

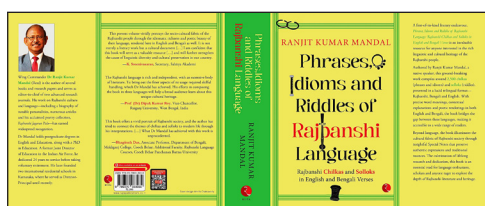
Book Review

A Book Useful for Promotion of Adolescent Health

Jugal Kishore

Managing Editor, Indian Journal for Youth and Adolescent Health, India

I N F O

**E-mail Id:**

jk@drjugalkishore.com

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Phrases, Idioms and Riddles of Rajbanshi Language: Rajbanshi Chilkas and Solloks in English and Bengali Verses

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The Prelude

The WHO has defined health as – ‘the state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity’, and we, the members of Indian Association for Adolescent Health who have undertaken the mission of promotion of health of the youth and adolescent of our country are responsible to accomplish this task adopting all possible healthy means. As a matter of professional ethics, all missionaries of adolescent health promotion work, thus, need to remain proactive to ensure complete wellbeing of the youth and the adolescent in our society. As it implies, besides other things, we need to explore different ways and make use of different resources to achieve our mission. And in this, a literature too works as an effective tool, because a good literature bears such valuable elements of moral teachings that makes it capable of enriching societal culture and in turn, promotion of the health of the youth and adolescent. Therefore, an effective and suitable literature search is required so that it can be made available to our youth and adolescents.

The Rajbanshi Literature

I feel extremely delighted to bring it to your notice that one of life members of IAAH – in fact one of the Vice Presidents of our organization, Wing Commander Dr. Ranjit Kumar Mandal (Retd) has brought out a Rajbanshi Literature book recently. As an invitee to the release ceremony of his book titled – *Phrases, Idioms and Riddles of Rajbanshi Language: Rajbanshi Chilkas and Solloks in English and Bengali Verses*, which I attended. The ceremony was held in the Press Club of India, New Delhi on 19 December 2025. This tri-lingual book was brought out by a renowned publisher – Rupa Publications India Limited, New Delhi. During the ceremony I came to know about the Rajbanshi language and its literature in greater details from the panel of renowned linguists and scholars of national and international repute. That three-hour session evoked my interest to write a review of this book. In our co-authored book titled ‘The Pioneering Reformers of India’ we have discussed about Panchanan Barman, Shibendra Narayan Koch, Mr Nagendra Narayan Roy, and Jananeta Upendra Nath Barman, where Rajbanshi culture and literature were also discussed.

The Special Feature of the Book

Later, I read the book. As the basic narration of the book was in English, I could read the book of this unknown literature with ease and got fascinated with the fact that Rajbanshi language has been one of oldest languages of the country and which has been in existence in India since the 10th century BC. As to the Rajbanshi literature, it appeared to me to be an equally fascinating and educative literature, as the book has been a collection of 2500 pieces of gems i.e., phrases and idioms (*Chilkas* and *Solloks*), gathered by the author painstakingly from this almost extinct language. The veteran author being a native speaker the language, could present the *Chilkas* and *Solloks* as he found them in use personally since the fifth of the previous century.

Foreword of the Book

The book has been forwarded by three eminent literatures namely Dr. Dipak Kumar Roy, the Vice Chancellor, Raigunj University, Dr. Sreenivasa Rao, Secretary, Sahitya Academy and Prof Bhogirath Das an eminent writer and a professor of Rajbanshi language, teaching Rajbanshi language in the Panchanan University, Cooch Behar. All three of them have hailed the book to be an extraordinary and pioneering work. They have even put it on record that this book shall make enormous contributions in the linguistic diversity besides being a resource for the social science researchers and the lovers of literature. They have hailed the book to be able to cross the linguistic barriers due to its three-language presentation.

Introductory Chapter of the Book

The introduction of the book has made it possible to create connection of the readers with the background of the language and the literature. The 19-page chapter of Introduction lays down the history of the Rajbanshi community, Rajbanshi language, grandeur of the Rajbanshi literature and the significance of the *Chilkas* and *Solloks* in the Rajbanshi literature. I came to know while going through the introduction of the book that the Rajbanshi language is in use currently in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, as the Rajbanshi language speakers currently live in these countries. I have been amazed to know that in India, the Rajbanshi language speakers live in a vast area, such as in West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya and Tripura. It was most fascinating to know that this language was the sole language of a ruling dynasty called the Koch Dynasty that ruled in the eastern and the north eastern part of India with its last palace being available even today in the Cooch Behar town in West Bengal. It was brought out there that though the Rajbanshi language has not yet been included in the 8th scheduled in the constitution of India, but the Sahitya Academy has recognized this language; and has awarded ‘*The Bhasha Samman: 2010*’ to one of the literatures of this language. Over and above that, some of the artisans of Rajbanshi culture have been awarded with Padmashree, honorary doctorate and D.Lit degrees. Meanwhile, one Rajbanshi feature film has bagged an international award. About 8 universities, located in Assam and West Bengal, are teaching this language through their Certificate and Diploma programs. In Nepal, this language is a recognized language.

