

INDIGENOUS WRITERS OF INDIA

Introduction and Contributions

Volume I : North-East India

Editor
Ramnika Gupta



Published for
Ramnika Foundation

This series, running into four volumes, presents biographies of indigenous writers of India, covering all genres of literature. It offers not only personal data and list of publications of individual writers, but also a window into their culture and the various ways that each of them has used literature to preserve and promote their own languages and community identities.

Volume one puts together biographies of 105 tribal writers of all the eight states of North-East India—Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim. They represent more than 15 tribal languages such as Adi, Apatani, Boro, Garo, Karbi, Rabha, Santali, Tiwa, Paite, Tangkhul, Khasi, Mizo, Tenydie, Kokborok, Lepcha and Nepali.

The other three volumes, covering Eastern India (West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar), South India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu), and Western and Central India (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh) are also in the pipeline.

Indigenous Writers of India

Introduction and Contributions

Volume I : North-East India

Editor
Raminika Gupta

Raminika Foundation

Raminika Foundation, a non-political, non-commercial and absolutely secular organisation, works for bringing an epistemic change in society through empowering the marginalised and oppressed communities like the tribals, dalits, minorities and women working in the social sector for the last many years, the Foundation has the distinction of piloting and pioneering many successful initiatives both at the ideological and material levels.

The Foundation embodies efforts and struggles, hopes and aspirations of the common people for developing a dynamic and responsive civil society which ensures human rights and dignity, wealth and education to the marginalised millions.

About the Editor

Raminika Gupta, former member of Bihar Sahitya Akademi, is presently President of Raminika Foundation. Also, she is editor of a Hindi quarterly journal 'Jansamvaad' and Joint Secretary of Democratic Women's Association (Bihar) - Jharkhand Chapter, as well as Member of National Council of Democratic Women's Association. She is a well-known Hindi poetess and novelist and has to her credit many collections of poems, short stories, novels and essays. She has also been actively involved in literary achievements and social service.

Details of the Forthcoming Volumes

Vol. II : Eastern India	—	West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar
Vol. III : South India	—	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu
Vol. IV : Western and Central India	—	Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Chattishgarh

Ramnika Foundation

Ramnika Foundation, a non-political, non-commercial and absolutely secular organisation, works for bringing an equalitarian change in society through empowering the marginalised and oppressed communities like the tribals, dalits, minorities and women working in the social sector for the last many years, the Foundation has the distinction of piloting and pioneering many successful initiatives, both at the ideological and material levels.

The Foundation embodies efforts and struggles, hopes and aspirations of the common people for developing a dynamic and responsive civil society, a society which ensures human rights and dignity, health and education to the marginalised millions.

About the Editor

Ramnika Gupta, former member of Bihar Vidhan Sabha, is presently President of Ramnika Foundation. Also, she is editor of a Hindi quarterly journal *Yudha Rat Aam Aadmi*, and Joint Secretary of Democratic Writers Association (Bihar-Jharkhand Chapter) as well as Member of National Council of Democratic Writers Association. She is a well-known Hindi poetess and novelist and has to her credit many collections of poems, short stories, novels and essays. She has bagged several awards for her literary achievements and social service.

**INDIGENOUS WRITERS
OF INDIA**
Introduction and Contributions

Volume I : North-East India

Editor
Ramnika Gupta

Published for
RAMNIKA FOUNDATION

by

CONCEPT PUBLISHING COMPANY, NEW DELHI-110059

Introduction

This is a book about Invisible India. With this publication, we have tried to peel back the dark curtains around the people and lands of the North-East and offered our readers a glimpse of the multi-faceted cultural panorama of this diverse collection of states and communities.

This bibliography, published side-by-side in Hindi and English, marks for the first time that the Tribal writers of the North-Eastern states of India have been recognised and brought together in a single volume. This is a landmark achievement, that will help the various writers of the North-East for their important work and which will also contribute greatly to the enrichment of Indian languages and literature.

