



# History Of Novel In Kokborok Literature (1954-2024)

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## **Abstract:**

Oral literature emerged alongside human speech, developing as an essential medium through which communities expressed their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. Long before the advent of written forms, oral traditions functioned as repositories of cultural knowledge, preserving collective memory, social values, and historical experiences. Literature, in its broader sense, may be categorized into two primary forms: oral literature and written literature, both of which play crucial roles in shaping and sustaining cultural identity.

Within the historical development of Kokborok literature, oral tradition occupies a central position. The transition from oral expression to written documentation began in 1897 with the publication of the first Kokborok grammar book, *Kokborma*, marking a significant milestone in the literary history of the language. This foundational work paved the way for subsequent written contributions. In later years, Kokborok prose writing gained recognition when the first novel in the language appeared in the literary magazine *Kwtal Kothoma*, authored by Sudhanwa Debbarma. Together, these early works represent the gradual transformation of Kokborok literary expression from oral transmission to written form, while continuing to reflect indigenous ways of life and cultural consciousness.

**Keywords:** Oral tradition, cultural memory, Kokborok literature, historical documentation, indigenous life.

## **1. Introduction**

The formal history of Kokborok literature commenced in 1897 with the publication of *Kokborma*, a grammatical text authored by Doulat Ahmad and Mohammad Umar. This publication marked the beginning of written literary expression in the Kokborok language and introduced written Kokborok literature to native readers for the first time. Prior to this period, literary expression among Kokborok-speaking communities existed primarily in oral forms such as folktales, songs, and myths.

Although written Kokborok literature began at the end of the nineteenth century, the emergence of the novel as a literary form took several decades. In the early phase of Kokborok literary development, novels were not published as complete books. Instead, long fictional narratives appeared in serialized form, published scene by scene in literary magazines. Among these, *Kwtal Kothoma* played a significant role by providing a platform for early Kokborok prose narratives, thereby contributing to the gradual growth of the novel tradition in the language.

## II. Concept of the Novel

The novel is often compared to a banyan tree with numerous branches, symbolizing its complex structure and interconnected narratives. It is a lengthy fictional prose form that portrays the lives, emotions, conflicts, and experiences of multiple characters within a continuous and coherent storyline. Through detailed characterization and expansive narrative development, novels allow readers to immerse themselves deeply in the fictional world. As a result, readers often experience the events of the narrative as if they were participating in or witnessing the lives of the characters themselves.

## III. History of the Written Kokborok Novel

From 1954 to 2024, a total of fifteen novels have been published in the Kokborok language, marking the gradual evolution of the novel as an established literary genre. Sudhanwa Debbarma occupies a foundational position in this history as the first Kokborok novelist. His works *Chethuwang* and *Hachuk Khurio* initiated the tradition of novel writing in Kokborok and set the groundwork for later writers.

### Chronological List of Kokborok Novelists (1954–2024)

1. Sudhanwa Debbarma
2. Shyamlal Debbarma
3. Biswa Kumar Debbarma
4. Nanda Kumar Debbarma
5. Kunja Bihari Debbarma
6. Sunil Debbarma
7. Atul Debbarma
8. Bijoy Debbarma
9. Sefali Debbarma
10. Prabir Kumar Debbarma
11. Chandramani Debbarma
12. Kiran Debbarma
13. Biswajit Debbarma
14. Matilal Jamatia
15. Andrew Debbarma

### I. Sudhanwa Debbarma

Sudhanwa Debbarma is recognized as the first novelist in Kokborok literary history. His novel *Chethuwang* was initially published in 1954 in serialized form through the magazine *Kwtal Kothoma*. Much later, in 2016, the noted writer Naresh Chandra Devvarma compiled its thirty-one scenes into a single volume. His second novel, *Hachuk Khurio-1*, originally published in 1987, holds the distinction of being the first complete Kokborok novel released as a single book. In 2014, the work was reissued in four parts by the Language Wing.

