

Pronominal System of Kudmali: A Brief Study

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to describe the pronouns in Kudmali, the language of the Kudmi or Kurmi community. It is spoken in some pockets of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar, and also sometimes confused with the Manbhum dialect. In recent studies, it has been recognised as a separate language, which belongs to the eastern Magahi branch of the Indo-Aryan language family. The survey of the 2011 census says that 555,465 Kudmali speakers had been identified across the previously mentioned states (Censusindia, n.d.). Although, due to major influence of the scheduled languages across these states, the majority of the second and third generation speakers do not speak the language (variety) rather opt for Manbhum dialect or other regional variety. In recent days, there have been several initiatives of revitalization within the community, resulting in publication of some written texts in the form of poetry, novels, folklores and folktales. Linguistic study on the language has not been a focus till date, except a few indigenous attempts from within the community. This study focuses on the usage of Pronouns and categorizes them accordingly, based on person (first, second and third), number (singular and plural). In this study, it is observed that the Kudmali pronominal system exhibits no gender dependency. This study also puts an enquiry in case of Honorific use of Pronoun, distinction based on proximity, animacy, and identify case based on personal pronoun usage. The data for this study are extracted from secondary sources and verified by Kudmali speakers. These sentences are then linguistically analysed to reach the desired goal.

Keywords: Kudmali, Pronominal system, Grammatical Case

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Language

Kudmi tribe is considered to be native of Chotonagpur plateau and its nearby areas. They are mainly dependent on agricultural works. Kudmi people have rich cultural traditions, they worship natural force originally. “Kudmali is a lingua-franca of Chotonagpur or broadly speaking of Jharkhand. It is the most ancient and mother of other dialectical languages known as Nagpuria, Golwary, Sadani (Sadri), Panch Pargania, Sikhria, Mathuary, Chhattisgari Habli, and Bagheli.” (Mohanta, 2011). It is known by different names such as Bedia, Dharua, Khotta, Kudmali thar, Kurumali. There are several debates about its classification under the language group; modern linguistics studies reveal that Kudmali have Indo- Aryan origin.

It is classified as Indo-European as in Ethnologue webpage. It belongs to the eastern Maghi branch of the Indo-Aryan language family. Magahi and Panchparganiya are classified as its sister language. Kudmali has no written script of its own. Kudmali literature is either published in Bengali script or in Devnagari (Hindi) script. Kudmali folk songs- jhumor , Chou dance are deeply integrated with the culture of Kudmi people.

It is observed that the language is depleting at an extensive rate after the division of Manbhum district and redistribution of state territories in 1956. The part that got attached with West Bengal gradually losing its native speakers as the new generations are much more prone to Bengali language as it is the official language

and medium of instruction in state affairs. The same observation is found in the case of areas that were part of Bihar then and now in Jharkhand. Hindi is the official language which is much dominant among the new generations.

Moreover, lack of proper documentation and lack of identification of it as a language has led it to such a catastrophic state.

