

*Rajbanshi People of northern West Bengal: Access to Micro-Credit*

Authors: Ashok Das Gupta, Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal, District- Darjeeling, West Bengal, PIN- 734 013, Email ID:  
*ashok.dasgupta@yahoo.com*

*Abstract:* This paper is on Rajbanshi People of northern West Bengal: Access to Micro-Credit. These people are basically agriculturists, but their traditional verities, organic cultivation, livestock rearing, and handicrafts as well as various ways to utilize natural resources and food processing techniques are so important where rural banking, Self-Help Groups, micro-credit can find the way. That would be also useful in women empowerment directly improving the education and health systems at ground stage. Case studies are taken from rural Rajbanshi people of northern West Bengal plains of India. Their involvements in production systems of tobacco, betel, organic manure and vermin-compost, jute, silk, silk cotton, quality rice, baby corn, vegetables like broccoli, bringal and potato, medicinal herbs, wooden work, bamboo and cane work, flex and Sital, mushroom, tea, gerbera, pine apple, mango, chilly, other spices as well as handloom, pottery, ornamental plants, coloured fishes, goat, cattle and poultry can be targeted for micro-finance investment.

## Introduction

In Indian perspective, the most people live in rural society segregated into various agrarian rural structures. Agriculture in India is the vertical backbone of the country and is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. The contributory share of agriculture in GDP has declined from 55.4 per cent in 1950-51 to 18.5 per cent in 2006-07. Agriculture at present provides livelihood to sixty per cent of the total population. The sector provides employment to 58.4 per cent of country's workforce. It is the single largest private enterprise. Agriculture also plays a very important role in industrial development as being the source of raw materials for many industries. India's foreign trade is deeply associated with agriculture. Agriculture accounts for about 14.7 per cent of the total export earnings. Agriculture and its related goods contribute thirty eight per cent in the total exports of the country. Expanding agricultural production increases the demand for other sectors notably fertilizers, pesticides, machinery, transportation and communication varying with the level of technology. Indian agriculture continues to be a gamble on the monsoon and still organic cum sustainable agricultural practices have a great demand.

(Anonymous, 2007)

### *Microfinance and Self-Help Group and focus on women*

Credit service delivery and savings service delivery between client and bank still favour women for their goodwill, though they suffer from various challenges, feel burdened, and demand flexibility in installment payment. In that context, microfinance is financial services to micro-entrepreneurs and small business groups who in generally fail to access

to banking and related services due to the high transaction costs, other unusual terms and inflexible repayment systems (such as, weekly installments from the very beginning of receipt of the loan amount onwards). Success of microfinance is in empowerment and poverty alleviation; but it is actually regulated by macro-economy. It is a form of macro-economy through which modern economy brings into traditional economy under the credit system.

Increased wellbeing of the poor family by means of the involvement of its womenfolk in a proper way is a very important attribute of microfinance. It includes: women's purchasing power; women's decisions about consumption; increased wellbeing of women; increased wellbeing of children and men; and access to development services such as health and education. Microfinance can facilitate both economic and political empowerment (see Figure 1).

Microfinance through co-operatives and Self-Help Group (SHG) can really helpful for the women associated with non-market or non-market household enterprises as well as such institutions serving households. Whether NGO or governmental; the SHG can turn them into profitable and market-oriented in terms of microfinance. This could be followed by rural banking and various public saving schemes.

Including womenfolk, people from rural section of India often try to access the equity, even want to invest into share market, and show interest in various *chit funds*. In comparison to these, microfinance and SHG in association with rural banking, other small scale investments, co-operatives, entrepreneur agencies are safer places to invest.

Women are often targeted for microfinance, as they are believed to be more punctual with proper use of the loan and returning back installments and loan in time. It is the goodwill of womenfolk for which they are given first preference in microfinance; there are so many tough challenges: poor networks, low opportunity, greater domestic burden, weaker self-confidence, less education, lack of awareness, existing social norms and cultural values that do not permit them to go outside or earning money elsewhere, absolute men dominance, and finally, a restrictive legal environment.

Microfinance is not restricted within microfinance loans and deposits, but has wider socio-economic and socio-political impacts with education and health organizations. Empowerment via microfinance is a complex, multidimensional and interlinked process of change.

Women are more trusted for loans and deposits. They have some credit, purchasing power, and decision makers' role. But ultimately this gender empowerment can affect social, economic, political and cultural domains that men can try to resist or not. Here come issues like matriarchy and/or matrilineal system in front of men dominance. Marriage and kinship systems may become so crucial. Some non-economic benefits are also associated to this: self-management, networking and entrepreneurship, respect from both men and female relatives and community members, and leadership. In SHG and co-operatives, the involvement of men should be taken care off.

Division of the total labour force in households and related institutions into paid and unpaid workers generates a generalized hierarchy inside and outside the homestead: always negative to women and children (however, child labour is itself an offence).

Again the total economic production (GDP) of the country excludes household enterprises and related institutions (non-market and for self-consumption) which are largely produced by women.

We should remember: women are not a minority but a marginalized majority; we cannot neglect their performances in agricultural, pre-agricultural and extra-agricultural activities.

Gender ratio, size of the group, chairperson's post, decision-making body, skills, service from traditional knowledge, past experiences, intellectual reasoning and old experiences, market survey, market safety, and access to information are different issues playing behind success of any SHG.

The activities taken up by the SHGs include dairy, backyard poultry, vermicompost unit, tailoring unit, food processing unit, goat unit, other enterprises, consumer store, gas agency, hotel, vegetable selling, spice, fast food and noodles unit, bakery, and small machinery unit.

Moving to the urban sectors, living in sub-urban areas, and working in unorganized sectors are new trends in post-1990s India. Women are not exceptions and they actively participate as wage and day labourers such as in construction sector. Microfinance and SHG can target to partially and fully poor families of unorganized sectors.

In West Bengal state of India, Self-Help Groups, each with a group of 5-20 persons of poor economic condition and of the same locality, are working as un-registered informal co-operatives [ According to West Bengal Co-operative Societies Act (1983), these SHGs can be enrolled as members of Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies (PACS) under two Notifications dated 02/05/1995]. Open and voluntary membership, democratic

control of members, participation of members in economic activities of SHG, autonomy and independence, education plus training and information, cooperation amongst different groups, and concern for the community — all the seven Co-operative Principles do exist in these SHGs. Agricultural Credit Review Committee (Khusro Committee) opined that the Business Development Plan of PACS should go by investing microfinance into and providing training to individual members and Self-Help Groups. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and so many rural banking sectors have helped these SHGs. SHGs have not only got booster dose from PACS and NABARD, but also stated investing credit as savings. The economic activities undertaken by the SHGs include agricultural activities (paddy cultivation or fishery on oral lease of land or water-area, backyard poultry, duckery, piggery, goatery), agricultural processing and marketing (marketing of packaged indigenous rice, cashew nuts, spice powders, jam, jelly, pickles, lentil cakes or badi/ naksha-badi, paddy-to-rice, paddy-to-perched rice / muri etc.), cottage industries (cane and bamboo works, sewing and tailoring, embroidery, jari-work, dokra/ brass metal art-work, door mat making, jute bag and soft toy making etc.), agricultural input production (vermicompost and bio-fertilizers, nursery), hawking / vending of agricultural produces, garments, grocery etc. Loans are also provided for consumptive purposes like medical treatment, marriage or like social function, children's education etc. Combined fight against social evils, regular meetings, rotation of leadership, supplementary activities and voluntary participation in fund recovery of PACS are various other roles played by SHGs.

Two case studies are taken from the North Bengal areas of West Bengal with a focus on women entrepreneurship. Out of total 19 districts of the state, the region constitutes only six northern to river Ganges (Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda). The Study is going to be conducted at the rururban and peri-urban areas of ever expanding Siliguri Municipal Corporation, the largest city of North Bengal and the second largest of the state.