Literary Significance of Rajbanshi Chilkas and Solloks

The Rajbanshi language *Chilkas* and *Solloks* are the synonyms of Phrases and idioms of English language. This first-of-its-kind book presents 2500 *Chilkas* and *Solloks* in six chapters which reflect the vivid and complete picture of the society, life-style and the nature of the people living in the Eastern and the North-Eastern India. The *Chilkas* and *Solloks* deal with human values like necessities to be hard working, living honest lives, necessity of helping others, having self-confidence, having high level of professional skills as the means of leading healthy and happy life. This book thus could be called as the book of language, literature, culture, anthropology and social history of Eastern and the North Eastern India.

Kabir’s Dohas and the Rajbanshi Chilkas and Solloks

Who does not know *Dohas* of Hindi literature? By virtue of the literary values, *Dohas* have been providing moral teachings to its readers as their basic features. The *Dohas*, as a literary genre, are the soothing rhythmic verses or

couplets which are not only the pleasing literary pieces but they guard against the evils to crop in, in the society. This particular Rajbanshi literature book of *Chilkas* and *Solloks* too brings somewhat the same kind of elements as the noble *Dohas* do.

Rajbanshi Chilkas and Solloks Deals with the Medical Science

As an adolescent health missionary which struck me are some *Chilkas* and *Solloks* that provide guidance to the people for maintenance of good health as given below:-

Benefit of Early Rising and Exercises

Sakāl baikāl māṭhat jāy.

Tār kaṛi baidya nā pāēy.

Word Meanings: ‘Sākāl baikāl’: morning and evening; ‘Māṭhat jāy’: goes to the ground; ‘Tār kaṛi’: his money; ‘Baidya nā pāēy’: does not go to any physician.

Contextual Meaning: This phrase signifies that the regular physical exercises in the morning and in the evening can keep a youth and adolescent healthy and avoiding physician.

‘One who walks on the ground in the morning and in the evening later,

They need not pay their money to any doctor.’

Necessity of Maintaining Personal Hygiene

Sakāl sandhāy snān,

Jam rājā pālē jān.

Word Meanings: ‘Sakāl sandhāy snān’: bathing in the morning and in the evening; ‘Jam rājā’: makes the king of death; ‘Pālē jān’: run away.

Contextual Meaning: A hygienic lifestyle, of a youth and adolescent in their growing age can keep them healthy and live longer.

‘One who is habituated in bathing daily twice,

They will be blessed with happiness and a long life.’

Having Cool Mind for Good Mental Health

Dhanēr pa’ōra dē’ōā jāy,

Manēr pa’ōrā dē’ōā nā jāy.

Word Meanings: ‘Dhanēr pa’ōra’: guarding the wealth; ‘Dē’ōā jāy’: is possible; ‘Manēr pa’ōrā dē’ōā’: guarding the mind; ‘Nā jāy’: is not possible.

Contextual Meaning: Knowing it full well that it is possible to guard one’s wealth but not one’s mind, so one should build up a stable healthy mind.

‘Guarding the wealth—one always can,

Guarding the mind can be done by none.’

Necessity of having Nutritious Food

Māmsat māmsa bārē, ghi’uē bārē bal

Dudhōtē bīrjya bārē, ār sāgōt bārē mal.

Dudhōtē bīrjya bārē, ār sāgōt bārē mal.

Word Meanings: ‘Māmsat māmsa bārē’: through consumption of meat, one gets muscles; ‘Ghi’uē bārē bal’: through consumption of clarified butter; ‘Bārē bal’: one increases their strength; ‘Dudhōtē bīrjya bārē’: through consumption of milk, one increases their vitality; ‘Ār sāgōt bārē mal’: through consumption of leafy vegetables, one has a clear bowel movement.

Contextual Meaning: The consumption of meat, clarified butter, milk and leafy vegetables is good diet for health.

‘Eating of meat creates muscles,

Clarified butter gives one strength.

Milk increases one’s vitality,

Leafy vegetables clear bowel activities.’

Necessity of having Varieties of Fruits

Asāl ām kāṭōl,

Ghittur ḍhak jamburā;

Gackumārī pāniāl,

Kucli thākā ha’iḍḍā

Word Meanings: ‘Asāl ām kāṭōl’: juicy mangoes and jackfruits; ‘Ghittur ḍhak jamburā’: a pumpkin-sized grapefruit; ‘Gackumārī pāniāl’: a tree-ripe *panial* (plum); ‘Kucli thākā ha’iḍḍā’: trees laden with soap seed.

Contextual Meaning: Households prosper if the housing complex has healthy living conditions and is surrounded by plenty of fruit-bearing trees for regular consummation by the family members.

‘A household prospers if the complex has fruit-bearing trees,

If mango, jackfruit, plum and berries are among these.’

