RESEARCH ARTICLE

JOELL
Veda Publications

ISSN: 2349-9753

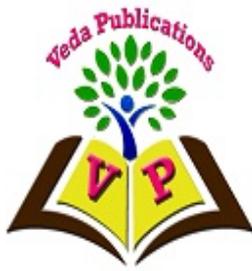# PRONOUNS IN RAJBANSHI: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COOCHBEHAR

Banashree Roy, Dr. S Ganesh Baskaran

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Linguistics, Assam University, Silchar, Assam

Professor, Department of Linguistics, Assam University, Silchar, Assam

Email: banashree990@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Rajbanshi belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European Language family **(Grierson, George A. Linguistic survey of India, Volume V, Part Ⅱ).** This paper is based on Pronoun in Rajbanshi language, spoken in the coochbehar district of West Bengal. The Rajbanshis are the native people of Northern Bengal, which is in West Bengal state. The Rajbanshi people are an ethnic group with a rich cultural heritage. Pronouns are one of the core elements of the language. They have distinct cultural identity shaped by their history, language, and traditions. Rajbanshi uses a wide range of pronouns, including personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, relative pronouns, and indefinite pronouns, reflexive pronouns. This study is based on my field work data that I have collected from some parts of coochbehar district of West Bengal. For this study, I have collected word lists from many informants of different age groups (30-60) and different gender from coochbehar district. The data has been collected and cross checked by the native speakers of the language. Aside from primary data, secondary sources are also used to collect information. This paper represents a small attempt to document the language for the upcoming and current generations of language researchers and speakers.

Keywords: *Rajbanshi, Coochbehar, Pronouns, Language, Types*

1. INTRODUCTION

Rajbanshi belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family. Grierson in his '**Linguistic Survey of India Voll-V, Part-Ⅱ (1903)'** places Rajbanshi within the eastern group of the Indo-Aryan language family. Rajbanshi is the name of the community and language as well. The Rajbanshi people are living since ancient period in coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, the plain of Darjeeling district, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Maldah of West Bengal State. They are also found in Assam, Bihar, Nepal and Bangladesh. Rajbanshi people maintain their language in home domain and they speak their Mother Tongue with their kith and kin and they Speak Bengali outside the home domain. Traditionally, the Rajbanshi people have been engaged in agricultural activities. The traditional dress of the Rajbanshi people reflects their cultural identity and heritage. Women wear **/patani/** and men wear /**gamtʃʰa/** or **/dʰuti/.** According to census report of India, there were 1685 speakers documented in the census of 1991, and 1122 speakers were recorded in the census of 2001. (District census handbook)

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of studying pronouns in the Rajbanshi language is to analyze and document the structure, usage, and classification of pronouns from a linguistic perspective. The main objective of the present paper is to identify and categorize the different types of pronouns used in Rajbanshi. The present study intends to give a complete view of the pronominal system and different types of pronouns in Rajbanshi language.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The data for the present study was collected mainly from coochbehar district of West Bengal. The present study uses a combination of primary and secondary sources for collecting data. The primary source is based on personal contact with the speech community through informants of different age groups, professionals and sexes with the help of questionnaires. The secondary method for collecting data includes available written materials like referred articles, journals and books etc.

1.3. PRONOUNS IN RAJBANSHI

An Overview

According to Bernard Comrie, 'Pronouns are grammatical elements whose referents are usually known through context and are used to avoid repetition of full noun phrases'. Pronouns are a class of words that function to replace nouns or noun phrases in a sentence. In Rajbanshi language, pronouns are inflected for number and case. Pronouns in Rajbanshi can be classified into:

1) Personal Pronoun,

2) Possessive Pronoun,

3) Demonstrative Pronoun,

4) Interrogative Pronoun,

5) Indefinite Pronoun,

6) Reflexive Pronoun,

1.4. PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal pronouns in Rajbanshi can be categorized into three distinct forms based on the person 1.First person 2.Second Person 3.Third Person and it can also be categorized in two ways in terms of number i.e. Singular, and Plural. The first, second and third person plural number personal pronoun constructed by suffixing the plural marker, /- la, gila, gula,/ i.e. / hamra-la, hamra-gila, hamra-gula/ 'We'(plural), /tomra-la, tomra-gula, tomra-gila/ 'You' (plural), and /umra-la, umra-gila, umra-gula/ 'they'. Rajbanshi has no gender distinction in third person; the same word /uaj/ is used to refer both 'he' and 'she'. Personal pronouns of Rajbanshi are shown in the following table.