Figure 1: Impact of microfinance

#### Impact of Microfinance

- Economic empowerment
- Employment for women
- Income under women's control
- Women's micro-enterprise
- Increased wage
- Increased income
- Savings and credit
- Women's decision about savings and credit use
- Repayment
- Political empowerment
- Increased status and changing roles
- Ability to negotiate change relations in gender
- Women's networks and mobility
- Wider movements for social, political & legal change

Table 1: Particulars of Self-Help Groups (SHG) in six districts of northern West Bengal and total West Bengal

<i>SL. NO.</i>	Name of Range	Total no of SHG Formed	No of members in SHG	No of female members
1	Coochbehar	6992	62509	57000

2	Dakshin Dinajpur	2584	23502	22542
3	Darjeeling	618	5605	5006
4	Jalpaiguri	2378	23374	22719
5	Malda	12341	115487	101883
6	Uttar Dinajpur	8846	70126	63654
	Total West Bengal	158336	1280514	1152168

(Source: Department of Cooperation, Government of West Bengal, India 2009)

### *Discussion*

In this context, the first case study is going to be taken from Rajbanshi people of North Bengal areas. Sanyal (1965) mentioned that Rajbanshis in and around the plains of northern West Bengal or North Bengal have their own history of thousands of years. They have transformed from a community to a huge complex heterogeneous social fold incorporating animism, ancient pre-Vedic versions of Hinduism, Vedic traditions, magico-religious performances and Buddhism, Kashyap-Bratya Kshattriya combination, Sufism and Vaishnavism, status mobilization, and folk practices symbolic to agriculture and trade relations. Rajbanshi people are living in agrarian pockets of North Bengal (northern part of West Bengal state, India) and they might have possessed IKS regarding agriculture and other related issues. Following Barma (2007), Hindu Rajbanshis are 129,904 in Darjeeling (also Darjiling) of total individuals 1,609,172; in Siliguri subdivision (also Shilliguri) of Darjeeling district 119,120 out of 818,581; in Jalpaiguri 811,567 out of 3,401,173; in

Koch Bihar (also Cooch Behar) 972,803 out of 2,479,155; in Malda (also Maldah) 144,158 out of 3,290,468; in North Dinajpur (also Uttar Dinajpur) 405,140 out of 2,441,794 and in South Dinajpur (also Dakshin Dinajpur) 224,988 out of 1,503,178 and there of total 14,724,940 of North Bengal, Rajbanshis have a population of 2,688,560 (18.26 %). They might have good knowledge over traditional agriculture and agro-based biodiversity management of North Bengal. According to Sen and Ghosh (2008), Rajbanshis are now placed in the Schedule Caste category in West Bengal. Currently the Schedule Caste population constitutes 23 per cent of the total population of West Bengal and there are 59 notified Schedule Caste populations in the state. The Rajbanshis constitute the largest percentage and number of the Schedule Caste population in West Bengal (18.40% and nearly 3.4 million, respectively). It is conjectured that the Rajbanshis have a mixture of Austroasian/Dravidian and Mongoloid elements. In that context their indigenous knowledge is going to be studied here. Rajbansi is a greater social fold and stratified as caste. They have tribal affiliation. They are traditionally agriculturists. Their indigenous production system can contribute into biodiversity management and sustainable agriculture. It is also good for gathering knowledge about traditional food preservation techniques. Their knowledge on seeds and traditional varieties is still quite relevant. Their knowledge system on mode of production is linked up with social system and also the super-nature.

Mostly detached from city life and pre-agrarian economies; present-day agrarian Rajbanshis are equally good with food preservation most of which is related to rice, fruit and pulses. They are efficient with making rice cakes. Rajbansi women are mostly associated with domestic works, handicrafts, kitchen garden, part of agriculture, and food preservation techniques. These works are generally treated as unpaid and unorganized.

Scope of microfinance and formation of small-scale organized co-operatives in terms of Self-Help Groups (SHG) are possible in this context. Women can be more trusted than men and empowered on politico-economic terms due to awareness about family and sense of duty regarding planned use of micro-credit and small savings in rural banks. The rice-rice cake relation shows the entrepreneurial capabilities of Rajbanshi womenfolk.

*Glimpse of Indigenous Knowledge maintained by the Rajbanshi day-to-day Folk Life*

Rajbanshis could play an important role in the following domains through their IKS:

1. Rajbanshis prefer rice cultivation the most. Rajbanshis preferred the rice varieties are Kukra or Kukurjali, Black Nunia, Tulaipanji, etc.
2. Black Nunia is black in color and when cultivated and crops are full grown, field is looking black or with black patches on golden or yellowish shade there.
3. Grains of Black Nunia are relatively small, but very much tasty; it is sold in market in higher price level than the hybrid varieties due to its low production
4. White Nunia is also there, their seed coat color is as usual non-black and hence golden.
5. Rajbanshis are concerned about high nutritious value of Nunia rice.

6. A lesser amount of Nunia consumption can feed a person for the whole day.

7. The amount of Nunia taken for cook is always lower than the quantity of rice it produces.

8. Kukurjali is a local variety of the Terai of Darjeeling district, North Bengal.

9. The size of the grain is greater than the Nunia.

10. It is delicious and very soft when cooked.

11. Rajbanshis cultivate Kukurjali with some religious sense; they use the rice made of this variety of paddy in religious and any other important social occasion.

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49. Gur is the unsaturated sweet solid fragrant form of cane juice. Due to lack of cane in large number, debt is used as the source of gur here.

50. Experienced peoples are either engaged into or they on their own responsibility collect the sweet juice coming out of the cut channels in the Debt trunk so as to collect the same in the earthen pot bound at the cut portion

51. The process is specifically done in winter season so that the juice remain fresh and in very early morning the pots filled with gur (molasses) were collected; then on earthen stove on earthen stove with the help of dried debt leaves serrated are mildly heated for long time under thorough observation and ultimately, poured on a clothed pot to let it be cooled down and form a sweet hard cake.

52. The juice starts loosing moisture and becomes crystallized saturated with a specific taste; lack of experience regarding preparing gur can bring bitterness in it. It is a day long process under the bright sun in the clear sky and only at the late afternoon, the cluster is poured and throughout the night kept for cooling.

53. As the fuel, the dried debt leaves are often used.

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61. Some Rajbanshi women make a delicious dish with rice dust called Vapa pitha which is nothing but one type of soft fluffy rice cake.

62. On a single poured dish placed at the mouth of a Handi on fire (pan on earthen stove) with boiling water inside, they put the rice dust packed in cloth pieces until the dust does not be cooked on steam and form the cake then served with gur (molasses).

63. The Vapa is prepared at night time in dark or early morning and the women preparing it would go out to barter their produce against some rice; they again produce Vapa the next day from the rice collected and the extra rice left would feed her family. One kind of distribution, barter and cash

exchange it is which helps in regular supply of food to the less prosperous or non-agriculturist families beyond the periphery of modern cash system and monetary economy.

64. The rice seed coat is used both as manure.

65. The rice seed coat is used both as manure fodder.

66. Often the rice cotyledon they use as important fodder.

67. As the fodder, Rajbanshis also use rapeseed remains, paddy straw, rice emulsion, jungle leaves, various types of grass, old makoi (corn grain), bad smelling marua (wheat like substance) and if available gur (molasses).

68. As the manure the Rajbanshis do not remove the paddy straw from field.

69. They use rotten leaves as manure.

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93. Wood and cow dung as the fuel.

94. But here the fume is produced to a large quantity.

95. They often burnt the leaves after piling them in a huge hip. This started from evening and continued to late night. This increases the temperature of the neighborhood and provides warmth both to the peoples and the animal husbandry and poultry to some extent.

96. Ash is good manure and pesticide.

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99. They preferred the earth warm, white ant and even ants as agriculture friendly organisms (obviously when under control).

100. Earth warms do the same thing a plough does to the land.

101. White ants decompose the dead and other unnecessary organic compounds that help in sustenance of the bio-geo cycles.

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106. Rajbanshis favors crop rotation.

