

**Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi  
People in Jalpaiguri: An Overview**

Rajesh Roy<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Independent Scholar  
Department of History,  
University of North Bengal  
Darjeeling, West Bengal, India  
Email: [rajeshroy.set@gmail.com](mailto:rajeshroy.set@gmail.com)

---

**Abstract:***The sub-Himalayan area North Bengal which means the North region of West Bengal is really covered by the districts like Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, and Darjeeling. Hills, mountains, rivers and green forests make it a sublime natural beauty. People of different cultures, religions and languages live together. The majority of people belong to Rajbanshi. The Rajbanshi are the major ethnic group of North Bengal. They worship natural power such as the goddess rivers, goddess forests etc. In spite of this, they have some separate Gods and Goddesses as well as practices like Garam Thakur, Kali Bishoori, Sannyasi, Terea fela, Chor Khela, Tistaburi, Naya Khoi, Mecheni Khela, Bas Khela, Dharam Thakur, Gorinath khela, Akso Haka etc. The Rajbanshi display their devotion to these gods and Goddesses for saving them from various evils. In this article, I shall attempt to highlight the Religious beliefs and Practices of Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri Districts.*

**Keywords:** Folk Culture, Gods and Goddesses, Prag-Jotishpur, Rajbanshi etc.

---

**Date of Submission:28.02.2026**

**Date of Acceptance: 05.03.2026**

---

**Introduction**

Jalpaiguri district in west Bengal is a very ancient highway of life. In the past, some parts of Jalpaiguri were under the rule of *Prag-Jotishpur, Kamrup, Kamta* kingdoms. After the Anglo-Bhutan war in 1884 Maynaguri and some other parts came under the colonial government. Finally it was under the Bhutan kingdom from 1715 to 1864. Later Jalpaiguri district was formed in 1869. From ancient time to present the Jalpaiguri has been the home to people of various Castes, Tribes and Religions and Cultures. However, the Rajbanshi community is in the majority in the Jalpaiguri district. The people of this Rajbanshi society

---

## Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

have their own god & goddess and worship them. They believe that by worshipping them, their wishes will be fulfilled. The Rajbanshi people are practices like - *Gachukuna Puja*, *Bisohori puja*, *Akso Haka*, *Garam Thakur Puja*, *Goru Chumani Puja*, *Garinath Khela*, *Terea Fela*, *Naya Khoi*, *Chor Khela*, *Bas Khela*, *Dhane Phul Ana*, *Koina Gat*, *Gosa Dewa*, *Vera Ghor*, *Dol Thakur Puja* etc. Among the famous temples of God and Goddesses like *Jalpeswar Temple*, *Jotileswar*, *Bhadeswar*, *Boteswar*, *Petkati*, *Sodorkhai Temple*. The Rajbanshi thinker that devotion to these Gods & Goddesses for saving them from various evils. Now-a-days, they like to follow Bengali culture and western Cultures. Through this article, I want to draw the Culture, Gods and Goddesses of Rajbanshi People.

### Gachukuna Puja

The people of the Rajbanshi tribe organize this *puja* on a special auspicious day in the Bengali month of *Ashadh* (May-June) before the first paddy planting in the land. According to the Bengali calendar, a high earthen altar is made in a corner of the land by determining a specific direction (*Yugani*) and planting a few paddy seedlings, a jute tree, a *kewa* tree, and a *Kalakachu* tree (Black Taro plant). As the ingredients of the *puja*, milk, bananas, *batasa*, flower water, along with gold and silver water are offered to Goddess Lakshmi. During the rainy season, many small animals die during the ploughing, Mother Earth is injured, so Mother Earth is worshipped and asked for forgiveness. Moreover, during the rainy season, Mother Earth is worshipped so that there are no obstacles during ploughing, the incidence of insects is reduced, and the harvest is good. As an ingredient of this *Gachukuna Puja*, banana trees are planted as a symbol of auspiciousness and prosperity, jute trees are planted as ornaments (fiber), and *kewa* trees are planted as a great medicine. During the rainy season, when a cow falls ill while cultivating paddy, *kewa* trees are needed as medicine. *Kala Kachu* trees are planted to worship Goddess Kali. Gold and silver water is given because gold is a very valuable ornament, the farmers of the village believe that their crop is as valuable as gold. During this *Gachukuna Puja*, a *bhuti* (straw bundle) is burnt and taken from the householder's house for the purpose of worship because this *bhuti* of straw is shown to Goddess Lakshmi and is said to be proof that the previous year's paddy was very good. And may there be a very good crop this year. After completing the Puja, the *bhuti* of straw is brought home. On the day of *Gachukuna Puja*, Rajbanshi people fast all day, perform puja, come home and eat rice with *Kalakachu* leaves and *Thakuri Kalai* (*Mash Kalai*) pulses. In

## Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

fact, *Kala kachu* leaves (black Taro leaves) are very good sources of iron. And *Thakuri Kalai* pulses are good sources of protein. Farmers work very hard during the rainy season while cultivating paddy. The villagers believe that eating these vegetables will keep them healthy and strong.

### Bisohori

The temple of *Bisohori Thakur* can be seen in the north-east corner of every house of the Rajbanshi people. *Bisohori* is the Snake goddess. Every year, *Bisohori Thakur* is worshipped during the annual *puja* as well as during the marriage ceremony. This brings happiness to the married life of the bride and groom. In this *Bisohori Thakur thane*, the deities Kali, *Dakini-Yugani*, *Netha*, *Dharam*, *Manasa*, *Teesta Buri* are worshipped. On the occasion of this *puja*, duck eggs, lambs, and pigeons are sacrificed. The village *Deosi* (priest) pleases this goddess by singing the *Bisohara* Song. The people of the village believe that by pleasing this goddess, one gets protection from insect and snake bites. As a vow, a three-day *Bishahara* song is organized if the wishes of the people of the village are fulfilled. No special idol is seen in this *Kani Bishahari Thakur thane*. A high altar made of earth is made and worshipped. However, during the *puja*, the *puja* is performed with a '*Dorjhar*' (an idol made of Thermocol). This *Bisohori puja* is still widely practiced in the Rajbanshi society of rural Bengal.

### Akso Haka

To protect the golden crop from insect attacks before the paddy ripens, the Rajbanshi people of Jalpaiguri district adopt a rustic way of repelling insects through a special ceremony. The *Akso Haka* ceremony is organized on the day of Lakshmi Puja. On the day of the *puja*, at first a paddy plant is brought home along with soil from the paddy field. Then in the afternoon, *Akso Haka* is performed by going from paddy field to paddy field. In many regions, the custom of sacrificing a duck is still prevalent on this day for *Lakshmi Thakur*. For this *Akso Haka*, *jamuri* leaves (a type of lemon), mustard seeds, etc. are required. These are dried and ground into powder. Apart from this, a banana stalk (the leaf spine of the banana tree) and jute sticks are made in a corner of each paddy field and a lamp is lit with salt. In the paddy fields, insects are chased away by lighting a lamp and sprinkling mustard seed and *jamri* leaf

## **Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview**

---

powder. This scene is especially seen in villages before the evening of *Lakshmi Puja*. The people of the village say a loud voice –

*“Akso ha, pokamakor dur Ja,  
Sogare dhan toneya maneya, hamar dhan  
Kainchar sona”*

This means that no matter how everyone else’s paddy (crop) is, but let our own crop be like gold. Another voice is -

*“Chhot langaler boro ish  
Hamar dhangila holhola shish”*

This means that the iron cog of the small plough that is needed while ploughing the paddy should be large so that it is convenient to cultivate. In this way, the cultivated land will be very loose, the yield will be good, and the paddy grains will be large.

### **Goru Chumani Puja**

A notable culture of Jalpaiguri district is called *Goru Chumani Puja* or *Bakhor* feeding. This cow worship is organized in the morning on the day after Kali Puja. The cows of the house are bathed and fed with rice, pumpkin, ginger, onion, salt, *Bakhor* (a type of tree root that is found in the forest). The roots of this *Bakhor* are burnt in a fire, cut into small pieces, mixed with oil and salt and given to eat on banana leaves. The villagers believe that if these are fed, the cows will be protected from various diseases. Then mustard oil is applied to the horns of the cows. Cows are treated with oil, vermilion and bulls with oil, clay, incense sticks are lit and worshipped with water and flowers. It is believed that the cow god is pleased with this.

