



# Rajanikanta Bordoloi As A Novelist Of Assam

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## **Abstract**

Rajanikanta Bordoloi (1867-1940) holds a distinct place in the literary landscape of Assam as a novelist whose works mirror of the cultural, social, and historical sensibilities of his time. This study seeks to examine Bordoloi's contribution to Assamese literature with a focus on his work as a novelist. Through a critical analysis of his major novels such as "Miri Jiyori" and "Manomoti", the study highlights how Bordoloi skillfully blended historical narratives with elements of Assamese folklore, culture, and social reform. The paper discusses his narrative style, thematic concerns, and his role in shaping a distinctly Assamese literary identity during the colonial period. Bordoloi's commitment to Assamese nationalism, his portrayal of indigenous communities, and his subtle critique of social hierarchies underscore his position not just as a novelist, but as a cultural reformer. This paper aims to reaffirm Bordoloi's stature as a foundational figure in Assamese prose fiction and assess his enduring legacy in the literary history of Assam.

**Keywords:** Rajanikanta Bordoloi, Folklore, Indigenous, Fiction, Literary, Literary

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rajanikanta Bordoloi occupies a distinguished place in the history of Assamese literature as one of the earliest and most influential novelists of the region. Writing during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period when Assamese prose was still in its formative stage, Bordoloi played a pioneering role in shaping the narrative tradition of modern Assamese fiction. His works, marked by historical depth, social consciousness, and a strong sense of cultural identity, contributed significantly to the emergence of the Assamese novel as a serious literary genre.

Often honored as the "Upanyas Samrat" (Emperor of Novels) of Assam, Bordoloi brought historical events, folklore, and indigenous life into the mainstream of literary expression. His novels such as *Miri Jiyori*, *Dandua Droh*, and *Manomati* vividly portray Assam's sociocultural landscape, tribal life, and the heroic struggles of its people. Through his realistic storytelling, meticulous use of history, and evocative depiction of Assamese ethos, Bordoloi helped establish a distinctive Assamese narrative voice at a time when the region was experiencing cultural and political transformation.

This research seeks to explore Rajanikanta Bordoloi's contributions as a novelist, examining his thematic concerns, narrative techniques, historical vision, and his overall impact on the growth of Assamese literature. By studying his works and literary legacy, this paper aims to understand how Bordoloi shaped the foundations of Assamese fiction and why he continues to be regarded as one of its most formative figures.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

- i. To evaluate the contribution of Rajanikanta Bordoli to Assamese literature and fiction, especially in the field of novel.
- ii. To analyze the major themes and narrative techniques employed in his novels.
- iii. To examine the influence of socio-political contexts on his writings.
- iv. To assess Bardoli's role in the development of modern Assamese society and literature.

### 3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Rajanikanta Bordoloi's works marked a turning point in Assamese fiction. By addressing the moral dilemmas, political conflicts, and existential uncertainties of his time, he elevated the Assamese novel to a platform for critical discourse. Studying his work reveals the trajectory of Assamese literature's evolution and helps understand how fiction interacts with social realities in Northeast India.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative analytical approach grounded in literary criticism. A textual analysis of Bordoloi's primary works was undertaken along with the study of critical essays, scholarly articles, biographies, and historical records. Interpretive methods were applied to understand recurring themes, character development, and socio-political allegories. Scope of the Study The study focuses primarily on Bordoloi's novels written between the 1860s and the 1940s. It examines his major novels while considering his influence as a literary editor and public intellectual. Other genres such as poetry and journalism, though significant in his career, are mentioned only where relevant to his fiction writing.

### 5. LITERARY BACKGROUND

Rajanikanta Bordoloi was one of the pioneers of the Romantic Movement in Assamese literature who contributed immensely to the domain of Assamese fictional literature. Prior to him, a number of writers had tried to write novels, but they failed to master the art of fiction. True to the concept of literary genre, Bordoloi's *Miri Jiyori* published in 1894 is regarded as the first Assamese novel and he is considered to be the father of Assamese fictional literature.

### 6. RAJANIKANTA BORDOLOI: THE NOVELIST

#### 6.1 Thematic Preoccupations

##### i. Historical Consciousness:

Many of Rajanikanta's novels draw inspiration from and are rooted in ancient historical events in Assam. For example, "Manomati" tells the story of a group of people caught between the retreating Ahom forces and the advancing Burmese army. In his novel "Nirmal Bhakat," Bordoloi weaves a narrative around the socio-political landscape of Assam, focusing on the Ahom dynasty and Vaishnavism. This novel covers the period from the coronation of Chandra Kanta Sinha to the British takeover of Assam. Bordoloi's novels, rich in historical awareness, have earned him the titles of 'Father of Assamese Novels,' 'Scott of Assamese Literature,' and 'Assam Bankim Chandra.' Some critics call him the "Walter Scott of Assam" because many of his novels are historical and deal with Assam's past.

##### ii. Social and Cultural Representation:

In "Miri Jiyori," Rajanikanta Bordoloi offers an in-depth depiction of the Mising community, highlighting their customs, traditions, and rituals. Written in 1894, "Miri Jiyori" is a love story set in the Miri (now known as the Mishong) community. The novel tells a poignant tale of ill-fated love, crafted during a period when the novel as a literary form was still evolving. It sympathetically portrays a young Miri couple who evolve from childhood friends into a deeply devoted, but ultimately doomed, pair in love. The novel serves as both a reflection of the Mising community and a heartfelt appeal for human compassion.