Dedicated to the Indigenous Writers' of the Invisible India

The writers belong to the seven states and more than fifteen languages which comprise the land and tribal communities of North-East India. It is a land of cultural diversities and rich linguistic and social history, but a land whose people are too often neglected by the "mainstream" Indian national culture, so much so that we have come to think of the North-East itself as a kind of "Invisible India." Many Indian citizens in the North-East face looks of inquiry or bewilderment when they travel to other parts of the country and are even sometimes asked, "Are you Indian?" The purpose of this volume is to bring the richness of this area's history and present to light. In bringing these writers and their achievements together in a single volume, we hope to begin a much-needed dialogue between the diverse communities of the North-East and the rest of the country, which for too long has remained ignorant of the literary, linguistic, and cultural achievements of various tribal communities in the North-East. And we hope to bring to the people of the North-East, a kind of exposure and national recognition that they have been denied until now.

The languages of the North-East are ancient, but they survived

Introduction

This is a book about Invisible India. With this publication, we have tried to peel back the dark curtains around the people and lands of the North-East and offered our readers a glimpse of the multi-hued cultural panorama of this diverse collection of states and communities.

This bibliography, published side-by-side in Hindi and English, marks for the first time that the Tribal writers of the North-Eastern states of India have been recognized and brought together in a single volume. This is a landmark achievement, that will help the various writers of the North-East for their impressive work and which will also contribute greatly to the enrichment of Indian language and literature.

The writers included in this volume represent the seven states and more than fifteen languages which comprise the land and tribal communities of North-East India. It is a land of cultural diversities and rich linguistic and social history, but a land whose people are too often neglected by the "mainstream" Indian national culture, so much so that we have come to think of the North-East itself as a kind of "invisible India." Many Indian citizens in the North-East face looks of incomprehension when they travel to other parts of the country and are even sometimes asked, "Are you Indian?" The purpose of this volume is to bring the richness of this area's history and present it to light. In bringing these writers and their achievements together in a single volume, we hope to begin a much-needed dialogue between the creative communities of the North-East and the rest of the country, which for too long has remained ignorant of the literary, linguistic, and cultural achievements of various tribal communities in the North-East. And we hope to bring to the people of the North-East, a kind of exposure and national recognition that they have been denied until now.

The languages of the North-East are ancient, but they survived

as oral languages until the arrival of Christian missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed the Lepcha language of Sikkim is believed to be even older than Sanskrit, but a written script was not created until Reverend William Start started a school for Lepcha language and culture in 1841. One interesting folk tale tells the story of how the spirits presented a script to the Mizo people on a piece of leather in ancient times, but due to negligence, it was eaten up by a dog. Thus the Mizos had to wait until 1894, when Reverends F.W. Savage and J.H. Lawrence created a script based to represent the vowel sounds of the language of communication between hunters, known as the Huntarian system in Mizoram. A great scholar Ram Das Boro is of opinion that Boro language was so rich that several of its aspects are considered to be the source of the Indian languages. It is a proven fact that the Boros came to India before the Aryans.

Madhu Ram Boro says that during the regime of the Boro kings, Devdhai script was in vogue. This script is engraved on the remnants of the Royal Gate at Deemapur.

Hence Bodos had a written script (which was subsequently lost) when they were rulers of this area during the Ahom Dynasty, it too was not recipient again of a written alphabet until 1895 when Reverend J.D. Anderson created the first script and grammar. Khasi emerged as a written language under the direction of a Welshman named Thomas Jones between 1810 and 1849 in Meghalaya, and was later improved upon and codified by Khasi intellectuals Jeebon Roy and Radhon Singh Berry. The achievements of all of these languages in creating a rich body of literature in only the last 100-150 years are therefore extremely impressive. One tribal writer refers to the development of a canon of Boro literature in the space of only fifty years like a "galloping horse". While it should be said that the development of all the languages of the North-East has been certainly uneven, that some languages have achieved greater success than others in the world of literature. For example with six Padmashree awards given to Mizo writers including two women, and several writers in Assam including Boro, Karbi and other tribal writers. It is also important to point out that tribal writers of all the languages and cultures and they are working hard towards that goal.

The tribal writers of the North-East do not simply write. They are linguistic, dealing with social and cultural activists and fighting for the life of their own native tongues. The writers in these pages have not only written creative literature, but have also codified grammars of their native languages. They have also produced histories of their communities stretching beyond recorded nationalist histories that examine prehistoric period, so that they may know the roots of their culture, community, and language. They have also written educational books for children and adult students, and translated important national and international works of literature and history into their local languages. In particular, the Boros, without any government assistance, have translated so many of the world's "classics," such as Shakespeare, Tagore, and the Hindu epics, into the Boro language. That they have succeeded in making Boro a language fit to be the principal medium of education in primary and secondary schools in some parts of Assam. Even a quick look at the entries included in this bibliography will impress the reader with the incredible literary and linguistic achievements of these tribal writers in just the last sixty years since Independence and creation of the North-East states.

