



Women's Writing In Kokborok Literature (1954-2016)

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Abstract:

The written tradition of Kokborok literature evolved slowly and remained undocumented for a considerable period. A major step toward formal documentation was made with the publication of *Kokborma Grammar* by Doulat Ahmed in 1897, which is often regarded as the earliest recorded written work in the Kokborok language. However, the participation of women in Kokborok literary writing did not emerge alongside this early development. For many years, women's creative expressions existed largely within the oral tradition and remained absent from written records. The first visible presence of women writers appeared only in 1954, when their works were published in the literary magazine *Kwtal Kothoma*. Rubi Rung Devi and Nobalaxmi Debbarma stand out as the earliest known women contributors during this period. Rubi Rung Devi's *Phunukmukung*, a compilation of riddles rooted in folk culture, and Nobalaxmi Debbarma's *Sikla Bai Sikli Rochoblaimai Rochabmung* reflect the initial written engagement of women in Kokborok literature. Before these publications, there is no reliable historical evidence of women authors producing written works in the Kokborok language. The entry of women writers introduced new perspectives and themes, drawing from folklore, emotional experiences, nature, and the socio-cultural environment of the community.

Keywords: Kokborok writing, women authors, oral tradition, literary emergence, folk culture, environment.

1. Introduction

The historical development of Kokborok literature reveals a limited yet significant presence of women writers during its early stages. From 1954 to 2016, only a small number of women actively contributed to written Kokborok literature. During this period, women's literary engagement progressed gradually, with notable gaps in publication and representation. However, in the later years of this timeline, there was a visible increase in women's participation, marking an important shift in the literary landscape of Kokborok writing.

Between 1954 and 1994, women's literary contributions were extremely scarce. A landmark moment occurred in 1994 with the publication of *Hili* (meaning *Gifts*), a poetry collection by Chandrabala Debbarma. This work holds historical importance as the first independently published poetry book by a woman in Kokborok literature. Consisting of thirty-eight poems, *Hili* stands as the only known women-authored poetry publication during this extended period, underscoring the limited opportunities available to women writers at the time.

From 1994 onward, and particularly between 1994 and 2016, Kokborok literature witnessed a gradual yet meaningful expansion of women's literary output. During this phase, women writers explored a range of literary forms, including poetry, rhymes, novels, short stories, folk narratives, songs, and historical writings. Their works not only diversified the literary genres within Kokborok literature but also enriched its thematic depth.

Chronological List of Women Writers in Kokborok Literature

1. **Chandrabala Debbarma**
2. **Sefali Debbarma**
3. **Sabita Debbarma**
4. **Pihrsati Debbarma**
5. **Ajita Tripura**
6. **Patal Kanya Jamatia**
7. **Balirani Jamatia**
8. **Surbala Jamatia**
9. **Jayatri Debbarma**

I. Chandrabala Debbarma

Chandrabala Debbarma occupies a pioneering position in Kokborok literary history as the first woman to publish a poetry collection in the language. Her book *Hili (Gifts)*, published in 1994, contains thirty-eight poems and marks the formal entry of women into written Kokborok poetry.

II. Sefali Debbarma

Sefali Debbarma made extensive contributions to Kokborok literature across multiple genres, including poetry, novels, short stories, and folk narratives.

Poetry Collections:

- *Hor Diporo Rwchapmung* (2001)
- *Imangni Yakhrai Ninango* (2004)
- *Tal Kwchang Yorkhwai Thango* (2008)
- *Sokat* (2011)

Novels:

- *Lokhopoti* (2010)
- *Khorang Bukcha Khalwng* (2015)
- *Hamjakmungni Hachuk* (2016)

Short Story Collections:

- *Hatal Khamchuru Bahai* (2014)
- *Khumpui Barrwrwk Twiyung Torrwrwk* (2014)

III. Sabita Debbarma

Sabita Debbarma's literary contributions span poetry, rhymes, songs, and short narratives, particularly enriching children's and folk-oriented literature.

Rhyme Collections:

- *Kadeng Kadong Kadan* (2003)
- *Chokeleng Keleng* (2008)
- *Toksa Tokmili* (2010)
- *Malmata Mwsa Mayung* (2011)

Poetry Collections:

- *Barsa Khum* (2009)
- *Khatijak Nini Bagwi* (2014)

Song Collection:

- *Bogla Rwchapmung* (Baul songs, 2008)

IV. Pihrsati Debbarma

Pihrsati Debbarma, whose real name is Dipali Debbarma, contributed both creative and cultural works to Kokborok literature. She authored *Rikari*, a book documenting traditional designs of *rignai*, *risa*, and *rituku*. Additionally, she published the poetry collection *Tabuk Kangkhung Nango* in 2010. Her literary articles have also appeared in *Aitorma* magazine.

V. Ajita Tripura

Ajita Tripura published a single poetry collection titled *Khani Kok* in 2016. The book comprises one hundred and eight poems and represents her sole contribution to Kokborok literary publications.

VI. Patal Kanya Jamatia

Patal Kanya Jamatia's poetic works are included in *An Anthology of Kokborok Poems*, edited by Binoy Debbarma. Her notable poems include:

- *Thar Wngdi*
- *Ani Kok Kokborok*

VII. Balirani Jamatia

Balirani Jamatia contributed poems titled *Bumuk* and *Rung*, which were published in *An Anthology of Kokborok Poems*, a compiled volume edited by Binoy Debbarma.

VIII. Surbala Jamatia

Surbala Jamatia authored the poetry collection *Chokha*, published in 2015 by Jora Publication. The book consists of fifty-two poems and reflects her individual poetic voice within Kokborok literature.

IX. Jayatri Debbarma

Jayatri Debbarma's poetry collection *Lamsogo*, published in 2016 by Kokborok Tei Hukumu Mission, contains thirty-two poems and marks her contribution to contemporary Kokborok poetry.

II. Conclusion

A close examination of Kokborok literary works reveals that the writings of Kokborok authors consistently articulate the collective identity of the Triprasa community. These literary texts serve not only as creative expressions but also as cultural documents that reflect the social realities of the people. Through narratives, poems, and stories, Kokborok literature captures the geographical landscape, cultural memory, indigenous traditions, rituals, and the intimate relationship between the community and its natural environment. Moreover, these works give voice to experiences of marginalization, displacement, and the historical loss of rights and freedoms, particularly the sense of alienation felt within ancestral lands. In this way, Kokborok literature functions as a powerful medium for preserving cultural heritage while simultaneously expressing resistance, self-awareness, and social consciousness.

III. References

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