107. Rajbanshis prefers mixed way of cultivation, especially in case of vegetables.

108. They have the concept of enriching the soil by panting leguminous plants and pea and other pulses.

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117. From the dried straw of the paddy crop, the Rajbanshis prepared sitting blocks, shade their roves and create cautions.

118. The Rajbanshis in order to make chura, first keep the coated rice in

water for the whole night or for some days so that the seed coat would be loosened; then they heat the same in mild temperature for long but under strict observation; control the flame and lastly, husk it in husking machine (Chham) or by a wooden beam continuously and only then some kind of pressed rice or chura is produced. This is left to be sun-dried for some days and in this way preserved for a long period. Here, the flame of fire and time of flaming are both different from that in the preparation of uncoated rice from paddy.

119. The softened seed coat here becomes a dust and used as fodder.

120. The pressed processed rice, chura, is usually served with card (dahi). Dahi-chura is one of the most delicious food items to the Rajbanshis.

121. They have learnt the preparation procedure of puffed rice, muri, on oven from the immigrant Bengali and the other Rajbanshi fellows from Bangladesh well overlapped with one another.

122. Basically, the uncoated uncooked rice is kept in salted water for the whole night or two to make it softened and diffuse the salt particles in it. Then on the earthen stove, these salted rice particles in the presence of sand and on controlled fire are cooked for several times while stirred with jute sticks continuously until it becomes heated, softened, aired and puffed.

123. Some like salted muri where quantity of the soluble salt is higher.

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127. Old paddy is heated in sand with continuously stirring by jute sticks and eventually the crunchy soft rice grains are jumped out of the paddy seed coats. This white colored food item (khoi) is another form of rice preservation.

128. Card was the most auspicious item for any kind of ceremony.

129. In order to prepare card, the Rajbanshis keep milk directly from the cow in an earthen pot for several days in a clean, dust-free, cool dark room (with earthen wall and roof made by jute sticks and straw); hang it from the beams of the roof; and after some days, the card was formed due to the activity of the bacteria and then they pull in down and intake it with salt. They do not put any lime extract or swore fruit substances in it like the Bengalis do. Nor they even heat the milk on mild temperature.

130. Rajbanshis for the festival purpose again they mix some more milk with the card and put sugar on it and stir continuously while boiling; and in this way sweet card is produced; they do not add any unsaturated fat in this in order to make the stalk thick and sticky.

131. Rajbanshis are not usual with the use of milk, but fond of card.

132. Rajbanshis also prepare unsaturated fat from milk called ghee.

133. Besides, addition of lemon juice or tamarind extract into mildly warm milk reacts with it to form a clumsy clustered white mass easily digestible, nutritious and cooling the body temperature.

134. Males are also involved in preparation of wooden plough from highly non-degradable teak grown up reluctantly in the forest areas of North Bengal.

135. Teak plough was also an important item for collection of rice in the weakly markets.

136. Cotton was once produced from the seeds of Shimul tree and a wide vegetation of Shimul was there in Terai region of Darjeeling district.

137. With increase in population, that has been destroyed and only teak belts were kept in safety for the very supply of the raw material for plough the main instrument for agriculture and for the carpenters the prime source of collecting rice and other substances. This is a clear example of feed-back.

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141. They at a time grew arum in huge quantity in the ditches here and there and often the good varieties like the Mukhi type in their kitchen garden.

142. The extract from long leaf base of aurum with spit could be added in a cut region which helps in quick coagulation of bleeding.

143. In winter, after harvesting the paddy crop, they cultivated vegetables in the upland or danga region, whereas the lowland areas were used for production of pulses.

144. Pulses are such as maskalai, and thakurkalai.

145. Mustered and other rapeseeds like tisi, spices, makoi or corn and wheat have come later are also cultivated.

146. In the sandy river bed areas just beneath the hill, spices like cardamom, ginger, garlic, onion, *tejpata*, cardamom could grow.
147. This sloppy landscape is important makoi cultivation.
148. Danga is preferred for vegetable cultivation, production of wheat and marua, habitation and kitchen garden, and grazing.
149. Marua, makoi and wheat are all dusted to prepare hand-made pancakes.
150. Mustard and other rapeseeds are also cultivated in winter.
151. In specific case of Darjeeling district, tisi is often more favored than mustard.
152. Tisi could grow in a more xerophytic condition than the irrigation-affiliated mustard.
153. Rai is grown in the hills and foothill areas as another variety of mustard, small in size and with broad leaves.
154. Dried leaf and stem of mustard are used as fuel and mosquito repellant.
155. In preparation of prickles, mustard is greatly used.
156. Mustard oil is used for cooking.
157. The oil is also used for body massage and relief of the pain.
158. Mustard seed remains or mustard cakes are used in increasing soil fertility.
159. Mustard grains as well as their dust are also used in food preparation.
160. Mustard oil is massaged over the body under sun light before

bathing and immediately after bathing, the body is rubbed with dry towel very well- this is a process of preventing the clod.

161. Often, the mustard oil with maskalai pulse, and garlic cubes is rubbed on body to reduce body pains.

163. The green soft plant parts are used as vegetable.

164. Mustard oil is used in flaming the candle in the remote village areas at the night and torch to remove elephants from the crop land as well as the honey bees from their nest.

165. Vegetables are generally grown in winter in the Danga with less water-supply.

166. Sop sop is another kitchen garden product that they eat with pork.

167. They also grew gourd and bottle-gourd that they used in preparation of goat meat.

168. Bringal, potato, bitter gourd, pumpkin, ginger, turmeric, hemp, chili, cucumber were also grown reluctantly.

172. The Rajbanshis had a least case of diabetes, because they knew the importance of the juice of bitter gourd as well as application of the water with extract of gulancha, a kind of herbaceous plant.

173. Rajbanshis are also fond of chilli; they think it helps them to warm up the body and prevent the cold.

174. They preserve chilli by drying it in the sun, but that does not sustain for long.

175. Preservation of chilli after heating it in warm water increases its longevity.

176. They also collect such types of medicinal plants grown up in non-cultivated uplands, jungles, home and even the humped soil barriers dividing the ground into many small agricultural plots.

180. The non-cultivated uplands at the jungle side covered with xerophytes with medicinal values are actually sacred grooves of the Rajbanshis.

181. The Sorea forest grown by side also provides various services.

182. The wax out of Sorea trunk in dry condition id used as highly inflammable object and mosquito repellant.

183. Sorea is a good source of very durable wood used in plough production.

184. Wood is also needed as poles, beams and logs in various types of construction.

185. It is a good quality fire wood.

186. Dried broad leaves are used as plates.

187. The charcoal is used in gold ornamentation.

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192. During the weather change when Sorea flowers and pollens are in the air; suffocation, pollen allergy and symptoms of asthma appear to affect the peoples.

193. In the marshy lands (jola or nichu), jute is being grown up.

194. Jute cultivation requires logged water on alluvial soil in low marshy land; therefore often surrounded by ferns and aurum vegetation.

195. The marshy alluvial soil prevents the logged water to go immediately under the ground and that water storage is utilized in post rainy period with bright sunshine with heavy moisture to rote the jutes in that marshy land and to remove the fibers from the jute stick.

196. Jute sticks are dried for several days under sunlight kept erect with the help of a balance of a tree trunk.

197. Jute sticks are both used as fuel and for construction of roof and fence for their very thin cylindrical hollow nature chambering the filled up non-conductor air.

198. Jute sticks could be used in paper making.

201. Jute sticks are used as fuel.
202. Jute sticks are also used in preparation of lattice in vegetable cultivation.
203. Jute plants and leaves are used as vegetables with somewhat pungent taste and contain medicinal values.
204. Jute fibers of very thin quality are used for preparation of mosquito net.
205. From the jute and such other less-quality fibers, Rajbanshis in their hand-led looms prepare handloom products like Dhokra the seat to sit.
206. Curtains and carpets are produced from jute. The edges of the curtain are folded with bamboo rods.
207. They also produce chott from where bags are produced for propose of storage and also carriage.
208. To secure the storage, they closed the mouth of the bags with ropes again made up of fibers.
209. Ropes are produced from rolling the fibers continuously by the palms of two hands; then again do the same with two thin ropes and repeating the same again and again.
210. Ropes thus produced are of various types and categories- thin to thick.
211. Some ropes are used for binding the wooden and wooden beams and pillars during house or shade construction;

212. Ropes are also used in hanging the pots carrying curds from the beams putting an impression on the neck of the pottery.

