẽ
book-ø
kitab°-lay
book-to
tyo kitab
that book (definite)

for animate pronouns:

u°-ø
he-ø
us-lay
he-to
u tyo manche-lay
he that man-to (definite)

for demonstrative pronouns:

yo-ø, tyo-ø
this-ø, that-ø (can only be inanimate)
yxs-lay, tyxs-lay
this-to, that-to (would be understood as animate)

for the demonstratives, definiteness is already a part of their meaning.

9. See Clark pp. 107-114. An illustration of an impersonal construction: "mx-lay yo cahi̊ cahinchx" "I-to this one want-pres, 3s" "I want this one." It would be inappropriate, I think, to consider "mx" the subject of an intransitive verb in the above sentence, even though it would improve the case for a morphological identification of subject and object in Nepali.

10. I'm told that Sanskrit conjugates borrowings with the verb "to make or do", as does Japanese (suru) and Turkish (etmek).

11. The verb "to register" takes two unmarked noun phrases:

a.) mxy-le ghxr-ø pasø gxrẽ.
I-by house-ø register-ø do-pst, 1s
I registered the house.

The verb "to search", on the other hand, takes a variety of post-positions on its second noun phrase:

b.) mxy-le ghxr {-ko / #-ø / *-lay} khoji-ø gxrẽ.
I-by house {of / #-ø / * to} search-ø made.
I searched for the house. (but I didn't find the house)

c.) mxy-le ghxr {-ma / *-ø / *-lay}
I-by house {in / *-ø / * to} search made.
I searched the house. (but I didn't find my wallet)

d.) mxy-le ram {-ko / #-ø / -lay} khoji-ø gxrẽ.
I-by Ram {of / #-ø / to} search made.

means both:
Isearched for Ram.
and:
I made a search of Ram.

e.) mxy-le us {-ko / *-ø / -lay} khoji-ø gxrẽ.

I searched for him. or I made a search of him.

12. Comrie, op.cit., 240-242.
13. He also found several of the examples unacceptable with "-lay", though Bandhu indicated they were acceptable.