Person	Singular	Plural
1st Person	/mui /'I'	/hamra-**la**/ hamra-**gila**/hamra-**gula/** 'We'(Pl)
2nd Person	/tui/ 'You'	/tomra-**la**/ tomra-**gila**/ tomra-**gula/** 'You'(pl)
3rd Person	/uaj/ 'he/she'	/umra-**la**/ umra-**gila/** umra-**gula/** 'they'

Personal Pronouns in Rajbanshi

Personal pronouns in Rajbanshi are inflected in four cases, i.e. Accusative, Dative, Instrumental, and Genitive; in three person like 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person and in two numbers as singular and plural. Personal pronouns of Rajbanshi are shown in the following table.

Case	Person	Singular	Plural
Accusative	first	/mok/ 'to me'	/hamra-**la-k/**, /hamra-**gila-k/,** /hamra-**gula-k/.** 'to us'
	second	/tok/ 'to you'	/tomra-**la-k/,** /tomra-**gila-k/,** /tomra-**gula-k/.** 'to you'(PL)
	third	/umak/ 'to him/her'	/umra-**la-k/,** /umra-**gila-k/,** /umra-**gula-k/.** 'to them'

VEDA'S

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)

An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

Impact Factor (SJIF) 6.002   http://www.joell.in

Vol.13, No.1

(Jan-March)

2026

Dative	first	/mok/'to me'	/hamra-**la-k/**, /hamra-**gila-k/**, /hamra-**gula-k/.** 'to us'
	second	/tok/ 'to you'	/tomra-**la-k/**, /tomra-**gila-k/**, /tomra-**gula-k/.** 'to you'(PL)
	third	/umak/ 'to him/her'	/umra-**la-k/**, /umra-**gila**-k/, /umra-**gula-k/.** 'to them'
Instrumental	first	/mok dia/'by me'	/hamar-**lak dia/**, /hamar-**gilak dia/**, /hamar-**gulak dia/.** 'by us'
	second	/tok dia/ 'by you'	/tomar-**lak dia/**, /tomar-**gilak dia/**, /tomar-**gulak dia/.** 'by you'(PL)
	third	/uak dia/, /umak dia/. 'by him/her'	/umar-**lak dia/**, /umar-**gilak dia/**, /umar-**gulak dia/.** 'by them'
Genitive	first	/mor/ 'my'	/hamar-**la-r/**, /hamar-**gila-r/**, /hamar-**gula-r/.** 'our'
	second	/tor/ 'your'	/tomar-**la-r/**, /tomar-**gila-r/**, /tomar-**gula-r/.** 'yours'(PL)
	third	/uar/, umar/ 'his/her'	/umar-**la-r/**, /umar- **gila-r/**, /umar-**gula-r/.** 'their'

Personal Pronoun with case Inflection

Example of Personal Pronouns

1. mui   kali   haʈ   gei-ʧɔŋ

    I-1SG   yesterday   market   go-PAST-1P

    'I went to market yesterday'.

2. tui   aʤi   hamar   gʰɔr-ɔt   aʃ-bu

    you- 2SG   today   our   house-LOC   come-FUT-2P

    'You will come to our house today'.

3. uaj   mɔʃoŋ   dija   bʰat   kʰa-j

    he/she-3SG   meat   with-INS   rice   eat-PRES-3P

    'He/she eats rice with meat'.

4. umra-la/gila/gula   ʃɔdaj   iʃkul   ʤa-j

    they-3PL   everyday   school   go-PRES-3P

    'They go to school every day '.

1.5. Possessive Pronouns

''Possessive Pronouns that express ownership or possession and typically replace or modify a noun to indicate that something belongs to someone or something.(Radford, A (2004) English Syntax: An Introduction)''. Possessive pronouns in Rajbanshi are derived from personal pronouns by morphological changes and are inflected for person and number. In Rajbanshi, possessive pronouns generally precede the noun they modify. They can be presented as follows:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st Person	/mor/hamar/ 'my'	/hamar-**la-r**/hamar-**gila-r**/ hamar-**gula-r/** 'our'
2nd Person	/tor/ 'your'	/tomar-**la-r**/-r tomar-**gila-r**/ tomar-**gula-r/** 'your'
3rd Person	/uar/umar/ 'his/her'	/umar-**la-r** /umar- **gila-r** /umar-**gula-r/** 'their'

VEDA'S

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)

An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

Impact Factor (SJIF) 6.002   http://www.joell.in

Vol.13, No.1

(Jan-March)

2026

Example of Possessive Pronouns

1. ei-ʈa   mor   baŋla   bɔi

    This-CLF   my-1SG   Bengali   book

    'This is my Bengali book'.