213. Ropes are used for the same purpose during binding the pots in the debt trees.

214. Ropes are used in measurement.

215. Ropes they also used on domestic cattle, collecting water from the well through bucket, playing as well as bullock cart in transportation and bullock-plough cultivation.

216. For each and every aspect, ropes are of different types. The rope preparation is held by the entire and that is why, fibers are also stored in due course.

217. From the looms, cloths of fine jute fibers are even now sometimes produced. The Rajbanshi women used to wear them folding on their body, while men only lower garments in the summer time.

218. In the cold days they used blanket made up Shimul cotton.

219. For pillow and blanket they have to depend the Dhunia community and for utensils on carpenter (Sutradhar), craft maker (Malakar) and potter (Pal).

220. Rajbanshis colored the clothing items with indigenous paints they then produced from plant extracts.

221. *Hibiscus* (jaba) petals and the teak leaves are used for red color, indigo for blue, duranta for violet, lime and gypsum for white, gray soil for gray, leaf extracts for green, water hyacinth for violet and so on.

222. With these natural extracts and dust of thin rice grains, paintings are often made up of natural objects and symbols on walls and floors as well as frame of window or door.

223. Burnt wood, charcoal, coal and ash are also used in the purpose of painting.

224. In washing the clothes, they use soda which they produced from the base of the banana tree (actually the part from where the leaf inflorescence grows out as “the tree” out of the underground rhizome). They submerged the trunk base for long in water and when it started to be rotten out, the waxy extract they collected and used as soda.

225. In burnt body part, immediately after the burning, the extract from the basal region of the banana leaf inflorescence (or the ‘stem’) has to be rubbed so no mark would appear there and complete remedy is possible.

226. Banana is being used as a fruit. Banana as a fruit is important in religious ceremonies, but interestingly the banana local variety with seeds, namely daya kela or bichia kela (bichia= seed; kela=banana) is preferred more as the folk peoples believed in their medicinal importance.

227. In festivals, they use sweet bananas of chinichampa with small and dark spots on their body.

228. The banana fruit inflorescence in the good variety of malvog riches up to the soil.

229. Bananas with seeds are not so tasty and they thought in not fully ripened condition, these fruits are very important to cure the diseases in

the abdomen like constipation.

230. They cook the banana fruit inflorescence as well as the ‘trunk’ leaf inflorescence as food items.

231. They used banana leaves as plates for serving food and also for packaging of various types.

232. In order to ripen the banana in a natural way, they dig the soil up and create some chambers in it of banana leaves storing bananas and dry straw of paddy alternatively. Then the system is fired in after covering the system again with soil from above. It acts as a closed kiln chamber where the wind is blown inside by a hollow bamboo pipe stick pierced by the soil. The banana gradually ripens within four hours from the heat produced by the straws kept within the non-conductor soil chamber.

233. Herdsmen often cook sweet potatoes in this manner but in small chamber and eat them hot.

234. Rajbanshis do not apply this procedure of ripening to other fruit varieties.

235. Rajbanshis are very fond of sour taste and eat the fruits before they ripen.

236. They also like the taste of chilli, small in size but very hot to taste.

237. They maintained the concept that a ripened fruit means a fruit with harmful microbes and insects.

238. Custar apple, guava, lime, banana, papaya, pindali, peach/ black berry, carambola and mango were the two most important fruit items for the Rajbanshis.

239. The fruits they eat in ripen condition are jack-fruit, banana, papaya, and pindali.

240. As a vegetable, they often cooked the composite type of jack-fruit before it attains the ripened condition.

241. Actually they never eat the soft, pulpy, juicy and sweet mango, because they considered ripened mango rotten in nature. They were actually fond of the sour taste of lime, tamarind, carambola and green mango with salts. They first rubbed the mango at its tip on the rough bark of the tree to remove the bitterness, halved to remove the seed, and consume it with salt.

242. They also pieced these green mangos and dried them in sunlight of the summer with salt and edible mustered oil in order to preserve them as pickle.

243. Pine apple is often grown up reluctantly.

244. Pine apples were often grown up in round under the mango tree shade.

245. The benefit of pruning the mango is that in this way, most of the mangos produced do not rot which is a common feature of the mango trees of the seed.

246. For pruning, first soil has to be prepared by filling the dig with full-prepared cow dung.

247. Other organic manure could be given if necessary.

248. The pruned plant would not be deeply placed inside the soil and to make ensure that it would not be got affected by water, the sides have to be piled up.

249. Herbs have to be controlled.

250. Ash and lime could be applied so as to free the land from fungus and germs.

251. Good dry (preferably sun-dried) fungus-free purified soil has to be mixed.

252. Longevity of a pruning again is lower than the original plant.

253. But pruning gives a lot more production, uninfected, and within a short period of time on a small sized tree.

254. They also liked the sticky taste of jack fruit, custar apple, guava, banana, peach/ black berry and betel-nut very well.

255. The slopes of uplands are often covered with ferns of numerous types, some being highly edible and nutritious.

256. Women used to collect the newly grown leaves and cooked as their daily vegetable dishes.

257. These Rajbanshi and Rajbanshi-associated women folks have the capability to use their fingers very swiftly and with consideration that which leaf has got sores or not and if present, whether in burst condition or not.

258. But still now, no one of them is interested in accepting the job of leaf collection in tea gardens; this shows their independent mode of behavior.

259. They have the concept of private and public ponds in the village.

260. Of the public ponds, they often maintain the concept of good or bad pond: pond to bathe, to wash the clothes, for religious occasion or for

other or no use.

261. Ash and soda are used in cleaning the utensils and clothe.
262. Women with their utensils and clothe come together to the pond, gossip, sing songs, recreate themselves.
263. The ash, soda, superfluity and dirt are food of the fishes.
264. They beat the clothes with the help of a wooden rod on a prepared flat stone or such type of wooden platform.
265. The wooden platform did not decay due to the very reason of preservative nature of clay soil to the wood.
266. Wooden items like sticks, furniture and boat were merged under the water inside the clay, so as to give them a stout and durable texture.
267. Existence of separate pond for cattle is very scientific; in this way, the parasitic cycle through pond, cattle and man could be checked.
268. The Rajbanshis select ponds for bathing with due consideration of the nature of soil type which is basically clayey in nature of good quality.
269. They paste the clay over the body as a natural moisturizer, skin therapeutic element and sun screen before bathing.
270. The peoples use the dried sclerotic remains of Dhundhul fruit for rubbing and washing their body.
271. For latrine peoples often use deep natural or man-made ditches on the ground.
272. When the water dried out, the manure therefore formed put to the land for vegetable cultivation, mainly the cauliflower.

273. Rajbanshis in some regions cultivated the crop in island like region, often created artificially in the big ponds or water tanks connected by a temporary bamboo bridge.

274. They in the rainy season often go in paddy-cum-fishery cultivation.

275. These fishes sometimes eat the harmful larvae of harmful beetles and dragon flies.

276. These small fishes die with water evaporation and their dead body remains rote to add manure and phosphorus to the ground.

277. Gappi, Techokha and other fishes they never harm as these are basically mosquito larvae eaters.

278. Important fish varieties were therefore kajari, puti, chala, dhara, gughia, bain (electric ill), chanda, taki, bacha, bata, mourala, nadiali, singi, magur, koi, shol, boal; they let the small fishes and fishes with egg to free to conserve the species. They did not do any harm to the non edible fish varieties of which many were used to control the mosquito larvae under water.

279. Some plant extracts were used as toxic to the fishes they wanted to become senseless and caught them with open hands in very shallow water, probably to the ankle to knee portion; so, they do not harm the fishes they do not want. Even the friendly fishes and crabs are not even paralyzed.