##### ii. Romantic and Moral Dimensions:

Romantic plots are central in some novels. Bordoloi's romanticism was deeply rooted in his connection to the Assamese landscape and culture. He portrayed love not just as a personal emotion, but as a force that connected individuals to their surroundings and heritage. His characters often experienced love against the backdrop of rural Assam, with its lush forests, flowing rivers, and traditional village life. In his works, love was portrayed as both a source of joy and a cause of inner turmoil. Bordoloi delved into the complexities of romantic relationships, exploring themes of unrequited love, societal pressures, and the conflict between tradition and modernity.

##### iii. Style and Prose

His writing style: simple expressions, use of dialects, idioms, different registers for different characters. His writing often explored complex human emotions, delving into the psychological aspects of his characters and their relationships.

Bordoloi's prose was accessible to a wide audience, using simple language while maintaining a sense of elegance and sophistication. His writing often featured a compelling narrative voice that drew readers into the story and kept them engaged. His prose often had a lyrical, almost poetic quality, especially when describing nature or emotional scenes.

#### iv. **Religious and Spiritual Elements**

Bordoloi was influenced by Vaishnavism—a major religious tradition in Assam. Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novels often depict Assamese society deeply rooted in traditional religious practices. He highlights Hindu rituals, festivals, and folklore, showing their influence on everyday village life. His works incorporate spiritual beliefs in nature, deities, and ancestral spirits, reflecting indigenous Assamese culture. Characters frequently rely on moral values drawn from spiritual teachings, guiding their decisions and relationships. Through these elements, Bordoloi portrays a harmonious blend of faith, culture, and ethical living in Assamese society.

### 6.2 **Style of Rajanikanta Bordoli Narrative Technique**

#### i. **Simple and Lucid Language:**

Uses easy, graceful Assamese prose that feels natural and conversational.

#### ii. **Descriptive and Picturesque:**

Rich descriptions of nature, rivers, forests, and rural life create a vivid atmosphere.

#### iii. **Cultural Realism:**

His writing reflects the customs, rituals, and everyday life of Assamese tribal and rural communities especially the Mising (Miri) people.

#### iv. **Emotional Depth:**

Expresses human emotions—love, suffering, conflict—softly and sensitively.

#### v. **Historical and Social Flavor:**

Some novels carry a historical backdrop and subtly portray social issues like oppression, class differences, and patriarchy.

#### vi. **Use of Local Dialects:**

Incorporates regional terms and tribal vocabulary to enhance authenticity.

### 6.3 **Narrative Technique of Rajanikanta Bordoloi**

#### i. **Linear Storytelling:**

Most stories follow a straightforward, chronological narrative, making them easy to follow.

#### ii. **Strong Characterization:**

Creates realistic characters and highlights their inner conflicts, motivations, and moral dilemmas.

#### iii. **Third-Person Omniscient Narration:**

Narrator often knows the thoughts and emotions of all characters, enabling psychological insight.

#### iv. **Blend of Romance and Social Commentary:**

Love stories are intertwined with depictions of social customs and community life.

#### v. **Detailed Setting as Part of the Narrative:**

Landscape and environment are not just background—they help shape the mood and actions of the.

### 6.4 **Major Works Analyzed**

Here are some of his important novels:

- i. **Miri Jiyori:** Published in 1894, this is a social novel depicting the Mising (Miri) community, their customs, and a tragic love story.
- ii. **Manomati (1900):** Historical novel set in the time of the Ahom kingdom and Burmese invasion
- iii. **Dandua Droh:** Rebellion or resistance (title suggests “rebellion”) as per his historical focus.
- iv. **Rahdoi Ligiri:** Another historical novel.
- v. **Rangilee:** Reflects societal life; “Rangilee” is one of his social and cultural portrayals.
- vi. **Others:** Nirmal Bhakat, Tamreswari Mandir, Thamba-Thoibir Sadhu, Radha-Rukmini Ran.

## 7. **LITERARY AND CULTURAL IMPACT**

- i. Rajanikanta Bordoloi is hailed as the “Upanyas Samrat” (Emperor of Novels) in Assamese literature for pioneering the Assamese novel tradition.
- ii. His works like Miri Jiyori and Manomati enriched Assamese prose with realistic portrayals of ethnic communities and rural life.
- iii. He played a key role in shaping Assamese cultural identity, highlighting local history, folklore, and social issues.
- iv. Bordoloi's novels inspired later writers to explore social reform, nationalism, and human values through fiction.



- v. His contributions significantly influenced the growth of modern Assamese literature and strengthened the region's cultural heritage

## 8. FINDINGS

- The study finds that Rajanikanta Bordoloi played a foundational role in shaping early Assamese fiction through his historical and socio-cultural narratives.
- His novels demonstrate a strong commitment to documenting Assam's indigenous communities, particularly the Karbis, portraying them with empathy and authenticity.
- Bordoloi's narrative style blends realism with romanticism, allowing him to present cultural history in an engaging literary form.
- The research reveals that his works address themes of identity, resistance, and community life, making them valuable sociological documents.
- Linguistic analysis shows that his prose enriched the Assamese language by introducing localized expressions and ethnographic details.
- Overall, the findings establish Bordoloi as a pioneering novelist whose contributions laid the groundwork for the evolution of Assamese literature.

## 9. CONCLUSION:

Rajanikanta Bordoloi's contribution to Assamese literature, particularly the novel, is both foundational and far-reaching. He is considered a pioneer of the Assamese novel, contributing significantly to the development of modern Assamese prose. Bordoloi's writings often depicted Assamese rural life, ethnic communities, and their customs with remarkable realism and empathy. His novels played a major role in awakening social consciousness and promoting progressive ideas in Assamese society. Bordoloi contributed to preserving and documenting tribal life, especially the Mising (Miri) community, giving them literary representation. His simple yet powerful narrative style helped shape the foundation of modern Assamese fiction. Rajanikanta Bordoloi remains a central figure in Assam's literary renaissance, inspiring generations of writers.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author of the paper declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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