2. tor   bʰai   kali   baʤar-ɔt   ge-iʧe

    your-2SG   brother   yesterday   market-LOC   go-PST-2P

    'Your brother went to the market yesterday'.

3. uaj   mor   ʤanla-hate   pɔri   ge-iʧe

    he-3SG   my-1SG   window-ABL   down   fall-PST-3P

    'He fell down from my window'.

4. mor   kaka   kolkata-t   thake

    my-1SG   uncle   kolkata-LOC   live

    'My uncle lives in kolkata'.

5. hamar-la-r/ gila-r/gula-r   bari   coochbehar

    our-1PL-GEN   house   coochbehar

    'our house is in coochbehar'.

1.6. DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

A demonstrative pronoun is a pronoun that is used to point to something specific within a sentence. Demonstrative pronoun is used to replace a noun or noun phrase that has already been mentioned in a sentence. These pronouns can indicate items in distance or time, and they can be either singular or plural. Demonstrative pronoun in Rajbanshi can be defined on the basis of distance i.e. proximity or remoteness. In Rajbanshi, demonstrative pronouns can be used for both human and non-entities. The examples are illustrated in the following.

Proximate   **Remote**

Singular	Plural
/ei/ 'this/it'	/ei-**la**/ei-**gila**/ei-**gula/** 'these'

Singular	Plural
/oi/ 'that'	/oi-**la**/oi-**gila**/oi-**gula/** 'those'

1.6.1. PROXIMATE PRONOUN

''Proximate pronouns refer to entities that are near the speaker in space, time or discourse'' (Stephen C. Levinson, in Deixis and Pragmatics, 1983). In the case of Rajbanshi language, proximate pronouns help refer to people, objects, or places that are physically or mentally close to the speaker. The Rajbanshi word /ei/ denotes both 'this' and 'it', indicating people, items or place that are in close proximity. The examples are illustrated in the following.

Singular

(1) ei-ṭa   mor   boi

   this-CLF   my   book

   'This is my book'.

(2) ei-ṭa   mor   kɔlom

    this-CLF   my   pen

   'This is my pen'.

Plural

(3) ei-la/gila/gula   mor   boi

    these   my   book

   'These are my books'.

(4) ei-la/gila/gula   mor   ʤama

    these   child   cloth

    'These are my clothes'.

1.6.2. REMOTE PRONOUN

''A Remote demonstrative typically refers to something that is not near either the speaker or the hearer, and may also express emotional or narrative distance'' (Dixon (2003) – Basic Linguistic theory). The Rajbanshi lexeme /oi/ is used to denote 'that' referred to the person or thing which are not within the proximity or sight in the mind of the speaker. The examples are illustrated in the following.

Singular

(1) oi-ṭa   manʃi   ek-ṭa   ʧor

    that-CLF   person   one-CLF   thief

    'That person is a thief'.

(2) oi-ṭa   ʧeŋri   bʰal   manʃi

    that-CLF   girl   good   person

    'That girl is good person'.

VEDA'S

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)

An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

Impact Factor (SJIF) 6.002   http://www.joell.in

Vol.13, No.1

(Jan-March)

2026

(3) oi-ţa   ʧeŋra   bɔja   manʃi

     that-CLF   boy   bad   person

     'That boy is bad person'.

(4)   oi-ţa   ʧʰaoa   dʰɔkerʃori   dekʰir

      that-CLF   child   beautiful   look

      'That child looks beautiful'.

(5)   oi-ţa   buri   ʃei   kaʤia   kɔre

      that-CLF   old woman   a lot   quarrel   do

      'That old woman quarrels a lot'.

Plural

(6) oi-la/gila/gula   mor   boi

        those   my   book

        'Those are my books'.

(7) oi-la/gila/gula   mor   bɔndʰu

      those   my   friend

      'Those are my friends'.

(8) oi-la/gila/gula   mor   ʤama

      those   my   cloth

      'Those are my clothes'.

1.7. INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

Interrogative pronoun is a pronoun, which are used to ask questions about a person, place or object not known about. The interrogative pronouns or the WH- words in Rajbanshi can be classified into two sub-types i.e. (1) Basic interrogative pronouns or (2) Derived interrogative pronouns in terms of their structure.

1.7.1.   BASIC INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

The basic interrogative pronouns are those which are underived roots of the language as can be seen in the following example.