280. Small ditches are also used for fishery.

281. Thin cloth pieces (used as sieve with minute pores) are utilized in catching very small fishes in shallow water ponds.

282. Big nets on bamboo frames with big paddle in closed water is used for catching fishes in huge quantity at a single time.

283. Net with bamboo frame is also used by hands.

284. Water is logged in a region by forming a low height dam and the water coming out of that dam is then allowed to pass by a sieve and fishes are collected.

285. Big nets are also used to move the cold water of winter so the fishes could be forced to move in the form of exercise and fed them to determine their growth, health and fertility in the next autumn, summer and especially in the rainy seasons.

286. They constructed single-tree trunk elongated, narrow and swift running boats for quick fishing.

287. Preparation of dried fish is done by keeping them under sun after the subsequent procedures like washing, mixing up with turmeric and salt, and storing them under the dried soil.

288. Water hyacinth grown up in the low marshy land or slow water flows crate a different type of water ecosystem on muddy soil.

289. This type of stagnant water is good for production of mosquito larvae and increasingly the small techokha fish which would die off due to excess of use of oxygen, growth of planktons and pollution; but giving the invitation to the insectivorous and fish eating small birds.

290. The water hyacinth is often cut off and then sun dried before burying

them under the soil which gives a very good quality of manure.

291. The water grass is considered to be good fodder for the cattle.
292. Rajbanshis are well concerned about need of cuttings and pruning; to check the risks of spreading infection, they use cow-dung and lime at the cut tips of the branches of the shrub, mainly flowering plant;
293. in case of flowering plants, they take special care about planting them separately in earthen pots or in the ground with safe distance from one another as they do in case of vegetable cultivation also;
294. In case of earthen pots, they often mix different kinds of soil stratigraphically or completely mix them up
295. In case of maintaining different strata, they often put broken pieces of earthen pots;
296. It may be due to check the unnecessary growth of the root within a limited area.
297. They select the pot with a pore at the bottom, so that the excess water could run away;
298. To check the release of the nutrients and control the soil fertility, they used the stones and broken blocks inside the pot.
299. Often, they clear the place where the pot has been kept or keep it closed except only the time of pouring water into the pot. The reason is simple; not to allow the ants to enter into the pot.
300. time to time soil has to be changed, make it soft and out of any harsh thing, allow the root growth unharmed, clean single piece of insects, fungi, their sporangia and other unwanted plants and their roots

completely from the soil and also protect the leaves and stem from excess sunshine or rainfall or even clod to make them safe from natural hazards and other types of infections.

301. For each variety, addition of stone free and germ free manure, pouring amount of the water, application of bone dust, boiled tea leaves, egg shells, cow dung or rotten leaves have been leveled.

302. Rajbanshis used to eat boiled algae, spore free fungi, cooked or uncooked rhizomes, leaves, flowers in fried condition, or other uncooked items like edible fruits and nuts during severe crop failure.

303. Still they collected Mushrooms from jungles or cultivate the same in the wet soil and straw on a basket at a damp corner of the room.

304. They believe that pruning plants give good production, but have lower longevity than the plants from fertilized seeds.

305. They stored the seeds or bulbs of good varieties in dried condition for the next year growth;

306. When available, they try to generate a new plant from a cut stem or rhizome or leaf or root or the bulb;

307. In nursery, they generate seeds and develop saplings in refined, shrub free, dried, stone free, nourished and fine soil beneath a shade of thatched shade or plastic, separated from each other and each of them at somewhat upper than the side channels to drain off the excess water.

308. In vegetable cultivation, they often produce an inversed funnel of the sticks for each creeper plant in the kitchen garden (instead of a common lattice).

309. In pots, they sometimes grow more than one plants, maintain a balance between them and use wooden or bamboo stick to make them erect.

310. Rajbanshis appoint the others collect honey and wax from the bee nests on trees.

311. They use torch to save themselves and remove the bees and then with the help of a sickle, cut the bee nest into pieces and keep them in a bucket. In the bucket, the honey is collected and the rest part of the nest the sell as the raw material of wax.

312. The sclerotic portion of the nest is burnt to get the wax which is stored after cooling.

313. Wax is used in sealing a hole, painting a cloth and even polishing the wood.

314. Wax is also used in beatification.

315. Honey is one type of anti-microbial element.

316. As a preservative, it could be used in food and prickle.

317. Honey is also preventive of cold; it warms up the body.

318. Honey is healthy and nutritious food item.

319. Honey has some medicinal values also.

320. Honey with meat or other food items in hot is exiting and excessive intake could cause a harmful effect.

321. Flower anther is also used in beatification.

322. Peoples often suck the back portion of the corolla region where the

nectar is stored at the root of the stamens.

323. Cow dung is used as fuel. In order to so, the cow dung is mixed with water, softened; and as hand made cakes on wall or tree surface, sun-dried. It is also plastered on dried sticks and then sun dried. Both are efficient here.

324. Such mixture of cow dung and water is also used weakly or once every fortnight to plaster the soil and the lower portion of the wall itself for further protection of the earthen houses in this rain affected region.

325. In case of leaf collection, stick collection and wood gathering, these things are kept in a separate home or under a separate shade or in the bags or from the roof in hanging condition from a temporary self.

326. The collected cow dung from field is kept inside bamboo funnels and heated before applying as manure.

327. Flowering in bamboo plantation is a threat to the peoples dependent on bamboo economy. Because, it would destroy the total bamboo variety at a time and a new variety with some altered genetic configurations would arise.

328. Cultivators were also threatened at that time due to rapid intrusion of rats into the dying bamboo bushes for the nourished seeds and their subsequent attack over agricultural sector causing a situation of starvation and rat made hazard situation.

329. Sudden increased need of owl and snake to control the rat population.

330. Bamboo is used in construction,

- 331. arts and craft, especially vas,
  - 332. fencing,
  - 333. as glass,
  - 334. roofing,
  - 335. preparation of thatched utensils of bamboo scales,
  - 336. preservation (of something) inside the funnel,
  - 337. thin sticks for sainted burning sticks (religiously and economically important),
  - 338. drainage,
  - 339. leaves as manure,
  - 340. leaves as fodder,
  - 341. in fencing,
  - 348. construction.
349. To make it durable, treatment is given with oil, sun heat, as well as mud and water inside the pond.
- 350. Bamboo pulps are supplied for preparation of paper.
  - 351. Soft bamboo shoots are used in preparation of soup.
  - 352. Bamboo sticks are also used for preparation of umbrella and the stick of it.
  - 353. Lime grass is famous for its lime smell.
  - 354. The dried lime grass is burnt to reduce mosquitoes.
  - 355. The ash is spread in the ditch and pond water to reduce the mosquito.
  - 356. Wild grasses with medium or long height are used in preparation of brush to clear up the soil and the home yard.

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361. They used to chew dried betel nut, and then have learnt the use of betel now with

tobacco, betel leaf and lime.

362. Ripen betel they chew as an energetic substance.
363. Snails they cooked with pulses boiled alive and then suck the juicy portion from inside the shell directly to the throat. They believed in its high protein value without any the scientific evidence and strange! They were all correct. They were the Bengalis who at a time avoided the Rajbanshis for this type of food practice and as a result of this; they gradually shed off this food item from their meal list.
364. Often, snail, snail consumption, use of snail shells for production of lime, use of lime in preparation of ponds for fishing, consumption of lime either with only tobacco or with betel nut, tobacco and betel leaf, production of betel leaf, production of betel nut, and trade of betel nut – betel leaf – lime – paddy – snail shell – snail through barter system are very crucial here.
365. Here, the snail collector, the fishermen, the lime producer, the paddy grower, betel leaf grower and the betel nut raisers are equally important. Potters in one hand provide the essential earthen pots and the crop raisers the straw as fuel source to the lime producer.
367. Unlike the betel nut, coconut is not grown reluctantly; but its plantation is often come to see.
368. 2/3 months before planting the coconut, in the dig fine full-prepared cow dung has to be added; if not full-prepared, has to be stirred from time to time.
369. The soil should be treated with salt of the amount of 1/2 Kg.
370. The coconut sapling has to be planted in such a manner that the upper portion of the root remains out of the soil and unharmed by stagnation of excessive water there.
371. These kinds of crucial measures are not needed in case of betel nut production.
372. Coconut is not only important for its fruit values or use of leaves used in roofing or

use as a fuel or the trunk as thin fast-running boats, but the thick dried fruit coat is really good for burning mosquito repellent.