### **Garinath Khela**

Every year, the people of the Rajbanshi tribe organize this *Garinath Khela* on the full moon day of the Bengali month of *Bhadra* (August-September) at night. The young boys of the village used to go from house to house for three days and sing while banging sticks on the ground. This game was organized by going from village to village to collect rice, pulses, paddy, jute, coconuts, bananas for the sake of Lord Shiva. The practice of singing while banging sticks is very rare nowadays. Now *Garinath Khela* is organized by playing microphones and setting off fireworks. While playing this game, when going to the house of the householder, one has to say -

# Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

“*Shive Shive Ek Dan Dhan Dibe*”

(This means that the owner of the house will donate one Dan (12 kg of rice) of rice to Lord Shiva.)

And the songs that are played are discussed below.

“*Chato Tongru Baro Tongru Tong Khatiber Jay,  
Chhawa Uthi Koy Bole Baap Kode Jay.*”

(The literal meaning of this is that two brothers were guarding the rice field by pitching a tent at night. Suddenly their son woke up and said where his father had gone.)

## Terea Fela

The people of Maynaguri Rajbanshi society are going to organize this puja on the 13th day of the Bengali month of *Falgun*. On that day, during the day, a banyan tree (banana tree peel), a broom stick (coconut tree leaf stick), a little cow dung, *dubba* grass, *bhauti* flowers are placed in a banana tree and incense sticks are burned in the street of the house and worship is performed. After the *puja*, one has to pour a bucket of water over the body and run home. It is generally believed that the cold (winter) departs from this day, and it is considered a prediction of heat. On the day of *Tereya Phela*, shepherd service is performed in villages. This shepherd service is mainly performed for the purpose of worshipping Lord Krishna.

## Naya Khoi

The *Nabanna* festival is also known as *Nayakhoi* by the Rajbanshi people. On a special auspicious day in the Bengali month of *Aghrayana* (November-December), the villagers perform *Shraddha* and *Pindadan* for their departed parents. Before eating the new rice, it is offered to the Thakur deity and the fox dog. On that day, to please the Brahma deity, a Brahma *yajna* is performed by the *Adhikari Thakur* (priest) with *Atkhor*, *Batkhor*, (made from dried branches of mango trees, jackfruit trees and other trees) mango leaves, mustard oil, and new rice bran, milk, curd and ghee. The Rajbanshi people believe that if they worship this Brahma deity, they will be well throughout the year. According to the custom, on this day, new vegetables and new rice are cooked and the *Mahabarik Thakur* is worshipped in a

## Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

banana shell (banana tree shell) with water and flowers. In the evening, the villagers gather together to enjoy a new meal of rice or rice with new vegetables.

### Chor Khela

The people of the Rajbanshi tribe play the game of Thief in the villages on the day after Kali Puja. According to folklore, when Goddess Kali left Shiva for the Himalayas, Bholanath went to Goddess Kali in the guise of *Bhikheri* (in disguise or as a thief), and Goddess Kali offered alms to Shiva in the form of Annapurna. Shiva ate it. Many believe that this *Chor Khela* started from that day. On the day of this *Chor Khela*, the boys and girls dressed as Goddess Kali and Durga went from house to house, sang with Drums, Khols, and Cymbals, and collected rice, pulses, and money. The collected rice and pulses are cooked and fed to the poor people of the village. The practice of this Chor Khela is comparatively less observed compared to the previous days.

### Garam Puja

*Garam Thakur* is one of the primary land deities of the Rajbanshi community of rural Bengal. In the Rajbanshi-dominated areas, a large *Garam Thakur* temple can be observed in each village based on the neighborhood. A little away from the householder's house, a high altar is made of earth under a banyan tree or under a bamboo bush, and small huts are built with bamboo and straw to worship *Garam Thakur*. However, today, due to family separation, many *Gram Thakur* temples can be observed in a village. In the past, various epidemics such as plague, cholera, malaria, and smallpox spread in rural Bengal. These deadly diseases took the lives of many people. To save themselves from this situation, the villagers took refuge in the *Garam Thakur*. It is believed that with the blessings of *Garam Thakur*, the Rajbanshi people were largely saved from this deadly disease. When the people of the agricultural villages lost their crops or were victims of any natural disaster or any accident, the village *Thakur* was worshipped. There are a variety of gods and goddesses in the *Garam Thans* located in different places of North Bengal. Dr. Girija Shankar Roy has mentioned the names of ten gods and goddesses in the *Garam Than* in his book '*Uttar Bange Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jaateer Puja Parvan*'. However, in the *Gram Thakur Thans* of Mainaguri, Dhupguri and

## Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

Kranti blocks of Jalpaiguri district, more or less gods are worshipped in some places and more than ten in others. The main deities that can be seen in most of the thanes are - to the east of the *Garam Thakur's* thane are Jai Jagannath and *Rakhal Bangla* (Krishna and Balaram), Sanyasi Thakur, to the north are Shiva, Kali and regional deities Mahakal, Dhansura, to the west - *Pasimpeer* or *Paglapeer*, to the south are *Dihabari Thakur*, *Chakchakki*, *Teesta Buri*, *Jalpesh*, *Chamar Thakur*. In the middle of these *Thakur* thanes is the place of *Guru Thakur (Vrindavani)*. Apart from these deities, sometimes in different regions, the places of *Hawa Kali*, *Bhot Thakur*, *Vishwakarma*, *Bangkandi Thakur*, *Solmari*, *Thunkir Jhar Thakur* can be seen in the thanes of *Garam Thakur*.

*Garam Thakur* is considered the main deity in the Thane of *Garam Thakur*. However, *Garam Thakur* is actually a folk form of *Shiva Thakur*. After that, *Kali Thakur* is worshipped as one of the goddesses. Not only the Rajbanshi community of North Bengal, but also people of other tribes worship *Kali Thakur*. In the Rajbanshi community of North Bengal, this goddess has been worshipped for a long time under the names *Bhadrakali*, *Rakshakali*, *Krishnakali*, *Hawakali* etc.

*Mahakal Thakur* is one of the deities in *Garam Thane*. The Rajbanshi people believe that by worshipping *Mahakal Thakur*, they will get relief from the hands of tigers, bears, elephants, etc. Usually, these animals easily enter into the villages from the nearby forest Jalpaiguri region. Many times they destroy paddy fields and other crops. To get relief from all these, *Mahakal Thakur* is remembered. To please *Mahakal Thakur*, *ganja (Cannabis)* is offered.

The deity of *Paglapeer* is located to the west of the *Garam Thakur's thane*. We do not see any special statue of this *Pagla Peer*. Instead, a bamboo stick is tied to his head with jute. This symbol is why *Paglapeer* is worshipped in different parts of Jalpaiguri. This folk deity is known as *Satyapeer* in some places and *Paschimpeer* in others. Every house of Rajbanshi people has a cowshed to keep cows. It is believed that *Goalipeer Thakur* lives in this cowshed. It is not clear whether this *Goalipeer* is the same as *Pachimpeer Thakur*. For the common people of the village, this *Paglapeer* is the god of freedom from diseases and dangers. I think that further research is needed on why this god of madness is located in the Thane of *Garam Thakur*, even though he is not a Hindu god.

Although all the *pujas* of the *Garam Thane* are performed by the *Deoshi* (village priest), one of the villagers is elected as the head of the village, *Mareya*. When all the *pujas* of the *Deoshi* are performed, *Mareya* offers devotion by offering water and flowers to each

## Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

thane three times. Then all the people of the village perform the *puja* one by one. It is noteworthy that no woman in the household performs this *puja*. After worshipping all the gods and goddesses, the *Pashimpeer Thakur* is worshipped at the end. This *Pashimpeer Thakur* has to be saluted three times with water and flowers. During the *puja* of *Garam Thakur*, Mareya loudly shouted -

“*Garam Thakurer Jahura hok akber, Hari Hari Bol*”.

(In Translation: May Lord Garam awaken and bless the people of the village.)