Rajbanshi	Gloss
/kaj/	'who'
/ki/	'what'
/kɔtkʰone/	'when'

VEDA'S

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)

An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

Impact Factor (SJIF) 6.002   http://www.joell.in

Vol.13, No.1

(Jan-March)

2026

/koʈe/	'where'
/kene/	'why'
/keŋkori/	'how'

1.tui   kɔtkʰone   aʃibu

   you-2SG   when   come-FUT-3P ?

   'When will you come?'

2.deba   dʒanla-hate   keŋkori   pɔr-iʧe

   deba-3SG   window-ABL   how   fell-PST-3P ?

   'How did deba fall from the window?'

3.kaj   tor   ʃɔte   badʒar-ɔt   ge-iʧe

   who   you   with   market-LOC   go-PST ?

   'Who went to the market with you?'

4.tui   ki   kʰa-ʧiʃ

   you-2SG   what   eat-PST-2P ?

   'What did you eat?'

5.tui   koʈe   ge-ʧiʃ

   you-2SG   where   go-PST ?

   'Where did you go?'

6.tui   kene   aʃ-ʧiʃ

   you-2SG   why   come-PST-2P ?

   'Why did you come?'

1.7.2. DERIVED INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

According to Otto Jespersen ''Interrogative pronouns as interrogative forms that are not primary, but are obtained by adding case endings are other grammatical elements to base interrogative''. In Rajbanshi language, derived interrogative pronouns are mainly derived from the basic interrogative pronouns /kaj/ 'who', /koʈe/ 'where' and /ki/ 'what' by suffixing case markers / –r, -k,-hate/ and /–dia/ to the basic interrogative pronouns as illustrated in the following.

Rajbanshi	Gloss
/kar/	'Whose'
/kak/	'whom'
/koʈe hate/	'from where'
/ki dia/	'with what'

1.tui   ka-k   dekʰ-ʧiʃ

 you- 2SG   whom-ACC   see-PST-2P ?

 'Whom did you see?'

2.tui   koʈe- hate   aʃ-ʧiʃ

you-2SG   where-ABL   come-PST-2P ?

 'From where did you come?'

3.uaj   koʈe-hate   pɔri   ge-iʧe

He-3SG   where-ABL   down   fall- PST- 3P?

'From where did he/she fall down?'

4.uaj   ki-dia   gɔʧʰ-ta   kaʈ-iʧe

he/she,3SG   what-INS   tree-CLF   cut-PST-3P ?

 'With what did she/he cut the tree?'

5.deba   ki-dia   tɔrkari   kaʈ-iʧe

 deba-NOM   what-INS   vegetables   cut-PST-3P ?

 'With what did deba cut the vegetables?'

6.ei-ʈa   kar   kʰata

this-CLF   whose   notebook ?

 'Whose notebook is this'?

1.8. INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

Crystal (2008) in A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics defines indefinite pronoun as 'A type of pronoun whose reference is non-specific, i.e. it does not identify a particular person, object, or event, but rather some member(s) of a class in an indefinite way'. Indefinite pronouns are those referring to one or more unspecified objects, beings or places, indefinite pronouns knows as indefinite because they do not indicate the exact object, being or place to which they refer. The indefinite pronouns in Rajbanshi are illustrated in the following examples:

Rajbanshi	Gloss
/ʃɔgaj/	'everybody'
/kaŋo/	'somebody'
/kaŋo nai/	'nobody'
/kaho/	'anybody'
/ʃɔblaj/	'everything'
/akna/	'something'

1. ʃɔgaj   kali   mela-t   ge-iʧe
    everybody   yesterday   fair-LOC   go-PST
    'Everybody went to the fair yesterday'.

2. ʃɔgaj   aʤi   iʃkul   ge-iʧe
    everybody   today   school   go-PST
    'Everybody went to the school today'.

3. ʃɔgaj   raʤa-r   gɔlpo-ʈa   ʤane
    everybody   king-GEN   story-CLF   know-PRES
    'Everybody knows the king's story'.

4. kaŋo   dobor   kʰul-iʧe
    somebody   door   open-PST
    'Somebody opened the door'.

VEDA'S
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)
An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal
Impact Factor (SJIF) 6.002   http://www.joell.in

Vol.13, No.1
(Jan-March)
2026

5. kaŋo   kali   mela-t   ge-iʧe
    somebody   yesterday   fair-LOC   go-PST
    'Somebody went to the fair yesterday'.

6. mor   bari-t   kaŋo   nai
    my-1SG   house-LOC   someone   not exist
    'Nobody is in my house'.

7. kaho   baʤar-ɔt   aʃir   paj
    anybody   market-LOC   come   can
    'Anybody can come to the market'.

8. mor   bari-t   ʃɔblaj   bʰal   aʧʰe
    my-1SG   house-LOC   everything   good   is
    'Everything is fine at my home'.

