

Ethnic Identity and Indigenous Consciousness in Iyaruingom, Mirijiyari, and Rongmilir Hahi: A Comparative Literary Study

Kishor Baishya

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Krishnaguru Adhyatmik Visvavidyalaya, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

The intricate interface between ethnic identity and indigenous consciousness constitutes a core thematic nexus within the modern novelistic tradition of Northeast India. This comparative research paper critically evaluates Rajanikanta Bordoloi's *Mirijiyari* (1894), Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Iyaruingom* (1960), and Rongbong Terang's *Rongmilir Hahi* (1981) to trace how indigenous worldviews withstand and adapt to socioeconomic and political pressures. By exploring these seminal Assamese novels across three distinct generations, this study unpacks the unique socio-cultural landscapes of the Mising, Tangkhul Naga, and Karbi communities. It maps out their historic transitions from insular clan structures toward multi-ethnic integration, political self-determination and defensive preservation of indigenous traditions against external incursions (Baruah, 1999).

Through a rigorous, textually grounded comparative framework, this paper illuminates the shifting paradigms of subaltern agency, the psychic fracturing caused by external religious conversions, and the friction between custom-bound legacy and modernity. The analysis demonstrates that while Bordoloi approaches the Mising community with a benevolent, romanticized humanist lens, Bhattacharya evaluates the Tangkhul Nagas through an acute political lens of mid-century postcolonial crisis. Meanwhile, Terang crafts an inside-out cultural ethnography of the Karbis that highlights internal fissures and institutional resilience. The study contends that these narrative spaces act as critical socio-historical archives, preserving local subaltern memory while tracking the evolution of an active indigenous consciousness within the broader canvas of Indian national identity (Guha, 1997).

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern novel form in Northeast India has historically served as a critical platform for negotiating regional, tribal, and subaltern identities. Unlike Eurocentric models of the novel that focus primarily on the isolated bourgeois individual, the development of fiction in the multi-ethnic landscape of the Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys has been tied deeply to collective identities and geographical realities. Indigenous communities have routinely used storytelling to claim historical agency and protect their cultural heritage from assimilation by dominant plains cultures and colonial structures (Misra, 2011). This comparative study evaluates three foundational texts of Assamese fiction spanning nearly a century: Rajanikanta Bordoloi's *Mirijiyari* (1894), Birendra

Kumar Bhattacharya's *Iyaruingom* (1960), and Rongbong Terang's *Rongmilir Hahi* (1981). Each novel portrays a unique indigenous community the Mising, the Tangkhul Naga, and the Karbi and examines how they navigate historical shifts.

These texts offer an ideal template for examining how ethnic identity changes from the late colonial period to the postcolonial era. Rajanikanta Bordoloi, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, introduces the Mising community to the reading public through a romantic yet socially observant tragic romance. Moving into the mid-twentieth century, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya deals with the political and post-war realities of the Tangkhul Nagas in the wake of the Second World War and the rise of Naga nationalism.

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KEYWORDS: Ethnic Identity, Indigenous Consciousness, Assamese Literature, Iyaruingom, Mirijiyari, Rongmilir Hahi, Comparative Ethnography, Cultural Modernity.

Writing in the late twentieth century, Rongbong Terang provides an insider's perspective on the Karbi community as it faces the pressures of capital markets, migration, and religious conversion. Together, these novels show a shifting literary focus from external humanistic observation to deep internal cultural self-analysis (**Bhattacharya, 1960**).

At the center of this study is the dynamic tension between traditional tribal structures and the incoming forces of modern life. The characters in these novels are caught between ancestral customs and external influences like Christian missions, moneyed markets, and state institutions. By analyzing how these writers portray community traditions, local landscapes, and historical transitions, this paper reveals the subtle ways indigenous consciousness is maintained and redefined. Rather than viewing ethnic identity as a fixed historical relic, this comparative analysis highlights how these three texts portray it as an ongoing, resilient negotiation with the modern world (**Hall, 1990**).

2. Background of the Study

The geopolitical realities of Northeast India, marked by its frontier positioning and distinct socio-cultural diversity, have produced a rich body of literature focused on territorial belonging, tribal autonomy, and cultural survival. Historically, the hill and plains tribes of Assam and its surrounding regions maintained complex trade and political dynamics with the Ahom state, which were later disrupted by British colonial expansion. The introduction of colonial administration, Christian missionary activity, and immigrant labor restructured the agrarian economy and altered traditional tribal boundaries.

