

# Analyzing the Literary Evolution and Language Development of Kokborok Writers

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## Abstract

Tripura, located in northeastern India, is renowned for its rich oral traditions, folk cultures, and customs. The Kokborok language has evolved orally for thousands of years, serving as a powerful medium for the Tripuri community to preserve its heritage. Long passed down through generations via oral literature, it has formed the bedrock of local identity. The transition of the language into written forms began when pioneers like Daulot Ahmed and Mohammad Umor wrote some of the earliest texts. Subsequently, Radhamohan Thakur authored a foundational grammar book titled Kokborok-ma in 1900, paving the way for the growth of modern Kokborok literature.

**Keyword:** Kokborok Literature, Doulat Ahammed, Thakur Radha Mohon Debbarma, jonosikha, Kwtal Kothoma, History of literature.

## Introduction:

Language is a medium of communication, through which humans have been expressing their feelings and thoughts for ages. It is through language that human's express feelings like love, sympathy, brotherhood, and soon. Language is a process that has no end. We can adapt and expand it to our own needs. It is impossible to trace the exact date humans have been using language. Language can be broadly divided into two parts: spoken language, in which thoughts and feelings are expressed through sound (voice). Second, non-verbal language, in which feelings, desires, and ideas are expressed through non-verbal signals, gestures, facial expressions, and body movements. Language is the medium that connects people living near and far, enabling the exchange of thoughts and feelings between them. Even those who cannot speak communicate their thoughts, feelings, and desires through hand signals, eye gestures, and body language. The scope of language is so vast that it cannot be fully explained in a few words. Language is a powerful medium through which people communicate with each other and exchange thoughts, feelings, and information. A society without language is unimaginable. Each society has its own unique language. Similarly, grammar and linguistic structure play an important role in language. Language is constantly evolving, and new words are born over time. These words are used in spoken and written language, making it even richer and more powerful.

The mother tongue of the Tripuri community of Tripura state is Tipra (Kokborok). This language has been spoken and preserved by the Tripuri community of Tripura since ancient times. The existence of a language is linked to society and its people. If there were no human society, languages would not exist. The word Kokborok also has a special meaning, such as the language of the Borok people. Written forms of Kokborok literature are available from 1897 to till date. In 1897, the first book, Kokborkma ong Tripura Byakaran, was published by Daulad Ahmed and Mohammad Umar. Despite being native Kokborok

speakers, they made the first attempt to write and understand the Kokborok language. In 1900, Thakur Radhamohan Debbarkarma published a work titled Koborokma. This type of written form of the Kokborok language gradually developed. Furthermore, Ajitbandhu, Somendra Chandra Debbarkarma, and others were involved in the Jana Shiksha Andolan. Members of the Kwtal Kothoma, including editor Sudhanwa Debbarma, Dasrath Dev, Shyamlal Debbarma, Nanda Kumar Debbarma, Chandra kanta Murasing, Sefali Debbarma, Sabita Debbarma, Sudhanya Tripura, Atul Debbarma, etc., contributed significantly to the development of Kokborok language. Furthermore, the books Troipur Kothamala (1906) and Tripura Bhasha Bidhan (1907) were published, which contributed significantly to the development of the Kokborok language and literature.

A significant milestone in the development of the Kokborok language was achieved on January 19, 1979, when it was recognized as the official language of the state of Tripura. Subsequently, on April 20, 1999, it was also declared the official language of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). As a result of these significant developments, the Kokborok language and literature have continued to flourish. Today, the Kokborok language is not limited to Tripura; a large number of people also speak it in other states, such as Assam, Mizoram, and Bangladesh. Furthermore, Kokborok-speaking communities reside in Bangladesh, where Kokborok is used in everyday life. Thus, the social, cultural, and literary importance of the Kokborok language continues to grow.