### Bas Khela

Every year, Rajbanshi people organize an *Bas Khela* on the day of *Garam Puja* in the month of *Baishakh* (April-May). The villagers call it ‘*Bash Jagao day*’. On this day, 6-7 bamboos are beautifully dressed in colorful saris at the thane of *Garam Thakur* and worshipped. These bamboos are imagined as *Garam*, *Sannyasi*, *Kali*, *Tistaburi*, *Kani Bishhari*, *Pagla Peer* deities. However, the bamboo of the *Paglapeer* deity is not dressed in a sari. The bamboo of *Paglapeer* is beautifully decorated with 3-5 layers of jute cloth. The village boys wear dhoti, tie a towel around their waist, take *Deosi* (Priest) with them and go around every house in the village with the bamboos dressed in saris and collect rice, pulses and money for *Garam Thakur*. Then they set off for the market, went to the market and bought milk and bananas for *Garam Thakur* with that money. After returning, the *puja* was performed at the *Garam Thakur Thane*’s. However, the bamboo of that *Paglapeer Thakur* was not brought to the *Garam Thakur Thana*’s. That bamboo was floating in the river. While passing through the village road, a dessert made of two, milk, and rice was prepared as *prasad* for the villagers. The Rajbanshi people accepted this *prasad* as the blessings of *Garam Thakur*. The villagers organized bamboo games for the overall well-being of the village. It is common for the villagers to sacrifice goats, sheep, and pigeons as vows on the occasion of the *puja*. In the Rajbanshi society, bamboo games are organized along with the *puja* of *Garam Thakur* on social occasions like marriages and *annaprashan*. This bamboo game *puja* is organized for three days in some regions. During these three days, the people of the village eat vegetarian food. On the last day, at night, various social events such as *Palatia Gaan*, *Chorchunni Gaan*, *Tukkha* and *Khyapa Gaan* are held. During this bamboo game, the boys go from house to house and play drums and khol and shout loudly-

“*Rakhol Bangla, Dihabari, Sannyasi Thakurer Akbar Hari Hari Bol*.”

# Traditional Religious beliefs and Practices of the Rajbanshi people in Jalpaiguri: An Overview

---

(Hari Hari Bol is said in remembrance of Rakhali Thakur, Banglajhar, Dihabari Thakur, and Sannyasi Thakur.)

## Conclusion

The people of the Rajbanshi community have kept intact the rituals of worshipping the worldly gods and goddesses given by their ancestors. Not only Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped, but the gods of the Muslim community are also worshipped. The people of the village spend every moment of the year with joy and entertainment, wishing for the overall well-being of the village through these worship festivals. I believe that even in the era of modernity and busy work, the next generation of Rajbanshi will maintain the cultural tradition given by their ancestors.

## Notes and References

1. Sanyal, Charu Chandra, *The Rajbansis of North Bengal*, Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 1965, pp.127-162
2. Roy, Girijasankar, *Utterbanger Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Puja-Parvana*, Dibrugarh, Assam: N. L. Publishers, 1970, reprint 1999, pp.19-80
3. Roy, Narendranath, *Sabhyta-Sanskritir Sandhane Utterbanger Lokdevdevi & Lokachar*, Kolkata: Chhaya Publications, 2012, p.18
4. Adhikari, Madhab Chandra, Barman, Sajib, Barman, Latika, *Socio- Cultural Issues of The Rajbanshis of North Bengal*, Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2021, pp.107-134
5. Roy, Rajeswar, Roy, Manadev, *Conventional religious belief and practice of the Rajbansis of North Bengal: An overview*, Volume.2, Issue.4, April 2015, pp.715-720
6. Roy, Ranjit, *Environment and Religious Practices of the Rajbanshis Living in a Border Village of Darjeeling District in North Bengal*, Volume.2, Number.1-2, June-December, 2017, pp.6-8
7. Mandal, Keshab, Sarkar, Prasanya, *An outlook of Social custom of Rajbanshis in West Bengal*, Volume.03, Issue.10, October, 2018, pp.497-498
8. Dinesh Roy, (Bangaratna recipient, folk literature researcher), Aged-69, Village- Maynamapara, P.S - Maynaguri, Dist- Jalpaiguri, on 16/01/2026
9. Dighen Adhikari (*Deosi*), Aged-65, Vill.- Paitkakhocha, Singimari, Jalpaiguri, on 18/01/2026
10. Bhupendra Nath Roy, Aged-54, Vill & Post - Bengkandi, P.S. Maynaguri, Dist- Jalpaiguri, on 18/01/2026