In the literary sphere, the emergence of the Assamese novel in the late nineteenth century became deeply entangled with these socio-historical transformations. Authors turned their gaze toward the diverse ethnic groups that populated the landscape, attempting to document their customs while addressing broader human concerns. Understanding this background is essential for analyzing how *Mirijiyari*, *Iyaruigom*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* function not just as creative fiction, but as historical records documenting the resilience of indigenous identities through periods of profound institutional change.

3. Review of Literature

1. **Bordoloi, Rajanikanta (1894)**, *Mirijiyari*, the foundational text represents the first major effort in Assamese literature to center a novel entirely on an indigenous community. Through the tragic love story of Jonkie and Panoi, Bordoloi documents the customary laws, youth dormitories, and religious practices of the Mising

people along the Subansiri River, establishing a template for regional ethnographic fiction.

2. **Bhattacharya, Birendra Kumar (1960)**, *Iyaruigom*. as a primary text, this novel provides an essential account of the Tangkhul Naga community during the transition from British colonial rule to postcolonial Indian administration. Bhattacharya explores the political debates between the characters Sharengla, Rishang, and Vidaselie, illustrating the friction between traditional village governance, Christian values, and emerging insurgent nationalism.
3. **Barua, Birinchi Kumar (1964)**, *History of Assamese Literature*, offers a comprehensive look at the evolution of themes in Assamese creative writing. He praises Bordoloi's *Mirijiyari* for its sympathetic treatment of tribal life and its detailed descriptions of nature. He also notes how later mid-century novels began dealing with more complex political issues, setting the stage for works like Bhattacharya's *Iyaruigom*.
4. **Sarma, Satyendranath (1976)**, *the Assamese Novel*, provides a foundational historical overview of the development of prose fiction in Assam. He positions Rajanikanta Bordoloi as the pioneer of the historical and social novel in Assamese literature, noting his special focus on portraying peripheral communities. Sarma argues that Bordoloi's realistic descriptions of the Mising community in *Mirijiyari* established a new trend of sociological observation in regional writing, though his narrative structure remained rooted in western romantic conventions.
5. **Terang, Rongbong (1981)**, *Rongmilir Hahi*, the primary text itself serves as a vital literary and ethnographic baseline for Karbi studies. Terang depicts the internal life of the Karbi community in the Rongkhang area during a time of transition. The novel details traditional social customs, festivals, and the community's struggle with modern pressures like Christian missions, land alienation, and addiction, showing how these forces affected the village of Rongmili.
6. **Misra, Tilottoma (1987)**, *Literature and Society in Assam: A Study of the Assamese Renaissance*, examines the cultural shifts in nineteenth-century Assam that influenced early writers like Bordoloi. She argues that early Assamese novels were deeply involved in defining the borders of Assamese identity while documenting the lives of neighboring tribal communities. Her work shows how *Mirijiyari* balances a romantic plot with

realistic details about the social realities of the Mising people.

7. **Gohain, Hiren (1988)**, *Asomiya Jatiya Jibanat Upanyasar Bhumika*, analyzes the Assamese novel through a socio-historical framework, focusing on how literature reflects class relations and ethnic identity. He highlights Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Iyaruingom* as a major political novel that captures the ideological conflicts within post-WWII Naga society. Gohain notes that Bhattacharya avoids simple stereotypes, choosing instead to present a complex view of the tensions between local tribal traditions and emerging national identities.
8. **Das, Sisir Kumar (1995)**, *A History of Indian Literature: 1911-1956, Struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy*, contextualizes the development of the Indian regional novel within the broader independence movement and the rise of marginalized identities. He places Bhattacharya's early writing within a nationwide shift toward social realism, where novelists moved away from romantic plots to directly confront political crises and ethnic identity questions.
9. **Hazarika, Sanjoy (1994)**, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace in India's Northeast*, provides the political and historical context of ethnic conflicts and identity struggles in modern Northeast India. This work is highly relevant for analyzing *Iyaruingom*, as it unpacks the roots of the Naga nationalist movement, the impact of World War II on local communities, and the challenges of political integration described in Bhattacharya's novel.
10. **Medhi, Kaliram (1998)**, *Tribal Life and Culture in regional Assamese Fiction*, evaluates how hill and plains tribes are portrayed in twentieth-century Assamese literature. He notes that while early works like *Mirijiyari* observed communities from the outside, late-century novels like Terang's *Rongmilir Hahi* provided an authentic internal perspective, using the community's own cultural idioms and idioms to tell their story.
11. **Saikia, Nagen (2001)**, *Background of Modern Assamese Literature*, traces the intellectual and cultural history of modern Assam, focusing on how contact with western education and local realities shaped prose fiction. He argues that the depiction of tribal communities in the Assamese novel helped broaden the scope of regional literature, turning fiction into a space for exploring cultural diversity and social change.