### 1. Doulat Ahammed and Mohammad Umor:

Doulad Ahammed and Mohammad umor jointly published 'kokborma' a kokborok Grammar book, at Amar yatra press in comilla. In his writing Md. Doulad Ahammed used kokborok dialect spoken people by the onamura area. He belong to Bengali-speaking community and wrote about both mior and minor, on various subject in Bengali, he also had a deep love for the kokborok language.

**Kokboroma ong Tripura–Byakoron (1897–1898 A.D.):** A Critical Analysis of Md. Daulat Ahmed's Contribution to Kokborok Grammar:

The publication of Kokboroma ong Tripura–Byakoron in 1897–1898 A.D. (1307 Tring) marked an important stage in the history of written Kokborok. Historical records identify the work as a collaborative effort by Kaji Md. Daulat Ahammed and Mohammed Umar, published in Comilla (now in Bangladesh). It is widely regarded as one of the earliest grammatical descriptions of the Kokborok language and continues to be cited in university curricula and scholarly studies on the history of Kokborok language and literature. Kokborma ong Tripura–Byakaran, the first printed and published Kokborok grammar book, was prepared during a period when Kokborok existed predominantly as a spoken language with a rich oral tradition but very limited written documentation. The preparation of a grammar was, therefore, an important intellectual undertaking. Rather than merely collecting words and expressions, the authors attempted to organize the language into a systematic framework that could be used for learning, teaching, and future linguistic study. This represented a significant step toward the documentation and preservation of Kokborok.

### Books Publish

1. 'Kokborma Ong Tripura byekaron'- 1897-98. (kokma/grammar).
2. 'Kokma kalai' 1901 A.D. (Grammar).

### 1.1. Radha Mohan Thakur Debbarma:

Radha Mohan Thakur was a boy at the time of his father's death. He would have been ten (10) years old

at that time. Their family situation was not very good. His widowed mother was in need of food and clothing. Despite his enjoyment, he never left his son in want. His mother fed him without eating, clothed him without dressing, and did not let him face any harm even for a single day. His mother kept him playing with her all day long, and when she did not see him for a while, she would search for him like a madwoman, and at night she would let him sleep on her chest, and she would tell him stories and teach him good words. When Madhava was sick or fell ill, his mother would bring a worshiper and perform puja (for the welfare of her son) and would bring medicine and have him take it.

Radhamohan Tagore's Kok-Borok-Ma (Tripura Grammar) was published in 1310 Tripura, i.e. 1900 AD. His Kok-Borok grammar, written following Bengali grammar, is the main basis for the present Kok-Borok grammar writers. Various grammatical definitions of Kok-Borok given by him are being accepted and used. Some of the aspects indicated in his Kok-Borok grammar are Radha Mohan Tagore's second book, 'Traipur Kothamala', was published in 1906. It includes Bengali and English translations of Kokborok sentences in 13 paragraphs, five original Kokborok short stories with Bengali translations, a collection of 10 short Kokborok folk songs, and a long poem 'Upohar' dedicated to his wife, Monmohini Devi.

### **Books Publish**

1. 'Kokborokma' - (Tripuri Bhasa Byakaron-1900 A.D) Grammar.
2. 'Tripur Kothamala' (Cherairokni swrwngma Bijap-1906 A.D)
3. 'Tripur Bhasa Bidhan' (Kokborok-English-Sanskrit Dictionary-1907 A.D)

### **1.2. Samarendra Chandra Debbarma:**

Memories of Tripura after Daulat Ahmed and Radha Mohan Thakur, there has been no further instance of Kokborok language practice for a long period of about three decades. Samarendra Chandra Debbarma, the second son of Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya, was a man of extraordinary intelligence. He had an immense passion for ancient history and archaeology. The book 'Tripura Smriti' published in 1927 is an outstanding contribution of his. He has discussed the archaeological history of Tripura in the past with great devotion in this book. This book of his is rich in many valuable theories and information.