373. Leaves of coconut and betel nut are both used for thatching baskets
374. hats
375. utensils
376. mat
377. brush
378. and even fence.
379. Coconut fruit coat fibers could be used in preparing ropes and carpets.
380. Coconut hair oil is favorite among the Rajbanshis
381. Lime is produced by layering up of the inflammable straw, broken pieces of clay pots and snail shells in a huge earthen pot; then heating the system in a closed manner by burning the straws; and ultimately melting the shells.
382. The Rajbanshis often owned large-scale poultries of duck; probably that was the effect of Vaishnavism that prevent them from eating hen.
383. Whether hen or duck, they generally make the poultry farm or the cage above some heights the floor, so as to reduce the chances of attacks from water, cold, snake and other bird or blood easting animals.
384. Stool of the duck is very important for feeding the fishes inside the pond.
385. So, the stool and bone dust of the hen are used for manure the soil.
386. They use paddy straw, especially for the chicks to protect them from cold.
387. Domesticated hens are often helpful in controlling the beetles, other insects and warms including excess amount of earth warms.

388. Ducks control the excess amount of snails in the pond eco-system.
389. Rajbanshis consume bird meat in cooked manner with spices, but they often consume the fresh egg yolk uncooked.
390. Rajbanshis often rare goose.
391. Rajbanshis are also fond of wild hens.
392. Rajbanshis during the period of availability of wood, used to prepare their wooden house on wooden trunks and suing a wooden (or wooden handled), temporary or permanent, ladder.
393. Pork, sheep, and pigeon were also highly favored by them. These items were actually associated with the blood sacrifice in their religious ceremonies, other social festivals and various types of magico-religious performances of the Rajbanshi social fold.
394. Often when a full grown goat is slaughtered, every family of the village or lineage or among the neighbors, the meat is served and major share goes to the actual owner of the goat and that person had also the right to sell the skin, bone, horn and head of the goat in the market.
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398. Rajbanshis used to smoke tobacco in wooden hookah (native type of pipe) with water.
399. The water and burnt substance in hookah are used as manure at small scale in gardening.
400. They smoke the dried pieces of tobacco, *tejpata* or even the hump in the form of cigar into the dry leaf of *tejpata/cassia*.

401. They used to burn the fibers of coconut and betel fruit and also the bark and leaves of sorea as mosquito repellant.

402. Tari is produced from freshly taken juice of palm in the same process as the debt juice is collected. The fresh juice is kept freely to be fermented and the alcoholic substance of Tari is thus produced.

428. In any of these yards, a jiga tree and an earthen pedestal of basil shrub are generally there having some religious importance and ethno-medicinal properties.

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441. Basal, palm, papaya, betel nut, banyan, *Hibiscus* (jaba), tamarind are also grown in the outer yard or the kitchen garden behind all with many medicinal values.

442. The houses often contain each a ditch where arum serving as both food and with medicinal facilities grew up.

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450. They also grow up neem tree; the young soft stems after removal of the skin they use as tooth brush.

451. The antimicrobial value of neem is not unknown to them and therefore, they eat neem leaf,

452. drink its paste with water,

453. use neem paste as a cream on burning and skin infection,

454. use hot water boiled with neem leaf in bathing,

455. and also dry neem leaf is used in preserving the uncooked and non-processed food items in the store.

456. Rajbanshis burn neem stem as mosquito repellant.

461. Neem extract is also used in garden as a non-toxic natural pesticide.

492. Rajbanshis prevent any type of damage to jaba, neem, banyan, bel, jiga, basil, tamarind, chhatim and many other plants those have some medicinal properties by connecting them with some religious or mythical versions.

493. There are other vegetations like *Sida*, *Cleome*, *Andrographis paniculata*, *Vitex nigundo*, *Croton bonplandinum*, *Lantana camara*, *Oldenlandia*, grasses, Leguminous plants, *Eclipta*, *Heliotropium*, and somewhat in the hill sides, *Chenopodium*, *Polygonum*, *Solanum* that grow up in so large numbers that no such types of safeguard to these medicinal plants is given there.

500. Amla is good for health, increasing resistance power and hair; it is preserved as pickle.

501. From the fruit extract of annual herbaceous poppy plant, drug was once produced; the soil of upland semi-arid dry areas in winter is good for poppy cultivation and growth of cactus.

502. From banyan, jack fruit, papaya, chapa and some rigid stem white flower plants- all with glossy leaves- a milk-like substance comes out that is used in medicinal purposes, especially on cut, burn, pause and other kind of damages.

503. The bark of Sajina tree is preferred for gum production; its soft branches are consumed in curry and it is also important as its leaves are the prime source of food for the larvae of butterfly and local varieties of silk warm.

504. Rangan and plum are other trees fond of these larvae.

505. To remove the fibers of larvae from the body, broad fibrous leaves of Gourd or plants of Malvaceae family with their lower surface, the affected body part is rubbed in one direction.

506. Curry leaf is given to the food for taste and flavor.
507. Irritation in the throat due to aurum consumption is treated with sour substances, especially card for their mild acidic activities.
508. Rajbanshis are well aware about the poisonous effect of some Aurum varieties and of these, sharangi variety is well known to them. They use it in various magico-religious purposes, basically in order to reduce the effects of ghosts and other harmful deities.
509. In festivals, sinni is prepared from mixing same proportion of rice powder and non-boiled milk with addition of sugar and ripened bananas in large quantities.
510. In festivals, the Rajbanshis offer ship to the female fertility cults.
511. The ship wool, skin, head and leg bones are sold to market.
512. In a thick jute cloth, the wools were placed first and then warm water is poured and then it was rolled and tied up tightly with ropes so as to produce the blanket.
513. Rajbanshis are fond of the spicy dish of pigeon, basically prepared in festivals.
514. Rajbanshis sometimes offered buffalo to their deities.
515. Rajbanshis sometimes offered vegetables like kings of gourd against their deities.
516. Rajbanshis use the huge dried and often polished form of gourd shell to prepare musical instrument. With this shell a string (or two) is attached and when they beat the string, sounds come out of the shell.
517. In dry fish production, with the clean fishes, they well mix good amount of salt and keep them either under the sunbeam or dry soil; they often treat these fishes with turmeric and even warm them in a tawa (plate) on stove; the proportion of salt and turmeric depends upon the nature of the fish variety.

518. Rajbanshis like big bone less fishes (like shoal and boal) or small fishes whose bones could be easily consumed and digested.

519. Fishes like magur, koi and singhi with extra respiratory organ could also grow up in low water muddy wet soil; these fishes are favored by the Rajbanshis for their high nutrition level and easily digestible nature.

520. The small fishes are enriched with phosphorus.

521. To reduce the quantity of salt in the dish, they often add pieces of betel nut in the cooking food.

522. They mix the fried uncooked rice, pressed rice (chira), dried grams and peas, dried pulse grains, chili and the makoi popcorn produced in fire openly; and prepare a good meal to eat called chanachur.

523. They roast makoi inflorescence on heated charcoal.

524. Rajbanshis used to prepare a kind of gum from pressing the fern between two stones.

526. They prepare yellow color from turmeric, red from red oxide, and green from plant leaves.

527. They collect the black from the lower portion under the handi used in cooking food on earthen stove with the help of dry wood or dung cake; then they make it thicker by mixing it with warming emulsion of fried uncooked rice in water and the black paint is produced.