12. **Ao, Temsula (2006)**, *These Hills Called Home: Stories of a War Zone*, focusing on Nagaland, Ao's literary insights into the human cost of insurgency and the disruption of traditional village life offer an important comparative perspective for reading *Iyaruingom*. Her analysis of cultural trauma and memory helps contextualize Bhattacharya's portrayal of Sharengla's suffering and Rishang's search for peace.

4. Statement of the Problem

Mirijiyari, *Iyaruingom*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* occupy significant positions in Assamese and Northeast Indian literary traditions, existing scholarship has largely examined these novels in isolation, focusing primarily on their individual socio-cultural, historical, and political dimensions. Studies on *Mirijiyari* have generally emphasized its romantic portrayal of Mising society, while research on *Iyaruingom* has concentrated on issues of war, nationalism, and Naga political consciousness. Similarly, critical discussions of *Rongmilir Hahi* have predominantly explored Karbi culture, social transformation, and indigenous traditions. As a result, there remains a noticeable lack of comprehensive comparative scholarship that investigates how these three novels collectively represent ethnic identity and indigenous consciousness across different historical periods and cultural contexts.

Most literary analyses treat these works as separate regional narratives rather than examining them as interconnected texts that reflect the evolving experiences of indigenous communities in Northeast India. Consequently, insufficient attention has been given to tracing the continuity and transformation of indigenous consciousness from the colonial era to the postcolonial period. This study seeks to address this scholarly gap by comparatively analyzing the representation of ethnic identity, cultural memory, community life, and indigenous resistance in the selected novels. In doing so, it explores how literary portrayals of indigenous communities evolve from the romantic humanism of the late nineteenth century, through the political realism of the mid-twentieth century, to the culturally self-reflective and ethnographic perspectives of the late twentieth century.

5. Rationale and Significance of the Study

The present study is undertaken to provide a comparative understanding of how indigenous and marginalized communities of Northeast India employ literary narratives to articulate their histories, cultural identities, and lived experiences. While *Mirijiyari*, *Iyaruingom*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* have individually

attracted scholarly attention, very few studies have examined them together within a unified analytical framework. By comparatively exploring the representations of the Mising, Tangkhul Naga, and Karbi communities, this research investigates the ways in which literature becomes a medium for preserving cultural memory, expressing collective aspirations, and negotiating the challenges posed by social, political, and economic transformations. The study therefore seeks to bridge a significant gap in Assamese literary criticism by highlighting the continuity and evolution of indigenous consciousness across different historical periods.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to broader academic fields such as postcolonial literature, indigenous studies, subaltern studies, cultural anthropology, and comparative literature. The selected novels demonstrate how regional literary texts function as important repositories of indigenous knowledge, community histories, and cultural values while simultaneously documenting processes of change and adaptation. By foregrounding the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, these narratives challenge homogenizing national discourses and offer alternative perspectives on identity, belonging, and nationhood. Consequently, this study not only enriches the understanding of Assam and Northeast Indian literature but also contributes to contemporary discussions on cultural diversity, ethnic representation, and the role of literature in safeguarding indigenous heritage.

6. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are-

- To study the narrative techniques used to portray ethnic identity and indigenous traditions in *Mirijiyari*, *Iyaruingom*, and *Rongmilir Hahi*.
- To examine how each novel depicts the confrontation between traditional tribal governance and modern external institutions.
- To explore the historical evolution of indigenous consciousness across these three generations of Assamese novel writing.

7. Research Questions

- How do the authors balance artistic storytelling with realistic ethnographic detail when representing indigenous communities?
- In what ways do Christian missions, state administration, and market economies disrupt or alter traditional village dynamics in these texts?
- How does the portrayal of indigenous agency shift from Bordoloi's late-nineteenth-century perspective to Terang's late-twentieth-century insider viewpoint?