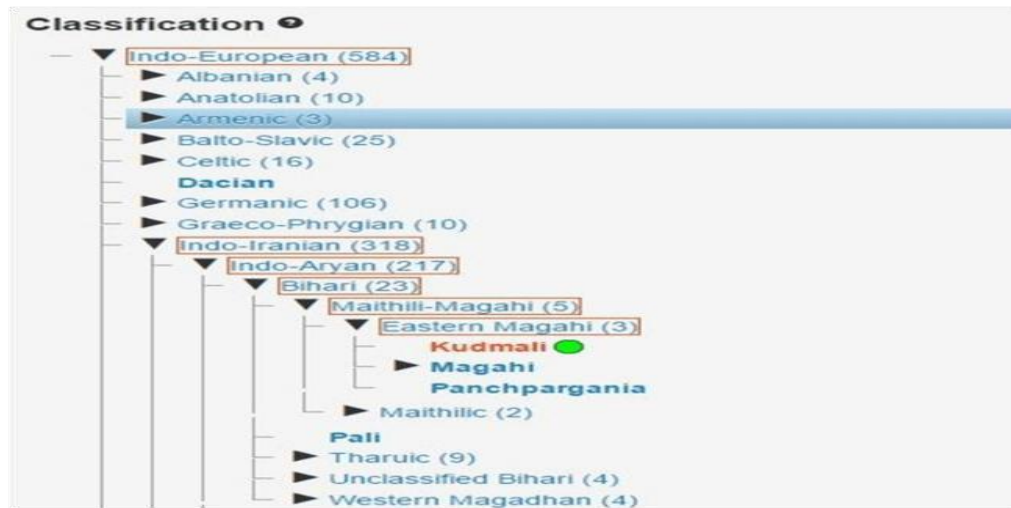


Figure-1

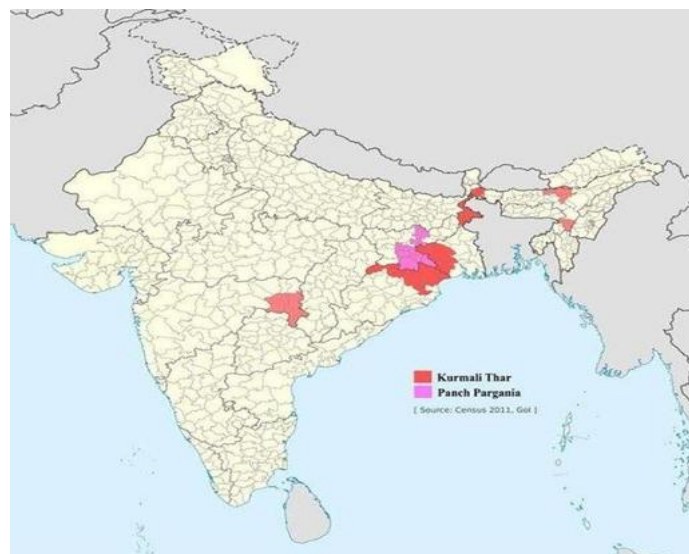


Figure-2

In the above map Kudmali is marked as Kurmali Thar(Red) and Panch Pargania(Pink).

1.3 Distribution:

The language is a widely spoken language in western parts of West Bengal, some parts of Jharkhand and Orissa. The Kudmi people are considered to be Indigenous to the Manbhum District, later which was broken down into districts like Purulia, Bankura, parts of Midnapore, parts of Bokaro and Dhanbad districts. During the British period the Kudmali language was known as Panchapargania(language of five regions). Present day those five regions are known as Bunder, Barendra, Sonahatu(split into Sonahatu and Rahe), Silli, Tamar, blocks of Ranchi district. A Large number of people of Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa also speaks Kudmali. The distribution of Kudmali according to Ethologue, IMA1997, which stated that it has around 37000 speakers.

Later in the Linguistic Survey of India, 2001, the language was identified as Kudmali Thar with 425,920 speakers. Kudmali is considered to be the mother tongue of the Mahato community primarily but it is observed that it is also the mother tongue of people of all castes and sects (even Muslims) residing in the area denoted in the map below.

1.2. Objectives of this study

The primary objective of this study is to provide a systematic description of the pronominal system in Kudmali by categorizing pronouns according to person (first, second, and third), number (singular and plural), and, where relevant, gender. The study further aims to examine the structural and functional distribution of pronouns in relation to honorification, proximity distinctions, and animacy contrasts, with particular attention to how case marking interacts with these categories.

In addition, the study investigates the morphological markers associated with various grammatical cases as they occur with personal pronouns in natural usage. The analysis is based on data extracted from secondary sources and subsequently cross-verified with native Kudmali speakers. These elicited and attested examples are then subjected to linguistic analysis to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the Kudmali pronominal paradigm.

1.3. Challenges/Motivation

The documentation and analysis of the Kudmali pronominal system present several intertwined challenges that simultaneously motivate the present study. Kudmali is an under-described Indo-Aryan language with limited grammatical resources, fragmented documentation, and inconsistent orthographic practices. As a result, the pronominal paradigm—one of the core components of grammatical structure—remains poorly understood in both descriptive and typological scholarship.

One major challenge arises from the absence of standardized grammatical descriptions. Variations in pronunciation, morphology, and syntactic usage across different speaker communities make it difficult to establish a unified pronominal inventory. Additionally, dialectal variation within Kudmali contributes to variability in pronoun forms, especially in plural and honorific distinctions. The lack of prior analytical work further complicates the task of defining case-marking patterns with confidence.