9. mui   akna   kʰaoar   ʧa-ŋ
    I-1SG   something   eat   want-PRES
    'I want to eat something'.

1.9. REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

According to Crystal David, ''a reflexive pronoun is a form which refers back to the subject of its clause typically ending in – self or- selves in English'' (2008, A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics).The reflexive pronoun occurs between the subject and the action being reflected back to the subject. The reflexive pronoun in Rajbanshi is expressed by using word /niʤe/ self. In Rajbanshi, the prefix /niʤe/ follows the noun or pronoun.

1. rimi   niʤe   bɔi-kʰan   nek-iʧe
    rimi-3SG   self-REFL   book-CLF   write-PST-3P
    'Rimi herself wrote the book'.

2. mui   niʤe   kamai-kʰan   ʃeʃ   kɔr-ʧɔŋ
    I-1SG   self-REFL   work-CLF   finish   do-PST-1P
    'I myself finished the work'.

3. uaj   niʤe   ak-kʰan   gari   kin-iʧe

    she   self-REF   one-CLF   car   buy-PST-3P

    'She bought a car herself'.

4. tui   aʤi   niʤe   kapur-gula   dʰo

    you-2SG   today   REFL   cloth-PL   wash

    'You wash the clothes yourself today'

5. mui   niʤe   ʃɔb   am-gula   kʰai- ʧɔŋ

    I-1SG   self   all   mango-PL   eat-PST-1P

    'I myself ate all the mangoes'.

2.   Conclusion

Rajbanshi is an Indo-Aryan language. The pronoun system helps to identify the typological features of Rajbanshi Language. Based on the above research it can be concluded that Rajbanshi pronouns can take both case and number markers. Rajbanshi pronouns can be classified into six categories namely; personal pronoun, possessive pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, interrogative pronoun, indefinite pronoun, and reflexive pronoun. In Rajbanshi, personal pronouns can be divided into three different forms according to the person that is First-person, Second Person and Third Person and it can also be divided into two number categories: singular and plural. The demonstrative pronoun in Rajbanshi can be defined based on distance, i.e, proximity or remoteness. Interrogative pronouns in Rajbanshi are divided into two sub-types based on their structure: such as (1) basic interrogative pronouns and (2) derived interrogative pronouns. Basic interrogative pronouns are the underived roots of the language. In the Rajbanshi language, derived interrogative pronouns primarily derive from the basic interrogative pronouns */kaj/* 'who', */koʈe/* 'where', and */ki/* 'what' by adding case markers */–r, -k, -hate/* and */–dia/ to* these basic forms. The reflexive pronoun in Rajbanshi is expressed by using prefix */niʤe/* 'self'. In Rajbanshi, the prefix */niʤe/* follows the noun or pronoun.

ABBREVIATIONS   INS   Instrumental   REFL   Reflexive

    1 First   SG   singular number

    2 Second   PL   Plural   number   CLF   Classifier

    3 Third   PRES   Present

    ACC   Accusative   PST   Past

    ABL   Ablative   FUT   Future

    GEN   Genitive   LOC   Locative

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbi, A. (2001). *A manual of linguistic fieldwork and structures of Indian languages*. Lincom Europa.

Wilde, C. P. (2008). *A sketch of the phonology and grammar of Rajbanshi of Jhapa, Nepal*.

Crystal, D. (2003). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (5th ed.). Blackwell Publishing.

Poudel, T. (2006). *Rajbanshi grammar and internalized text*. Lincom Europa.

Sanyal, C. C. (1965). *The Rajbanshi of North Bengal*. The Asiatic Society.

Grierson, G. A. (1903). *Linguistic survey of India: Vol. V, Part I. Indo-Aryan languages (Eastern group)*. Motilal Banarsidass.

Comrie, B. (1985). *Tense*. Cambridge University Press.

Masica, C. P. (1991). *The Indo-Aryan languages*. Cambridge University Press

Barman, S. (2011). *Kamtapuri abhidhan*. Kamtapuri Bhasha Unnoyan Porishad.

Barma, D. N. (2000). *Kamtapuri bhasha sahityer ruparekha*. Raydhak Prakashan.

Gleason, H. A. (1961). *An introduction to descriptive linguistics* (Rev. ed.). Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Radford, A. (2004). *English syntax: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Toulmin, M. (2006). *Reconstructing linguistic theory in a dialect continuum: The Kamta, Rajbanshi, and Northern Deshi Bangla subgroup of Indo-Aryan* (Doctoral dissertation). Australian National University.