### II. Shyamlal Debbarma

Shyamlal Debbarma contributed two novels to Kokborok literature. His first work, *Khong* (1996), was initially serialized in the newspaper *Tripura Koptung* under the title *Sampli*. The novel was later revised and officially published under its present title. His second novel, *Tongthai Naitugwi*, was published in 2007.

### III. Biswa Kumar Debbarma

Biswa Kumar Debbarma authored a single novel titled *Ostinogo*, which was published in 2000.

#### **IV. Nanda Kumar Debbarma**

Nanda Kumar Debbarma produced two novels in Kokborok literature. His first novel, *Rung* (2001), was structured into four scenes. His second work, *Bubagwrasa* (2018), expanded the narrative form further and consists of eleven scenes.

#### **V. Kunja Bihari Debbarma**

Kunja Bihari Debbarma wrote three novels, two of which were published in literary magazines. His first novel, *Mwnakni Pohor*, appeared in 2002. *Halok* was published in *Raima* magazine in 2004, while *Surang* was serialized in the same magazine between 2008 and 2009.

#### **VI. Sunil Debbarma**

Sunil Debbarma published his novel *Langmani Rukungo* in 2003. The work consists of twenty-seven scenes and reflects the expanding narrative scope of Kokborok novels.

#### **VII. Dr. Atul Debbarma**

Dr. Atul Debbarma has authored three novels. His first novel, *1980*, was published in 2005. His second work, *Mungkwrwi*, appeared in 2023. In 2024, he published *Dungur Bano 5G*, reflecting contemporary themes within Kokborok fiction.

#### **VIII. Bijoy Debbarma**

Bijoy Debbarma published his novel *Dolai Twima Naro* in 2008. The narrative is divided into eleven scenes.

#### **IX. Sefali Debbarma**

Sefali Debbarma holds a historic place as the first female novelist in Kokborok literature. Her first novel, *Lokhopoti*, was published in 2010. This was followed by *Khorang Bukcha Khalwng* (2015), which consists of ten scenes, and *Hamjakmungni Hachuk* (2016), a novel structured into thirty-nine scenes.

#### **X. Prabir Kumar Debbarma**

Prabir Kumar Debbarma authored the novel *Khapangni Mari*, published in 2016. The book is organized into eleven scenes.

#### **XI. Chandramani Debbarma**

Chandramani Debbarma published his novel *Sokorom* in 2020. The work consists of eleven scenes.

#### **XII. Kiran Debbarma**

Kiran Debbarma has written two novels. *Khoroksale Bekereng Khochawanw* (2022) is divided into twenty-two scenes, while his second novel, *Sampari*, was published in 2023.

#### **XIII. Biswajit Debbarma**

Biswajit Debbarma published his first novel, *Langmani Khorang*, in 2022. The book was released by the Kokborok Department of TTAADC, Khumulwng, Tripura, and consists of four scenes.

#### **XIV. Matilal Jamatia**

Matilal Jamatia's debut novel, *Bai Chakti*, was published in 2023 by the Kokborok Department of TTAADC, Khumulwng, Tripura. The novel is structured into four scenes.

## XV. Andrew Debbarma

Andrew Debbarma authored the novel *Nakarmung*, which was published in 2023.

## IV. Conclusion

Kokborok novel literature serves as a vital narrative space through which the everyday life of the indigenous communities of Tripura is vividly portrayed. These novels offer detailed representations of social structures, belief systems, and customary practices that continue to shape the lived experiences of the native tribes. Through fictional narratives, Kokborok novelists document religious observances, traditional norms, and customary laws that govern community life.

In addition to social and spiritual dimensions, Kokborok novels function as cultural archives, preserving knowledge of traditional attire, indigenous cuisine, folklore, folk dances, and folk songs of the Tiprasa people. The texts also provide insight into age-old agricultural practices, particularly *jhum* cultivation, which has been sustained from ancestral times and remains an integral part of indigenous life. Collectively, Kokborok novel literature not only entertains but also safeguards cultural memory, ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge and identity for future generations.

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