Another challenge relates to data availability. Existing studies often provide only rudimentary word lists or sociolinguistic notes, offering minimal insight into the morphological processes governing pronoun formation. Eliciting naturalistic data from speakers is time-consuming and requires sensitive methodological design, particularly when dealing with low-frequency forms such as relative, interrogative, or honorific pronouns. At the same time, these challenges create a strong motivation for the present research. A systematic description of Kudmali pronouns is crucial not only for linguistic documentation but also for understanding broader Indo-Aryan pronoun typology, where issues of number, case syncretism, and honorification play an important role. Furthermore, as Kudmali is undergoing significant influence from dominant regional languages (such as Bengali, Odia, and Hindi), documenting its pronominal system becomes an urgent task for future revitalization and comparative study.

Thus, the present work aims to address these gaps by providing a structured and comprehensive account of Kudmali pronouns, grounded in primary field data and presented through a clear typological lens.

2. Literature Review

Kudmali is an Indo-Aryan language that appears to have had substantial impact from Austric languages. A group of Kudmali speakers may be found in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha. Kudmali is a language spoken in the areas of Purulia, Ranchi, and Rourkela, as noted by (Grierson, 1907/67). It is possible to classify Kudmali as a language that is mostly spoken in rural areas. According to Grierson, Kudmali is an eastern Magahi (Grierson, 1907/67). According to Grierson, Manbhum's Kudmali Thar (Kudmali fashion) is a strange language that might be referred to as a "bilingual language." Although the language is a variation of Magahi, Bengali words, phrases, and sometimes whole sentences have a Bengali feel. The language is wrongly referred to as a Bengali dialect because it clearly contains Bengali characteristics and is written in Bengali characters.

Language convergence and linguistic blending have occurred in the region where Magahi, Bengali, and Oriya are in direct contact with one another. The region has produced a number of complex morphological languages. Creolization processes have given rise to the languages Sadri/Sadani (also known as Sadri Kol), Nagpuri, Panchpargania/Tamaria, and Kudmali. Kudmali was described by (Brian D. Joseph, 2003) as an amalgam of Eastern Hindi and Mundari (Bihari). The case of Shyampur, a village in Purulia, is discussed in the study, along with the educational and employment circumstances of the village's Kudmali-speaking residents.

In order to provide a theoretical foundation for this study on inflectional morphology, multiple researches of Indian languages and dialects have been examined. However, most of these studies have more to do with other aspects of Kudmali literature than they do with the language itself. As was already said, neither Kudmali is taught as a subject nor is it employed as the school's primary language of instruction. There are no printed grammar guides or reliable dictionaries. Nevertheless, we only find a single publication by (Mahato K. , Digitized by Stanford University, Stanford, CA in May 2009, 1973) and a short lexicon he created. Recently, (Davison) made a significant theoretical contribution by examining the typological significance of verb agreement systems in relation to the differences between mainstream Hindi/Urdu and Kudmali.

The primary sequence relationships are those created by the ego, the parents, siblings, and children of the ego make up the core sequence ties, which are, as the name implies, the core relations. There are the following kinship labels for these relations (Majumder, 2020)

(Mahato A. , 2022) analysed the pronouns in the Kudmali language in his book “An Overwhelming Discussion on the Kudmali Pronouns”. In this work eight types of pronouns were discussed based on traditional grammar.

3. Data Collection

The data for the present study were collected through field interviews using a structured questionnaire prepared in Bengali. The questionnaire was specifically designed to elicit different categories of pronouns and their usage in a variety of grammatical and communicative contexts. Since Bengali is widely understood by the speakers in the study area, the use of a Bengali questionnaire facilitated clear communication between the researcher and the informants and ensured the accurate elicitation of linguistic forms.

The primary data were gathered from native speakers of Kudmali residing in Marudahar, a village under Chitorpur in the Kotshila region of the district of Purulia. The selected informants belonged to the age group of 30–50 years. This age group was chosen because speakers in this category generally possess a stable command of the language and retain many traditional linguistic features while remaining active participants in everyday communication. All informants were fluent native speakers of Kudmali and regularly used the language in domestic and community interactions.

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting informants. Bilingual speakers proficient in both Kudmali and Bengali were preferred, as their bilingual competence facilitated effective interaction during interviews and enabled the researcher to clarify meanings, grammatical functions, and contextual nuances when necessary. The bilingual nature of the speakers also helped in cross-checking translations and interpretations of elicited forms. Data collection involved both direct elicitation and spontaneous conversation. Informants were asked to respond to questions, translate sentences, and provide examples of pronoun usage in natural speech. Additional follow-up questions were used to verify forms and identify possible variations in person, number, honorificity, case marking, and discourse functions. Whenever possible, the responses were cross-checked with other speakers to ensure consistency and reliability.