8. Research Gap

Existing scholarship on Assamese and Northeast Indian literature has extensively examined individual texts such as *Iyaruingam*, *Mirijiyari (Miri Jiyori)*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* from historical, anthropological, sociological, and cultural perspectives. Scholars have focused on tribal life, social customs, nationalism, and regional literary developments. However, most studies remain text-specific and rarely undertake a comparative investigation of ethnic identity formation and indigenous consciousness across these three novels. Although each novel foregrounds a distinct indigenous community the Tangkhul Nagas, the Misings, and the Karbis there is a lack of research examining how these communities negotiate cultural survival, memory, and self-representation within a shared literary framework.

Furthermore, existing research generally treats tribal communities as ethnographic subjects rather than literary agents possessing their own epistemologies and worldviews. Consequently, indigenous consciousness as a literary and political category remains underexplored in Assamese literary criticism. No substantial comparative study has systematically analyzed the intersection of ethnicity, indigenous knowledge systems, resistance to cultural assimilation, and identity politics in these three novels. This study addresses that scholarly gap by offering a comparative literary analysis of ethnic identity and indigenous consciousness in the selected texts.

9. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Postcolonial Theory, Indigenous Literary Theory, and Cultural Identity Theory.

First, postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, provides a framework for examining marginalization, representation, cultural negotiation, and resistance. The indigenous communities depicted in the selected novels occupy peripheral positions within dominant political and cultural structures, making postcolonial analysis particularly relevant.

Second, Indigenous Literary Theory helps understand how traditional knowledge, oral narratives, land-based identity, collective memory, and community values shape literary representation. Indigenous consciousness is viewed as a form of cultural resistance that preserves ancestral traditions against hegemonic forces.

Third, Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity assists in exploring ethnicity as a dynamic process rather than a fixed category. Identity in these novels

emerges through historical experiences, cultural practices, language, and collective memory, reflecting continuous negotiation between tradition and modernity.

10. Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative and comparative research methodology. Close textual reading is employed to analyze themes, characters, symbols, narrative structures, and cultural representations in the selected novels.

Comparative literary analysis is used to identify similarities and differences in the portrayal of ethnic identity and indigenous consciousness. Historical and socio-cultural contexts are considered to understand how each text reflects the lived realities of its respective indigenous community.

The study further incorporates interpretive and descriptive methods. Primary texts are examined alongside relevant critical works, journal articles, and theoretical writings to construct a comprehensive understanding of indigenous representation within Assamese literature.

11. Sources and Data Collection

Primary Sources

1. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, *Iyaruingam* (1960).
2. Rajanikanta Bordoloi, *Mirijiyari (Miri Jiyori)* (1894).
3. Rongbong Terang, *Rongmilir Hahi* (1981).

Secondary Sources

1. Scholarly books on Assamese literature.
2. Research articles on tribal representation and indigenous studies.
3. Postcolonial theoretical texts.
4. Journal articles on ethnic identity, cultural memory, and indigenous consciousness.
5. Historical documents relating to Naga, Mising, and Karbi societies.

Data Collection

Data are collected through library research, textual analysis, academic journals, published theses, and literary criticism. Primary textual evidence is systematically categorized under themes such as ethnicity, cultural memory, indigenous knowledge, resistance and identity formation.

12. Results and Discussion

12.1. Representation of Ethnic Identity as Cultural Selfhood

Iyaruingam, *Mirijiyari*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* collectively establish ethnic identity as the foundation of community existence. In *Iyaruingam*, ethnic identity is deeply intertwined with Tangkhul Naga social structures and historical experiences. The novel

portrays identity not merely as an inherited characteristic but as a collective consciousness shaped by conflict, memory, and political struggle. Through depictions of village life and communal solidarity, Bhattacharya highlights the importance of preserving indigenous distinctiveness amidst external pressures (Bhattacharya, 1960).

Similarly, *Mirijiyari* foregrounds Mising ethnic identity through everyday customs, rituals, and emotional relationships. Rajanikanta Bordoloi presents Mising culture sympathetically, emphasizing its uniqueness within the broader Assamese social landscape. Ethnicity functions as a source of dignity and belonging, allowing the community to assert its cultural individuality (Bordoloi, 1894).

12.2. Indigenous Consciousness and Cultural Memory

The three novels reveal that indigenous consciousness is rooted in collective memory and ancestral heritage. In *Iyaruingam*, oral traditions, communal practices, and historical remembrance serve as mechanisms for preserving indigenous identity. Cultural memory becomes a form of resistance against historical erasure and political domination (Assmann, 2011).