Necessity of having Good Feel of a Green Housing Complex

Bārīr śubhañkar kalāgāchi, nāirkol,

Cālir śōbhā hō’il jhāri;

Nārīr śubhañkar sōyāmī paradhan,

Bichnār śōbhā nārī.

Word Meanings: ‘Bārīr śubhañkar kalāgāchi, nāirkol’: a house looks beautiful if surrounded by banana and coconut trees; ‘Cālir śōbhā hō’il jhāri’: the veranda of the house looks proper if there is a water vessel meant for hand-wash; ‘Nārīr śubhañkar sōyāmī paradhan’: a married woman looks

beautiful with her husband; 'Bichnār śōbhā nārī': the bed is complete with the presence of the wife.

Contextual Meaning: A house looks pleasant with greenery around and certain accessories decorated inside. Likewise, a happy married life is when the husband and the wife share a loving bond, and the bed becomes beautiful with the presence of the charming wife.

'Houses look grand with tall trees around,
Veranda looks nice if a water pot is found.
Women look pretty in company of their husbands,
A bed receives added grace if the wife is present.'

Guidance for Right Selection of Food

Garam ṭēṅgā, ṭhāṇḍā dudh,

Tākē khāy nīrbōdhē put.

Word Meanings: 'Garam ṭēṅgā': hot-and-sour sauce; 'Ṭhāṇḍā dudh': cold milk; 'Tākē khāy nīrbōdhē put': these are consumed by the sons of fools.

Contextual Meaning: These are the words of wisdom or a health advisory that says consuming a hot-and-sour sauce followed by cold milk may prove to be injurious to health. These food items do not gel and taste good together.

'Hot sauce and cold milk never should you take,
Both are harmful and adversely affect your health.'

Guidance for Right Food Habit

Dudē nuṇē khābu nā,

Asātalē jābu nā.

Word Meanings: 'Dudē nuṇē': milk and salt; 'Khābu nā': not to be consumed together; 'Asātalē jābu nā': one should not spoil their health by doing so.

Contextual Meaning: Consumption of milk and salt together is hazardous to one's health.

'Avoid consuming milk and salt together,
By that, you will remain healthy forever.'

Necessity of Prioritizing Hygienic Food

Dhāgrīr hātē khā'i,

Tēm̐ō gēdrīr hātē nā khā'.

Word Meanings: 'Dhāgrīr': a woman of doubtful character (maintains illicit relationships); 'Hātē khā'i': can be permitted to cook and serve you food; 'Tēm̐ō': but; 'Gēdrīr': a person who lives an unhygienic life; 'Hātē nā khā'i': should not be permitted to do so.

Contextual Meaning: It is very essential to ensure that the woman who cooks and serves food lives a hygienic life; it

does not matter what her personal life is like (even if she has a questionable character in the prevailing social sense).

'Cleanliness is godliness—this is taken as the truth,

A cook should live a hygienic life to serve you food.'

Remaining Away from Tobacco

Tās, tāṅku ār pāsā,

Ēi tin sarbanāsā.

Word Meanings: 'Tās, tāṅku ār pāsā': gambling through cards and dice and consumption of tobacco; 'Ēi tin sarbanāsā': these three habits ruin people.

Contextual Meaning: Gambling through cards and dice and consumption of tobacco are bad habits that need to be avoided.

'Tobacco consumption and gambling with dice and cards,
People should avoid as these would make their life hard.'

Remaining Away from Substance Abuses

Gāṁjāy khāy māñjā,

Āphimē khāy kāyā,

Word Meanings: 'Gāṁjāy': a narcotic called the hussies; 'Khāy māñjā': takes away the inner strength of a person; 'Āphimē': the opium; 'Khāy kāyā': spoils the physical appearance of a person.

Contextual Meaning: Substance abuse harms a person in one way or the other.

'Hussies ruin the health of a man,

Necessity of having Good Company

Sat saṅgē swarga bās,

A-sat saṅgē sarbōnās.

Word Meanings: 'Sat saṅgē': good company; 'Swarga bās': takes one to heaven; 'A-sat saṅgē': bad company; 'Sarbōnās': ruins everything.

Contextual Meaning: While good company brings one joy, bad company ruins the mental peace. This Chilkā issues a kind of advisory that one should maintain a desirable company for one's benefit and for the general well-being of society.

'In good company, one acquires positive traits,

In bad company, one lowers one's image.'

Benefitting from the Rajbanshi Literature

I am of the belief that this literature shall be of immense reference value to the youth and adolescent health. As the book which has been written in a very lucid and charming way, even the young and adolescent students shall be able

to read this book and imbibe the given values in their lives. Another important factor of the book is that the *Chilkas* and *Solloks* being written in with their serial number, the book is easily readable in random manner.

The Better way of Using this Rajbanshi Book

I feel the important *Chilkas* and *Solloks* may be used while delivering lectures to the students. The sayings available there may be used in making placards. The contents of the book may be used as the quiz and language game. Hence, I would recommend that this book to be added in the inventory of the colleges, schools and institutions libraries and in the personal collection of the people.