To supplement the primary linguistic data, several knowledgeable members of the Kudmali-speaking community, including local scholars, teachers, cultural activists, and elderly speakers, were consulted. These individuals provided valuable information regarding the historical development of the language, patterns of language use, regional variation, language contact, and sociolinguistic changes within the speech community. Their insights contributed to a broader understanding of the linguistic and cultural background of Kudmali and aided in interpreting the collected data.

The collected material was subsequently transcribed, organized, and analyzed to identify the structure and functions of the Kudmali pronominal system. Particular attention was given to person distinctions, number marking, honorific forms, case inflections, and the influence of neighbouring languages on pronoun usage. The findings presented in this study are therefore based on systematically elicited field data corroborated by community consultation and comparative analysis.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Kudmali language exhibits distinction in Pronouns based on Person and Number. The following table gives a detailed account of Pronouns and its classification based on Person and Number.

4.1. Types of Kudmali Pronouns

The pronominal system of Kudmali reveals a clear structural pattern organized around case and number, with highly regular morphological markers across the paradigm. Based on the study consistent morphological chain is observed in the marking of personal pronouns.

Kudmali Pronouns can be broadly classified into seven major types:

4.2.1 Personal pronouns

A consistent morphological chain is observed in the marking of personal pronouns.

Number	1 st PS, NOM	E.Gloss	2 nd PS, NOM	2 nd PS, NOM (HON)	E.Gloss	3 rd PS, NOM	3 rd PS, NOM (HON)	E.Gloss
Singular	hami/ hamae/moi	I	ṭṣi	ṭṣhra	you	ṣi, æi	ṣk ^h ra	he/she
Plural	hamra	we	ṭṣhra	-	you all	ṣk ^h ra	-	they

Number	1 st PS, OBJ	E.Gloss	2 nd PS, OBJ	2 nd PS, OBJ (HON)	E.Gloss	3 rd PS, OBJ	3 rd PS, OBJ (HON)	E.Gloss
Singular	hamke	me	ṭṣke	ṭṣhrake	you	ṣke	ṣk ^h rake	him/her
Plural	hamrake	us	ṭṣhrake	-	you all	ṣk ^h rake	-	them

Table-1, 2

First Person:

The singular nominative form takes the marker /i/ or /æ/, as illustrated in (1), while the plural nominative adds the plural marker /ra/, as in (2). For the objective case, the singular uses the marker /ke/ (3), and the plural also uses /ke/, preceded by the plural morpheme /ra/ (4).

1. *hame/hami b^haṭ k^hai-ke iʃkul dʒam*
1SG rice eat-FUT school go-FUT
'I will eat rice and then go to school.'
2. *hamra aedʒ k^heṭ dæk^he-lai dʒab*
1SG-PL today field to see-INF go-FUT
'We will go to see the field today.'
3. *hamke ʈaka ɖe*
me-1SG money give-PRS,IMP
'Give me money'
4. *hamrake kɔḍailgila ɖe*
us-1PL spade-PL give-PRS,IMP
'Give us spades'
5. *mɔi ʈke lei dʒab*
I-1SG,NOM you-2SG,OBJ go-1SG,FUT
'I will take you with me'

Second Person:

The singular nominative likewise takes the marker /i/ (6), and the plural nominative takes the marker /ra/ (7), mirroring the 1st-person pattern. The objective case uses /ke/ for both singular (5) and plural (8), with the plural form again containing the preceding /ra/ plural marker.

6. *ṭoi bihane hamɔr g^ha:r aibe-ṭo?*
2SG morning my-POSS home come-FUT
'Will you come to my house tomorrow morning?'
7. *ṭhra-ni keʃɔn aiha ?*
2SG,HON how are(being)
'How are you?'
8. *ṭhrake aedʒ hiai rɔhe heṭɔhɔn*
3PL.OBJ today here-LOC stay-INF have-FUT
'You all have to stay here today'

Third Person:

The pattern continues in the 3rd person: the singular nominative appears with /i/ (9), the plural nominative with /ra/ (10), and the objective case with /ke/ in both singular (11) and plural (12). As with the other persons, plural objective forms include the /ra/ marker before /ke/.