A series of sad songs of separation song by the wife of a soldier killed in battle were once very popular in the tribal society of Tripura. Such songs were famous as 'Resiyar Khagra'. A Kokborok song of 'Resiyar Khagra' has been included in the book 'Tripurar Smriti' with its Bengali translation and notation. It is certain that Maharajkumar Samarendra Chandra Debbarma knew Kokborok and was equally enthusiastic about Kokborok folk songs.

#### **The song of 'Resiyar Khagra'**

Hadukduk kolok maisui pinjagwi  
Pakri nurukliya, jadu pakri nurukliya.  
Hadukduk kolok gunthu pinjagwi  
Yakurai nurukliya, jadu yakurai nurukliya.  
Tuigereng gereng Gati chakjagwi  
Rihinui khunaliya, jadu Rihinui khunaliya.  
Gati holongsa bangmani bagui  
Ruktharui solapliya, jadu ruktharui solapliya.  
Maising siyari Bangmani bagui  
Naharui nurokliya, jadu naharui nurokliya.

**In English**

To sow corn on the long mountain road  
I couldn't see (his) turban.  
Planting two-petaled flower trees along the long mountain path  
I couldn't see (his) ankle.  
Called to prepare a ghat by the Kalnadini waterfall  
Even though he called out, he could not hear.  
There were so many stones on the shore  
that I couldn't reach him even if I ran.  
In the abundance of fog  
I looked but couldn't see him.

**1.3. Jonosikha Choba (Janashiksha Movement):**

Jonosikha Choba (Janashiksha movement) showed the path of survival and liberation to the tribal people, who had long been dependent on primitive livelihoods, deprived of the light of education, oppressed by feudal lords, and burdened by superstitions. Subsequently, this movement led to the formation of the 'People's Liberation Council' among the tribals, followed by the establishment of the Communist Party.

On December 27, 1945 (11th Push, 1352 Bongobdo), the Tripura Janashiksha Samiti was formed in Durga Chowdhury Para under the Jiraniya Block. The Samiti was organized by a group of educated youth from the tribal community. Sudhanwa Debbarma, Dasarath Debbarma, Aghore Debbarma, Nilamani Debbarma and Hemanta Debbarma. Their primary demand was the establishment of schools in remote Tripura villages, hill area and the spread of education among the tribal population. As a result of their intense movement, following the passing of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur Dev Barma, more than 450-500 primary schools were established across various remote rural areas of Tripura between 1950 and 1951. Notably, one of the core demands of the Tripura Janashiksha Samiti was the education of tribal students through their mother tongue.

In the post-independence era, the wave of pan-India politics reached the small state of Tripura. Almost all the leaders of the Samiti eventually joined an all-India political party. While the great mass movement of the association birthed the Ganmukti Parishad, which transformed into the tribal wing of an all-India political party, another significant stream emerged with the publication of a Kokborok literary paper named Kwtal Kothoma, aimed at developing the Kokborok language and literature.

Throughout the janashiksha movement, numerous writers contributed to the development of kokborok by writing magazines. Yet, the contribution of the jana shiksha samiti are omitted in this context. At that time, periodicals were published in both kokborok and Bengali. Ajoy Debbarma and Surya Reang with publish 'Koktun', Naresh Debbarma Publish 'Chini kok', Upojati Student Federation publish 'Sachwlang', Bijoy Hrangkhawl was publish 'Tripura star and karam (my Land)', Brajabihari Debbarma-Hani kok, Shyamlal Debbarma, Dasarath Debbarma- Lama, 'tripura koktun' Shyamlal Debbarma. Many writers have worked on the Development of kokborok.

**1.4. Sudhanwa Debbarma:**

Sudhanwa Debbarma was Born 26 February 1918 A.D. and he Died 1999 A.D (aged 80-81) he is Indian kokborok writer and Political leaders. Earlier, in the chapter titled Janashiksha Movement and Kwtal Kothoma, Sudhanwa Debbarma contributions to Kokborok literature were discussed to some extent.