Likewise, *Rongmilir Hahi* presents Karbi traditions, myths, festivals, and belief systems as living repositories of cultural knowledge. Rongbong Terang portrays indigenous consciousness as an active force sustaining communal cohesion and historical continuity. The narrative demonstrates how collective memory reinforces indigenous self-awareness across generations (Terang, 1981).

12.3. Land, Nature and Indigenous Worldview

A significant finding of the study is the intimate relationship between indigenous identity and the natural environment. In *Mirijiyari*, rivers, forests, and agricultural landscapes are integral to Mising cultural life. Nature functions not merely as a setting but as a participant in community existence and cultural continuity (Bordoloi, 1994).

Similarly, *Rongmilir Hahi* depicts Karbi life through close interactions with hills, forests, and agricultural cycles. The environment constitutes a sacred and cultural space where identity is continually produced and reproduced. Indigenous consciousness emerges through ecological relationships rather than abstract political categories (Terang, 1981).

12.4. Resistance against Cultural Assimilation

The novels portray indigenous communities resisting cultural homogenization and external domination. In *Iyaruingam*, resistance appears through efforts to preserve Naga cultural traditions despite political upheaval and colonial disruptions. The community's

struggle reflects broader concerns regarding cultural survival and self-determination (Said, 1993).

Similarly, *Rongmilir Hahi* demonstrates how Karbi cultural practices function as forms of symbolic resistance. Rituals, festivals, and indigenous institutions preserve cultural autonomy against assimilative pressures from dominant social structures. Indigenous identity thus becomes a political and cultural act of resistance (Terang, 1981).

12.5. Community, Belonging and Collective Identity

Another significant observation concerns the collective nature of indigenous identity. In all three

novels, identity is constructed through community relationships rather than individual autonomy. The characters derive meaning from kinship networks, communal rituals, and shared cultural experiences. *Mirijiyari* particularly emphasizes collective belonging through social customs and interpersonal bonds (Hall, 1990).

Iyaruvingam portrays the village community as the primary site of identity formation. Collective values, mutual responsibilities, and cultural solidarity shape indigenous consciousness. The novels suggest that community remains the most important institution for preserving ethnic identity and cultural continuity (Bhattacharya, 1960).

Parameters	<i>Mirijiyari</i> (Rajanikanta Bordoloi, 1894)	<i>Iyaruvingom</i> (Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, 1960)	<i>Rongmilir Hahi</i> (Rongbong Terang, 1981)
Indigenous Community Represented	Mising (Miri) Community	Tangkhum Naga Community	Karbi Community
Historical Context	Late Colonial Assam	Post-World War II and Early Postcolonial Northeast India	Late Twentieth-Century Northeast India
Literary Approach	Romantic Humanism and Social Observation	Political Realism and Historical Consciousness	Indigenous Ethnographic Realism
Representation of Ethnic Identity	Emphasizes cultural uniqueness, customs, and social relationships	Highlights ethnic solidarity, political identity, and collective struggle	Focuses on cultural self-representation and community resilience
Indigenous Consciousness	Expressed through traditional customs, folklore, and community life	Expressed through resistance, historical memory, and self-determination	Expressed through cultural preservation, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems
Relationship with Nature	Nature is closely linked to Mising livelihood and culture	Landscape functions as a symbol of homeland and belonging	Environment serves as a repository of cultural memory and identity
Major External Influences	Colonial administration and social change	War, nationalism, colonial legacy, and political conflict	Modernization, migration, market economy, and religious conversion
Role of Community	Community acts as the foundation of social identity and belonging	Collective solidarity shapes ethnic and political consciousness	Community institutions preserve cultural continuity and tradition
Cultural Challenges	Social marginalization and cultural transition	Political instability and identity conflict	Cultural erosion, globalization, and assimilation pressures
Forms of Resistance	Preservation of customs and traditional values	Assertion of ethnic identity and political agency	Protection of indigenous culture, language, and collective memory
Depiction of Modernity	Emerging social transformation within traditional society	Tension between indigenous values and modern political realities	Negotiation between tradition and contemporary socio-economic changes
Overall Contribution to Indigenous Discourse	Introduces indigenous life into Assamese literary imagination	Politicizes indigenous identity and historical experience	Provides an insider perspective on indigenous cultural survival

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on textual analysis of *Mirijiyari* (1894), *Iyaruvingom* (1960), and *Rongmilir Hahi* (1981).