Overall, personal pronouns consistently maintain a structural opposition between singular /i/ and plural /ra/ in nominative forms, and a uniform /ke/ across objective forms, with plural marked by /ra/ + /ke/.

9. *ṣi hamɔr ʃɔngi hekei*
He/She-3SG my-1SG.GEN friend-3SG is-PRS
'He/She is my friend'

10. *ɔkʰra aedʒ kʰæt̪ gelahaʈ*
 3PL today field go-PST
 ‘Today they went to field’
11. *ʃke aedʒ gʰare ɖakihin*
 3SG.GEN today home-LOC call-IMP
 ‘Call him/her to our home’
12. *ʃkʰrake kina ɖebʃi*
 3PL.GEN what give-FUT
 ‘what will you give them’

4.2.2. Possessive pronouns

In Kudmali language sense of possession is very prominent in all person ie in 1st, 2nd and 3rd(Possessive case)

Number	1 st Person	2 nd Person	Honorific,Singular	3rd person	Honorific,Singular
Singular	hamər	ʈəkər, , ʈəhər, ʈər	ʈəhranik,ekʰranik	əkər, ʈəkər	əkʰranik, əkʰranik,ekʰrak
Plural	hamrak, hamranik	ʈəhrak,ʈəhranik	-	əkʰrak, əkʰranik, ekʰranik	-

Table-3

Kudmali contains person-based distinctions in the form of possessive pronouns and also contrast is determined by number as in table-3:

Singular possessive: marked by /r/ (13), Plural possessive: marked by /k/ or /nik/ (14) and Honorific forms introduce an additional layer of complexity.

The 2nd-person singular honorific employs /nik/ (15), while the 3rd-person singular honorific may take either /nik/ or /k/ (18 and 19). Notably, honorific distinctions do not extend to plural forms.

13. *hamər gʰa:r cʰəkbaide hekei*
 My-1SG home chakbad-LOC there-PRS
 ‘My home is at Chakbad’
14. *hamrak iha gaiɖe pani gir-ɔ-hei /girehek*
 Our’s(1PL,POSS) here-LOC very raining-PROG-PRS
 ‘It’s raining heavy in our place’
15. *ram aedʒ ʈər/ʈəhrak gʰa:r dʒaʈɔ*
 Ram today your(2SG-POSS/2PL-POSS) home-LOC go(FUT)
 ‘Ram will go/visit your home today.’

16. *əkər giḍərṭir kina nam hekei?*

His (3SG,POSS) daughter what name is-PRS

‘What is his daughter’s name?’

 17. *əkʰrak/əkʰranik gʰa:re ḍome giḍər ahə.*

Their’s(3PL,POSS) home-LOC lots baby there.

‘There are lots of babies in their home.’

 18. *Ram ekʰranik gʰa:rei aedʒ rəhṭei*

Ram-NOM their (3SG-HON,POSS) house-LOC today stay-INF

‘Ram is going to stay in their house today’

 19. *əkʰrak gae adʒ mela laglahe*

3SG-HON village-LOC today fair-NOM start-PRS-PERF

‘Fair has started from today in their village’

4.2.3 Inanimate Pronouns

Inanimate pronouns refer to non-human objects, facts and circumstances. Of the two pronouns given here, ‘*ɔi*’ can also refer to animates meaning he or she in English but *eḟa*, *uṭa*, *ɔhəṭa*, *əhəṭa* is always inanimate.

In Kudmali there are several demonstratives like

Nominative	<i>iṭa nai heṭṭi</i>	That won't happen
Genitive	-	-
Objective	<i>hami iṭa dʒaneṭalo nihi</i>	I didn't know that
Locative	<i>ɔhəṭai dʒailai hæṭek</i>	We need to go that way

Table-4

The inanimate pronominal system uses distinct lexical forms with minimal case variation:

Nominative/Object: /iṭa/

Locative: /ɔhəṭai/

No clear genitive forms were attested in the available data. This may represent a lexical gap, productive omission, or simply a data limitation.

4.2.4 Interrogative pronouns

Kudmali too has distinction between Interrogatives for animate pronouns.

Animate	Nominative	Genitive	Objective	Locative
Singular	kone	kakor	kakra	kaha
Plural	kakra	kak ^h rak	-	-
Inanimate	kina	keʃon	-	-

Table-5

Kudmali interrogative pronouns take different markers in terms of different cases. Plural nominative case takes /**ra**/ marker, as in (21), In the genitive case the singular form takes /r/ marker as in (23), and the plural form takes /**ra-k**/ marker, as in (24). Interestingly, the objective singular form and the nominative plural form have the same /ra/ marker, as in (21).