Alongside political activism, he devoted his entire life to the practice and enrichment of Kokborok literature. He is widely recognized as a pioneer in writing Kokborok novels. In addition to serializing his novels Chethuwang (Chatim Tree) and Kakborok in the self-edited magazine Kwtal Kothoma, his masterwork, the novel Hachuk Khuria (At the Lap of the Mountain), has been published in four volumes. A Bengali translation of this novel has also been published in a compiled four-volume edition. Furthermore, he wrote several short stories and a significant number of articles focusing on politics, tribal society, and culture. Although he did not primarily write poetry, his potential to be a successful poet is evident in the single poem he authored.

**Sudhanwa Debbarma Book's Published presented below:**

1. 'Agiye Cholo' (1948 Drama/Thungnuk).
2. Kwtal Kothoma (1954-56, Magazine) Kokborok Kokrbai Bwlai.
3. Himdi Do (1983. Poem) Kokborok Koklop Bwchap.

**Magazine (Kokrbai bwlai):**

1. Kha Kwak (1983, March. Magazine) Lama Koktwma Bwlai.
2. Bwthai Thaikhe Bedek Kongo (1983, April. Magazine) Lama Kokrbai Bwlai.
3. Tripura Upajati Sanskriti Biyangtwi Kochok Phaikha (1983. Magazine) Jora Kokrbai Bwlai.
4. Jati Chapthani Gonotantik Thansani Samung (1984, April. Magazine) Lama Koktwma Bwlai
5. Jonona Commission-ni Samung tei tongmung (1984, February. Magazine) Lama Kokrbai Bwlai.
6. Lam Kirima (1984, August) Lama Kokrbai Bwlai.
7. Kwtal Bwsa (1984, October) Lama Koktwma Bwlai
8. Bwkha Kirima (1984, October) Lama Koktwma Bwlai
9. Lachima Kotor Shyamlal Debbarma bai komthingjak Tripura Koktung Koktun Bwlai (1984, Kothoma Bwsa).
10. Ta Pokdi Chini Matri Basha (1985, October) Lama Koktwma Bwlai.
11. Kothoma Kothor (Tripura Koktun)

**Novel (Kothomayung):**

1. Chethuwang-1954 A.D.
2. Hachuk Khurio-1 volume (1987)
3. Hachuk Khurio-2 volumes (1995).
4. Hachuk Khurio-3, 4. Volumes 2014 A.D.

**Drama (Thungnuk):**

1. Osa Khichon (Rabindranath Tagore- Kokborok Drama).
2. Porikhit Bidruho (Thungnuk).

**Grammar (Kokma):**

1. Kokborok Kokma (Kokma bijap)

**1.5. Kwtal Kothoma:**

'Kwtal Kothoma' made its debut in 1954 as the mouthpiece of the Janashiksha movement. The founder-editor of this first literary magazine in Kokborok was Sudhanwa Debbarma, a writer and the president of the Tripura Janashiksha Samiti. However, the character of "Kwtal Kothoma" was not confined to pure literature; in addition to Kokborok literary works, it published various articles reflecting the political ideology of the Ganamukti Parishad. Kokborok songs, folk tales, and cultural stories were published continuously in the magazine, and it gained widespread popularity among Kokborok-speaking tribal

people in a short span of time. Among its notable contributors and contents were the first Kokborok novel, Chethuwang (published serially by the editor himself), along with works by Jyotilal Debbarma, Ratimanik Debbarma, Nagendra Chandra Debbarma, and Rubirung Devi, Published in series, Fumukmung (riddles), Navalakshmi Debbarma, 'sikla Bai sikli' Rwchaplamung (a competitive song for young people), Dashrath Dev' Gandhijini Koklam (Gandhiji's words), Bindra Debbarm 'Kak Chonai, and Mahendra Debbarma, Tripurar Shabdabali. Additionally, some of Rabindranath Tagore's songs, translated into Kokborokk by Sudhanwa Debbarma and Mahendra Debbarma, were featured in the magazine.