528. They use haritaki fruit rubbed on a stone to produce some kind of brown color.

529. Ash is produced for preparation of ash color.

530. Red is also prepared by mixing lime with powder of young turmeric rhizome.

531. Wax is also produced from Bel fruit.
532. They prepare the color brush from the tails of a cow or other animal fibers or hair.
533. Once the Rajbanshis collected sponge (shola) from the rivers of North Bengal and these light weight substances in dry condition they cut out to make various figurines.
534. Carpenters produce burnish from teak extract.
535. Rajbanshis sell wooden horses from the market as they believe that then the ghosts on the way at evening could do nothing harm to them.
536. Ash is not always used in curing plant disease, but the affected leaves are often collected along with pastes and their larvae and eggs and burnt off in a dig before covering it with soil.
537. They could burn the field affected with crop.
538. They keep the field under the sunshine for a month or a fortnight after taking the crops to home; this sun treatment helps to kill the pupae in the field soil. In the due time, they participate in some post-harvest festivals.
539. The teeth of a dead dog according to the Rajbanshis could be used in magico-religious purposes, especially to cause harm to somebody and destroy a girl's chastity.
540. They use the technique to 'ban-mara' to harm somebody; this is one kind of voodoo where a symbol of the target is hurt by an arrow.

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612. Various types of leaves are used thereby in serving food: betel leaf, sorea leaf, banana leaf, palm leaf, lotus leaf and aurum leaf.

613. Guava fruit is thought to be curing cancer.
614. *Leonurus*, Oxalis reluctantly grow inside the village bushes with certain medicinal importance.
615. Alovera, Jaba (China rose) and Ganda (marigold) are some garden plants growing reluctantly in the garden also important for their medicinal values.
616. Marigold flower is used in decoration, flower necklace and religious purpose; while leaf paste of its leaves is used in stop bleeding and quick removal of pause and other cut and rotten body parts.
617. Some fungi grown on rotten tree trunks in jungles could be used as decorative objects.

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620. Rajbanshis have proper knowledge about the edible and non-edible mushroom.
621. Kadam is another important tree grown reluctantly in the region of North Bengal.  
Kadam flower in paste condition is used in stomach clearing.
622. The bark of Gamar is used for curing fever.
623. Leaf of white Lajjabati/touch-me-not (*Mimosa pudica*) is used in curing cold, cough and fever.
624. Amlaki/ amla protects against cold.
625. Card regulates body temperature.
626. Alovera sticky juice is good for skin.
627. Honey increases the strength and stamina within a person as well as warm up the

body.

628. Durba grass leaf helps in clotting the blood.
629. Kanda grass root is used in curing fever.
630. Saw grass root is used in the same purpose.
631. Haritaki/myrobalan is used for curing liver disorder.
632. Rajbanshis extract the juice from khoir/ catechu that is another natural source of brown color and adding lime with it red color is produced.
633. Thankuni leaf is used to control liver and stomach problems.
634. Brahmi herb as a vegetable or its liquid extract is consumed for good memory.
635. Kalmegh (*Andrographis paniculata*) leaves are taken as the bitter juice of its is useful in curing abdominal and liver problems, dysentery, mild temperature and teniasis.
636. Nearly same service is provided by neem along with some extra measures like treatment of skin diseases and chicken pox for its anti-microbial activities and even in fertility control.
637. Basal leaf taken with honey is useful in curing cold and bronchitis; abdominal problems and skin disease.
638. Vasak leaves protect from cough and cold, regulate blood pressure, purify blood, cure jaundice, skin disease, abdominal problems, heart problems, nerve pains, and also help in memory restoration, act against acid action due to insect bite.
639. Datura leaf paste is used in maintaining asthma.
640. Tannin is usually produced from the fruits of Haritaki, Amla, Bahera and Tamarind (also the tea leaf) and used in tan the animal skin. So, Rajbanshis once supply these raw

materials to the shoe-makers who also supplied them the tanned skin to be fixed in musical instruments.

642. Shimul, Sajina and Babla are used in gum production.

663. Now, many traditional villages have become connected with electricity and roadways.

664. Radio, Television, portable music system (walkman) and C.D. system have so far launched in these villages.

665. Video hall is often there near the weekly/periodical market.

666. Battery has been used by the households to enjoy movies on C.D. system.

670. Torch and torch battery are also used in night; pencil batteries are essential to play the walkman.

671. To increase the longevity of battery, the old batteries are kept under the sunlight in the inner courtyard and even chew the external body of the battery.

672. They listen the Bengali and Hindi music; but the local songs, now available on cassettes and C.D. at relatively low cost (Rs. 10-15/-), have assured an increasing popularity among them (also the other non-Rajbanshi peoples living with them).

673. Some other important musical instruments used by the Rajbanshis are harmonium, whistle, sarenga (one kind of string instrument, better to say violin), drum with drumsticks, bamboo flute of various kinds, tabor tabla, tanpura (another type of string instrument where strings are attached with the polished gourd shell and the long wooden handle).

674. Religious personalities, mentors, magico-religious practitioners and salesmen often use drumet (dugdugi) which is a miniature of drum with beating stones inside.

675. In old days, beating drums and bugle made up of bison or deer horn are used to call all the villagers in the common meeting place to know them the message of the concerned authority, especially the land lord, at a single time.

676. Rajbanshis like to use soap while bathing; but before they use sorea fruit as the alternative of soap.

677. Rajbanshis also produce several types of spices like onion, ginger, garlic, black paper, salt, rock salt, cumin seed/jira (black and white), cassia/tejpata, chili, sharisha/mustard seed, poppy seed/posto, cardamom/elach, clove/labanga, kasai, sorea seed, coriander seed/dhone, coriander leaf, tomato, soda, dry neem leaf, chirata, betelnut, amla, haritaki/myrobalan, koir/ catechu, resin, hemp, alum, turmeric, hing (*Asafoetida*) and so on.

678. Rajbanshis have the habit to chew the coriander and joan (another spice) and suck up the juice.

679. They are fond of nut, chestnut, water chest nut and also cashew (when available).

680. They generally take tea with sugar; or milk and sugar; or milk, sugar and ginger; or milk and lime; or only lime; but the quantity of sugar is not too high.

681. Rajbanshis in their kitchen/rannagrar/annaghār, use various types of cooking and cooking related utensils like jar/ghot, pitcher/kalsi/kalas, jug/kunja, pot/hari, small bowl/bati, big bowl/tub/gamla, basket/tukri, bucket/balti, glass/gelas, cup/piala/pirich, dish/sarai/sara, thatched plate with edge/batai, plate/thala/thali, cooking bowl/karai/noya, large spoon/hata, large flat spoon/khunti/chilni, spoon/chamcha/chamche/chamuch, rolling machine (to paste pulses)/dalghata/phirki, nutcracker/janti, match box/shalai, kettle/ketli, tong/chimta/sharanshi, box/diba, lid/dhaka/dhakna/dhakni, spice presser and grinder /shil-pata, husk/chham, sieve/chalni,

shaking plate (to separate two different types of granule mixed up with each other)/chalni, oven/unan, dry stick/lakri, cow dung/ ghuta/ghute, jute stick/pat kathi, paddy straw/ khor lamp/kupi, wick/sholta/polta, bottle/botol, phial/shishi, rope/dori/roshi, wooden seat/piri, jute seat/dhokra, thatched mat/chatai, bag/chat/bora, and so on. Some of them are made up of steel, aluminum, local metal like kasan and pitol, thatch and even of earthen type; kasan/bell metal is made up of zink/dasta, gray copper/tama and tin/rang (Rajbanshis are not involved in these metal works).

682. Rajbanshis have used thatched semi-rounded baskets/jhuri in both household and outside work.

683. Rajbanshis at a time use both cart and boat for carriage and transportation to the nearest town or trade center; but now they are more dependent upon paddle vans, cycles with carrier on back, tractor, auto (small automobile carriers), trucks, buses, motorcycle and even personal vehicles.

684. Rajbanshis have used various agricultural and soil cutting implements like spade/kodal, spade/belcha, sickle/kaichi/kaicha, dibble/khurpi/poshani, plough/langol, ladder/moi, rope/dor/dori, joal/a wooden log (that fixes the plough/ladder with the bullock pair) and fauri/fal/ the portion of langol entered into the soil and cultivating the ground.