Inanimate forms show no overt genitive marking in the current dataset.

A noteworthy structural feature is the syncretism between the singular objective and the plural nominative, both expressed through /**ra**/ (21). Such syncretic forms contribute to the typological interest of the Kudmali pronominal system.

20. **kone** kəharaholə/ k^hədʒehelo ʔəke?

Who say- PST you?

‘Who said this to you?’

21. **kakra** k^həʒdʒehə ʔəhi ?

Whom searching(PROG-PRS) you(2SG)

‘Whom are you searching for?’

22. **keʃon** ahif/ aiha ?

how are(2SG,PRS)

‘How are you?’

23. **kakor** hua dʒabe-he ?

whom(GEN) there(LOC) go(FUT) HON ?

‘To whom will you go ?’

24. **kak^hrak** gae mela laglahe ?

3P.PL.HON village-LOC fair-NOM start-PRS-PERF

‘In whose village is the fair being held?’

25. **kina** k^hədʒehəm ?

what search-PRS.PROG

What are you searching for ?

26. **kaha** dʒabe ʔəi ?

Where go-FUT 2P.SG

Where will you go?

4.2.5 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns follow on from interrogatives as their formation is based on interrogative pronouns. There are no such plural forms of indefinite pronouns. Indefinite pronouns translate as someone/anyone or something or anything.

	Nominative	E.Gloss	Genitive	Objective	locative
Animate	kehu	someone	kakrə	kahuke	-
Inanimate	kuc ^h u	somethin g	-	kuc ^h u	-

Table-6

Indefinite pronouns fall into two semantic categories: animate and inanimate. Both categories are attested with nominative, genitive, objective, and locative forms, generally using the same set of markers as table-6.

However, across both categories, productive locative forms are not found, suggesting either a low frequency in discourse or an incomplete elicitation dataset.

4.2.6 Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns are used in correlative structures and follow the same logical pattern of 3rd person personal pronouns, though there is not much use is seen in the language.

/ækər/- 'his' Possessive case (Singular)

/æk^hrak/ – 'their' Possessive case (Singular, Honorific)

Relative pronouns show a simple and highly regular pattern. Two major morphological categories are identified:

Singular relative marker: /r/

Singular possessive relative marker: /k/

This minimal paradigm suggests a relatively streamlined relative-pronoun system, which stands in contrast with the richer personal and interrogative paradigms.

4.2.7 Deictic pronouns

Pronouns	Unmarked	Near	Far	English Gloss
Personal, Singular		ei, i	oi, u	
Inanimate, CL, PL	æhætə/uʔa/iʔi	igilan, æhægila n	ugilan, ugin/əhoʔi	this/that

Time	uk ^h ɔn, ahak ^h ɔn	ik ^h ɔn	ɔhek ^h ɔn	then
Location	ɔhæ ^h ɪne, ɔhɔ ^h ɪne	ehe ^h ɪne, ɪ ^h ne	ɔhɔ ^h ɪne, ɔhæ ^h ɪne, u ^h ɪn	there, here
Direction	ɔhɔbaɛ/ubaɛa	æhæbaɛ	ɔhɔbaɛ	this/that way
Manner	tæɟɔn	æɟɔn	ɪɟɔn/eheɟhon	such
Type	ɔhanɪɔr	æhenɪɔr	ɔhɔnɪɔr	that kind
Quantifiers	ɔtæk	ætæk	ɔtæk	so much

Table- 7

The Kudmali data reveals a consistent three-way deictic contrast—unmarked, proximal, and distal—across all semantic domains, including person, inanimate, time, location, direction, manner, type, and quantity as in . Distance is largely encoded through regular vowel alternations, where /e/–/æ/ mark proximity and /ɔ/–/u/ mark distance.

In the nominal domain, Kudmali displays rich morphological variation, especially for inanimate and plural demonstratives, suggesting the presence of classifier-like forms and possible dialectal or contextual allomorphy. Locative expressions show a productive pattern combining deictic prefixes with specialized locative suffixes. Importantly, the deictic system extends beyond reference to objects and persons, grammaticalizing distinctions in time (‘now’ vs. ‘then’), manner (‘like this’ vs. ‘like that’), type (‘this kind’ vs. ‘that kind’), and quantity (‘this much’ vs. ‘that much’) as in table-7.