Kwtal Kothoma originally appeared as a bimonthly publication. Later, it shifted to being published as a quarterly and semi-annually, but it was discontinued after three years. Today, the serving issues of Kwtal Kothoma are highly prized. The handwritten copies of the first to fifth issues, preserved by eminent researcher Rama Prasad Dutta, highlight the notable works of the following writers across these editions and Naresh Chandra Debbarma his Boook 'Kokborok Sahitya Krama Bikash' mentioned Fifth issue. But we Seen Dipra Kishore Debbarma Book's 'Kwtal kothoma' nine (9) issue.

### **Issue Breakdown**

#### **First Issue: Ashar, 1364 Tring (1361 Bang)**

Kok Borok – Sudhanva Debbarma

Para Rachabmung – Ramchandra Debbarma

#### **Second Issue: Shravan–Bhadra, 1364 Tring (1361 Bang)**

kokphil – Brajakumar Debbarma

Phumukmung – Jyotilal Debbarma, Ratimanik Debbarma, and Rubirung Devi.

Chin deshni jat Bangthayarak (sachoi chondojak) – Sudhanwa Debbarma.

Tamo sadi – Pulin Debbarma.

Sikla bai sikli rwchaplamani rwchapmung – Navalakshmi Devi.

#### **Third Issue: Ashwin–Kartik, 1364 Tring (1361 Bang)**

Kok chonai – Rabindra Debbarma

Sanma – Ratiranjan Debbarma

Gandhiji Koklam – Dasharatha Debbarma

Masing Chakra – Jagat Devbarma

Khujama – Manmohan Debbarma

Tamo Sadi – Rajmani Debbarma

Chin Deshni Gonotontro – Dasharatha Debbarma

Chethuwang – Sudhanwa Debbarma

#### **Fourth Issue: Paush, 1364 Tring (1361 Bang)**

Tripura' sobdoartho– Collected.

Muitu khwlaide – Dasharatha Debbarma

Kokma – Sudhanwa Debbarma

#### **Fifth Issue: Jyishtha–Ashadha, 1365 Tring (1362 Bang)**

Khurio achugwi khochai phuchai – Dashrath Devvarma

Sichaoi phaiioo – Nakul Debbarma

Kokma (Adi kotha) – Sudhanwa Debbarma

Tripura' sobdoartho – Mahendra Debbarma

Phumukmung – Nagendra Chandra Debbarma

### 1.6. Bongsi Thakur Debbarma:

The most prominent figure in the practice of the Kokborok language in the post-independence era is Amarendra Debbarma. He was popularly known as Bongsi Thakur Debbarma. His pioneering role and contribution to the spread of education among the Tribals of Tripura is memorable. He was the superintendent of Tripura Boarding (presently Umakanta Boarding House). Later, he actively participated in politics and even became a member of Parliament.

During the Raj period, the spring festival was celebrated with pomp and show in the upper-class Tribal community of Agartala. Bongsi Thakur Debbarma and Mahendra Debbarma wrote Holi songs in Bengali for this festival. Bongsi Thakur Debbarma also wrote Holi songs in Brajbuli and Hindi. From the thirties, the Dol-Utsav also started in the tribal villages near Agartala and in the southern part of the country. Banshi Tagore, jogendra Debbarma and Mahendra Debbarma are among the pioneers of writing Holi songs in the Kokborok language. In the fifties, Banshi Tagore wrote many Holi songs in Kokborok, but his songs were not published in booklets. Several Kokborok poems written by him are also scattered.