685. Rajbanshis use hone, flat big stone piece with fine narrow cutting edges, so as to make sharp their metal/iron implements used either inside the house (knife/chaku/boti) or outside in construction of house, peasantry or other occupational works.

686. The metal workers use the following objects in order to prepare products of copper, bell-metal or iron: anvil, farness, clamp, bellow, blow pipe, hammer, tooling plane, trying plane, jack plane, rasp, file and others.

687. Rajbanshis have the technology to pour melted wax into an empty earthen doll (made up of clayey soil) and let it cool down, so that when they would break the sculpture, a solid wax doll (with a little retouch) they could get into their hands.

688. Some Rajbanshis have chosen the occupation of goldsmith and they deal with copper, bronze, silver and gold ornaments.

689. Rajbanshis have now been habituated with monetary economy and use of balance, but they often take the stone pieces for balancing (especially in case of measuring little weights).

690. Women usually wear ornaments in necklace, bangles in hand; ring in finger of the hands and feet, earrings in ears and nose rings in nose. These ornaments are made up of silver and seldom in gold.

691. Iron bangles they wear so as to remove all the bad eyes of the others up on the family.

692. Ornaments, especially necklace, are often produced from Basil seeds or with a pendent of dried hartaki fruit; both are considered to be good for health and good religious impact.

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700. At a time, the Rajbanshis used chun-surki (mixture of egg yolk, lime, clayey soil, grinded broken breaks and paddy seed coat dust with sand) at the place of cement; only a few jotedars and land lords were able to construct break houses; beaks were generally burnt in nature and not sun dried in nature.

705. In case of traditional house types, first the earthen floor of clayey mud with paddy

seed coats and cow dung was produced; then the walls are erected upwards with widened base (2.5ft.) gradually narrowing upwards (0.75 ft.); during this construction of layer after layers, regular supply of water is necessary to wet the wall mixture and let this water to evaporate; the dry soil becomes more rigid; bamboo or wooden frames of windows and door are fixed in this course of wall construction; later, wooden doors and windows are fixed to these frames with the help of screws and hinge joints; to give a durable form, these windows and doors are fixed with extra wooden bits taking the ‘Z’-shape.

706. Soil they generally collect from the nearby pond side.

707. High edge ponds consist of big trees around that with help of their strong roots check soil erosion, suck the excess pond water, and check excess water evaporation directly in summer (by forming big shadows but from safe distance, so that the shed-off leaves could not pollute the water).

708. For the construction of roof, first a bamboo or wooden or mixed type of lattice is produced on the open head walls from the ground; on that lattice, workers construct a ‘A’-shaped construction of a bamboo frame often guided by wooden flat plies and/or bamboo sticks; on this texture, bundles of jute, paddy straw and other water resistant things are fixed with declination downwards; often this system is covered by broad leaves to reduce the heat entrance; climbing vegetable herbs let to propagate there on the roof and in this way, a portion of the sunbeam gets utilized by that vegetation-on-roof and vegetables reluctantly grow there up.

709. Sometimes, tin or tile or asbestos is used to construct the partial or complete portion of the roof; in case of tin or asbestos, again screws for fixation are used; a flat floor of

wood under this tin-made ‘A’-shaped roof is constructed there that again checks the entry of heat waves from the hot tin into the room; in this way, a chamber is built up there which is again used as a storage for bundles of jute, jute sticks and paddy straws.

710. Tailors and shoe makers use the following objects like scissors, needle, and awl.
711. Ojha, Mahat, Adhikari, Kabiraj and Peer-Fakirs are different personalities whom they think completely devoted in their wellbeing as also do the astrologers, gurus and other priests.
712. Political leaders and three-tire village governance (Panchayet) are increasingly playing their important roles in the betterment of their livelihood and replacing the traditional systems of land lords, jotedars, village head and his associates, aged folks in the lineage and Wise Man.
713. They still maintain a sense of fellow-feeling.
714. They prefer to marry in other village.
715. Property inheritance is held among the sons with the matrilineal system; but the mother could give her ornaments to her daughter at marriage; dowry is a common system among the Rajbanshi society.
716. The dowry payer family of the bride is often accused of not well behaving to the groom side. This turns into the form of a trend in the Rajbanshi society.
717. Even after such a long period till passing out the tradition of jhum cultivation, spread of the old seeds in the ashes of a sterilized field burnt on fire and rinsing it with mild water spray so as to grow the saplings before the rain reaches the prepared cultivation ground, somehow reminds the once practice of the shifting cultivation even in this stage of modern technologies and improved machinery.
718. Rajbanshis now-a-days go to the modern fashion, but still their tradition of handloom production sustains and they are seeking help from various self-help

groups and governmental organizations. The production they have to expand from only jute or flax to wool and cotton fibers; they require a good and available market for their productions in the domains of agriculture, horticulture, fishery, sericulture, production of cash crop, dairy and poultry, agro-based industry, revival and sustenance of cottage industries, ethno-medicines as well as global public service (in a nature friendly way).

The above discussion clearly shows that Rajbanshi folk life is a correct place for micro-finance through Self-Help Groups in crop cultivation, vegetable propagation, flower and fruit yield, poultry and animal husbandry, pottery, handicrafts from natural fibers and wooden works and cane, honey and wax collection, food preservation, organic manure production, fishery, and even collecting forest resources. We can also trust them for protection of flora and fauna as a part of biodiversity. Only they need proper training and easy finance at least from banking sector. Chit funds and alcoholism are rather the other instances for wastage of money. However, economic strength would provide them purchasing power and accessibility to modern market system. Here traditional economy has to be converted into more and more into the monetary system.

#### *Some Suggestions for the Entrepreneurs*

We cannot exploit human resource in terms of gender biasness. Microfinance and SHG can play a vital role.

We cannot neglect the indigenous knowledge and its historicity; but would try to gain public services from this.

We cannot trespass the realities of global market that provides both opportunities and

challenges.

We have to realize the demand of market, mould the production machinery according to the market, catch the market and expand the market.

We have to keep in mind certain basic things that we learn from the market traditionally (for example, way of profit making).

We have to realize the relatedness among traditional production system, social system, historicity and cultural values, religion, and the way of life. If possible, we have to gaze the cognate of economy in traditional way. That would let us aware of how far we should proceed further and how could be achieve the maximum within the limit.

Poor people, especially women in various production units need not just loans but also savings, insurance and money transfer services. For that SHG can be the way.

Both public and private institutions can facilitate this microfinance and encourage women entrepreneurship. This could bring the neglected bulk into the mainstream economy (here, currency system and global market economy).

The approach should be both economic and social-cultural. Awareness is needed.

Short term training and input of modern machines can also play their roles.

Microfinance should both profit and labour oriented. Jobless growth is unnecessary here. Handicraft products have always something to say about identity and tradition. They have a permanent market that with time get shaped and reshaped. They are basic in type and have the potentiality to survive during the phases of economic meltdowns. So, they also comprises of a political motif in them in a passive manner. In a developing country like India, these politico-economic aspects cannot further be

neglected.

Different sectors where self help groups can play important roles are food supply, horticulture, nursery and pruned varieties, fiber, pulses, nitrogenous plants, vegetables, indigenous rice varieties, pisciculture, livestock, poultry, timber, medicinal plant, honey, wax, natural dye, nectar, preserved fruit, preserved fish, preserved food, pickles, fruits, organic manure and pesticide, molasses, tari (alcoholic substance), cigar, bamboo, cane, vegetable oil, lime grass, other grasses, lime, areca, betel, mosquito repellent, tannin, compost manure and ash, natural preservatives, fast foods, handicraft and hand-loom products, coconut, poultry manure, ethno-medicines for livestock and poultry, meat and egg and skin and other animal products, mushroom, gum, natural cosmetics, spices, musical instruments, pottery, essential iron tools used in everyday life, house construction, ornament,

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