These observations suggest that deixis in Kudmali functions as an important organizational principle within the grammar, shaping both nominal and adverbial domains.

5. Conclusion

This study presents one of the first systematic descriptions of the pronominal system of Kudmali based on elicited data that were cross-verified with native speakers. The analysis demonstrates that although Kudmali retains the core characteristics of an Indo-Aryan pronominal system, it also exhibits several distinctive features that may have emerged through prolonged contact with neighbouring languages such as Bengali, Magahi, and various Munda languages. The findings reveal a highly regular and structurally transparent pronominal paradigm organized around person, number, case, honorificity, animacy, and deixis. Personal pronouns consistently distinguish three persons (first, second, and third) and two numbers (singular and plural), while no grammatical gender distinctions are encoded, confirming the gender-neutral nature of pronominal reference in the language. Case marking is systematic and predictable, with nominative, objective, and possessive forms clearly differentiated. The objective marker /ke/ is uniformly applied across all persons and numbers, while plural forms are regularly formed through the addition of the plural marker /ra/, producing an agglutinative and morphologically transparent structure.

The possessive system is similarly regular, expressing possession primarily through number rather than person, with /r/ marking singular possessors and /k/ or /nik/ marking plural possessors. Honorificity constitutes a restricted subsystem, being limited to singular second- and third-person forms and expressed through markers such as /nik/ and /k/. This distribution suggests that honorific marking in Kudmali is closely tied to social relations and discourse participants rather than functioning as a generalized grammatical category. Beyond personal pronouns, the language exhibits distinct subsystems for inanimate, interrogative, indefinite, relative, and deictic pronouns. Inanimate pronouns show separate nominative and locative forms but lack attested genitive forms in the present dataset. Interrogative pronouns display a relatively rich case paradigm and exhibit instances of syncretism, particularly the use of /ra/ in both plural nominative and singular objective animate forms. Indefinite pronouns are largely derived from interrogative bases and show limited pluralization and locative marking. Demonstratives encode contrasts of proximity, distance, and animacy, reflecting the importance of spatial orientation in the grammar, whereas relative pronouns form a comparatively reduced system centred on the markers /r/ and /k/.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the Kudmali pronominal system is typologically characterized by gender neutrality, agglutinative case marking, regular number morphology, restricted honorific marking, and sensitivity to animacy and deictic distance. Despite increasing language shift and sustained influence from dominant regional languages, Kudmali continues to maintain a robust and internally coherent pronominal architecture. The patterns documented in this study contribute significantly to the description of Kudmali grammar and provide valuable comparative evidence for the study of Eastern Indo-Aryan languages and language contact phenomena in eastern India. The findings also underscore the importance of further fieldwork and documentation efforts, particularly in view of the sociolinguistic pressures that may threaten the preservation of distinctive grammatical features of Kudmali in the future.

6. Limitations and Possibilities

Although this study offers a preliminary but systematic account of the Kudmali pronominal system, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the dataset is based on elicited forms and consultant-driven examples, rather than extensive naturalistic corpora. As a result, certain pronominal categories—particularly genitive forms of inanimate pronouns, locative markers in indefinite pronouns, and plural forms of honorific pronouns—remain unattested. Their absence in the current data should not be assumed to indicate grammatical impossibility.

Second, the study relies primarily on speakers from a restricted geographic area, and Kudmali is known to exhibit dialectal variation across Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha. It is therefore possible that other dialects preserve additional forms, alternative markers, or different honorific strategies not captured in this analysis.

Third, phonetic variation and morphophonemic alternations (such as variation between /k/, /nik/) could not be investigated in depth due to limited tokens. Future work combining acoustic analysis with broader sociolinguistic sampling could clarify whether such alternations reflect dialectal differences, formality levels, or phonological conditioning.

Fourth, reflexive pronouns could not be investigated due lack of sufficient authentic data. Future work might give a detailed account of it.

Abbreviation

PS	Person	1	First person
2	Second person	3	Third person
OBJ	Objective	NOM	Nominal
HON	Honorific	SG	Singular

PL	Plural	FUT	Future tense
PST	Past tense	PRS	Present tense
POSS	Possessive marker	PROG	Progressive
PERF	Perfective	GEN	Genitive case
LOC	Locative marker	IMP	Imperative
INF	Infinitive		

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