### Books Published

1. 'Koktang kului' (1948 A.D)
2. 'Dongoino Ringdi' (Poem 1983 A.D)
3. 'Kokborokni Bagwi Chini khaithai' (Choba kokrwbai Bwlai- june1979 A.D)
4. 'Hathai Bubagra Himalayani khurio Kokborok' (Dungur- July 1979 A.D)
5. 'Bodrinarayan Mwtainok Tai Nama Kami' (Dungur- October 1979 A.D)

## 2. The Role of Various Language and Literature Organizations in the Development of the Kokborok Language and Literature:

### 2.1. Tripura Kokborak Unnayan Parishad:

With the aim of giving a written form to the Kokborok language, Birchandra Debbarma, Aghor Debbarma, Mohan Chowdhury, Tripur Sen, and Rajkumari Kamalprabha formed the Tripura Kokborak Unnayan Parishad in 1967. On behalf of the organization, Dr. Suhas Chatterjee, a professor in the Department of Comparative Linguistics at the University of Calcutta, along with two of his students, Kumud Kunda Chowdhury and Shyamsundar Bhattacharya, were invited to assist. As a pioneering milestone in Kokborok language research, Dr. Chatterjee authored the book The Written Form of the Kokbarak Language of Tripura with the help of his students, which was published in 1972. The book discusses the Kokborok alphabet and spelling system in the light of applied linguistics. Although the spelling system prescribed in the book was not directly adopted by current Kokborok writers, the value of this work in the development of Kokborok language and literature remains immense.

### 2.2. Tripura Kokbarak Sahitya Sabha:

The Tripura Kokbarak Sahitya Sabha was established in 1972 on the initiative of Alindralal Tripura, who served as its first secretary. Inspired by the activities of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha of Assam, Alindralal formed this organization to foster the development of the Kokborok language and literature in Tripura. Notably, he built a bridge between the Bodo community of Assam and the Kokborok-speaking community of Tripura, maintaining strong relationships with Bodo writers, literary enthusiasts, and intellectuals until his death. The Kokborok Sahitya Sabha has played a significant role in promoting the language through various programs held in Agartala, as well as in rural and hilly regions.

During the 1980s, the organization regularly published a Kokborok literary magazine titled Dangdu, edited by Nanda kumar Debbarma. Additionally, every year on the occasion of Gariya Puja, it published a joint

Kokborok and Bengali literary magazine named Gariya, edited by Nanda kumar Debbarma and Sunil Debbarma. Since 2000, the organization has published an annual or special-session supplement titled YAKPAI, featuring research discussions and articles on Kokborok language and literature in English, Bengali, and Kokborok.

### 2.3. Kokbarak Sahitya Sanskriti Sangsad:

This organization was founded in January 1986 by Dasharath Dev, Sudhanwa Debbarma, Mahendra Debbarma, Shyamal Debbarma, and other prominent writers from the Kkal Kathama era alongside modern writers. The Kokbarak Sahitya Sanskriti Sangsad has remained an integral pillar of the Kokbarok literary movement since its inception. The organization is particularly careful in its literary publications. In 1987, on the occasion of the Agartala Book Fair, it published three notable books: Sudhanwa Debbarma's Hachuk Khuria (At the Lap of the Mountain), a collection of stories edited by Shyamal Debbarram titled Adang (Representative), and Chandrakant Murasing poetry collection Haping Garing' Chibkusa Ringo (The Snake Calls in the Abandoned Jungle). Later, the organization continued to publish collections of poems and stories by various other writers.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, the journey of Kokborok literature is a testament to the resilience of an indigenous linguistic heritage. Moving from an invisible oral framework to a heavily structured, grammatically codified medium allowed Kokborok to transition safely from a colloquial household dialect into a vibrant language of administration, education, and creative expression. Through systematic grammatical documentation and relentless contemporary authorship, Kokborok literature continues to secure its distinct identity within the broader landscape of Indian literature.

The development of Kokborok as a written language is the result of the sustained efforts of many scholars, writers, educators, and cultural leaders. Among these contributors, Md. Daulat Ahmmmed occupies a significant place because of his role in the early documentation of Kokborok grammar and the growth of its literary tradition. His works represent an important stage in the transformation of Kokborok from a predominantly oral language into a language capable of supporting formal study and creative writing.

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