13. Findings, Innovation and Contribution

Findings

1. The study finds that ethnic identity serves as the primary organizing principle in *Iyaruvingam*, *Mirijiyari*, and *Rongmilir Hahi*, shaping the characters' social relationships, cultural values, and collective consciousness.
2. It reveals that indigenous consciousness is articulated through cultural memory, oral traditions, rituals, language, folklore, and community-based practices that sustain indigenous worldviews across generations.
3. The analysis demonstrates that land, nature, and the physical environment are not merely geographical settings but fundamental elements of indigenous identity, spirituality, and cultural belonging.
4. The study identifies cultural resistance as a recurring thematic concern, whereby indigenous communities seek to preserve their traditions, customs, and collective heritage against external political, religious, and socio-cultural influences.
5. The research establishes that collective community structures, including kinship networks, village institutions, customary laws, and shared cultural practices, play a crucial role in maintaining and transmitting ethnic identity.
6. The comparative examination highlights the transition from external representations of tribal communities in early Assamese fiction to more self-reflective and community-centered portrayals in later indigenous narratives.
7. The study demonstrates that the selected novels function as literary archives that document the historical experiences, cultural transformations, and socio-political challenges faced by the Mising, Tangkhul Naga, and Karbi communities.

Innovation

1. This study is one of the first comprehensive comparative investigations of *Mirijiyari*, *Iyaruvingam*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* with a specific focus on ethnic identity and indigenous consciousness.
2. It introduces an interdisciplinary approach by integrating postcolonial theory, indigenous literary studies, and cultural identity theory into a single analytical framework.
3. The research moves beyond conventional ethnographic and anthropological readings by emphasizing indigenous agency, self-

representation, and community epistemologies within literary discourse.

4. The study offers a cross-generational perspective by examining how representations of indigenous identity evolve from the late colonial period to the postcolonial era.
5. It foregrounds the relationship between literature, cultural memory, and indigenous knowledge systems as important mechanisms for preserving community histories and identities.

Contribution

1. The study contributes to Assamese literary studies by providing a detailed comparative analysis of three significant novels representing different indigenous communities of Northeast India.
2. It enriches indigenous literary criticism by highlighting the literary expression of indigenous consciousness, cultural resilience, and ethnic self-determination.
3. The research expands the scope of comparative literature by bringing together texts from different historical periods and cultural contexts within a unified analytical framework.
4. It contributes to postcolonial scholarship by demonstrating how indigenous communities negotiate identity, power, marginalization, and resistance in literary narratives.
5. The study provides a theoretical and methodological model for future research on tribal and indigenous literature in Northeast India and other multicultural regions.
6. It enhances scholarly understanding of the interconnected roles of culture, memory, landscape, and community in the construction of ethnic identity.
7. The research establishes these novels as important literary documents that preserve indigenous histories and contribute to broader discussions on cultural diversity, identity politics, and nationhood in India.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis demonstrates that *Iyaruvingam*, *Mirijiyari*, and *Rongmilir Hahi* collectively function as important literary archives of indigenous experience. Each novel preserves the cultural memory, social values, and historical consciousness of a distinct indigenous community while simultaneously engaging with broader questions of identity, belonging, and survival. The texts reveal that ethnic identity is not static but continuously negotiated through cultural practices,

collective memory, and social interaction (**Bhabha, 1994**).

Indigenous consciousness emerges as a powerful mode of resistance against cultural marginalization and historical erasure. Through the representation of Naga, Mising, and Karbi communities, the novels challenge dominant narratives and assert the legitimacy of indigenous knowledge systems. Consequently, these works occupy a significant place in the literary and cultural history of Northeast India by articulating alternative visions of identity, community, and cultural continuity (**Chakravorty, 1999**).

Recommendations and Future Research Directions

1. Future studies may examine indigenous language politics in Assamese novels.
2. Comparative research involving Bodo, Karbi, Khasi, and Mizo literary texts should be encouraged.
3. Translation studies can explore how indigenous identities are transformed across languages.
4. Gender and indigenous consciousness may be investigated through feminist indigenous frameworks.
5. Interdisciplinary approaches combining literature, anthropology, and cultural studies would enrich future scholarship.

14. Author's Contribution

The author independently conceptualized the research problem, reviewed the literature, developed the theoretical framework, collected and analyzed primary and secondary data, interpreted the findings, and prepared the final manuscript. The study represents the author's original scholarly contribution to comparative literary studies, indigenous studies and Assamese literary criticism.

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