Each individual entry of the more than ninety writers included in this volume offers more than just personal data and a list of publications. Every entry is also a window into the writers' culture, and the various ways that each of them has used literature to preserve and promote their own Languages and community Identities.

Though we have made our best efforts, we cannot claim that this volume represents all of the tribal writers of the North-East. We faced many hurdles due to lack of communication, the geographical distance and spread of these writers, as well as due to their sheer number. A second, and even more complete, volume is already being planned. But we hope that this book will serve only as a starting point for interested readers and students of Indian literature and culture to explore the rich collection of authors in the North-East. Any survey of Indian literature and culture would be incomplete without them.

Three years ago when I made up my mind to prepare and publish this bibliography of the North-Eastern tribal writers, the enormity of labour involved in it stood in the way. One of the major challenges

was to collect information about the writers. Dr. L.T. Liana Khiangte and Darchhawna from Mizoram, Bijoya Sawian from Meghalaya and Mangal Sing Hazowary from Assam came to our rescue and arranged both addresses of the writers and materials in their respect. I owe a debt of gratitude to each of them. Dr. Khiangte, Darchhawna (Mizo) and Bijoya Sawian (Khasi), Mangal Sing Hazowary (Bodo) and Theso Cropy (Karbi) took pains for us to transcribe the names of the writers accurately in Hindi.

It was Shri Prakash of kritika, Ranchi, who made it possible to contact writers by E-mail, telephone or by visiting places personally where necessary to get the Biodata required, for the book. I must thank him for this.

Once the requisite information and materials began to pour in, the real problem was to incorporate them in presentable write-ups. I wish to acknowledge my very great obligations to Aquil Quais who helped me on this front right from the beginning. Most of the write-ups of this bibliography have been prepared by him. It is no exaggeration to say that without his help, this book could not have been possible. Later on Ms. Ginger from U.S. joined the project and made necessary corrections. When she left India, Ms. Laura Brueck from U.S. (who is doing Ph.D. on Hindi Dalit writers) joined the team. She made significant contribution in making the prose of the book (English version) more acceptable to the readers at large. I express my hearty appreciation to each of them for their kind and helpful association.

I am also indebted to Mr. Dinesh, Mr. Rakesh, Mr. Ram Kuresh and others who helped in composing the matter of the bibliography patiently for months together. I must mention with special reference to Mr. Hare Prakash Upadhyaya who saw the proofs with special care and helped significantly in editing the stuff of the book in the final stage.

This volume of the bibliography is the first of a series of publications that we intend to bring out in course of time. While we intend to publish an enlarged edition of this first volume, many more volumes focusing on tribal writers from other parts of the country will be brought out. The next volume will be focused on eastern states viz., Orissa, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar, southern states

comprising Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and western states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Rajasthan, central states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and the remaining states viz. Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Delhi. Though tribals inhabiting all parts of the country have suffered and neglected, the north-eastern tribals are the worst sufferers. For this very reason, this first volume of the bibliography is focused on them. It is regretted that we could not include the writers of Sikkim for lack of communication. Lepcha writers living in West Bengal have found a place in it.

I take great pleasure to commend this book to the readers and scholars. Suggestions to improve this volume and the other ones to come in the series are welcome.

Ramnika C-1/K

Ramnika Gupta

CONTENTS

Introduction

7

Arunachal Pradesh

Adi/Apatani

Bani Danggen	21
Mamang Dai	23
N.N. Osik	25
Takhe Kani	27
Tagang Taki	29
Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi	30

Assam

Boro/Garo/Karbi/Rabha/Santali/Tiwa

Bodo

Anil Kumar Boro	35
Bhupen Narzaree	36
Brojendra Kumar Brahma	38
Charan Narzary	40
Jatin Kumar Brahma	41
Kamal Kumar Brahma	42
Kameswar Brahma	44
Madhu Ram Boro	46
Mada Ram Brahma	50
Mahadev Uzir Basumatary	51
Mangal Singh Hazowari	52
Manoranjan Lahary	54
Mukut Prasad Boro	57
Phukan Chandra Basumatary	59

Praban Bargoyari	61
Prema Nondo Machahary	63
Purna Boro	65
Ramdas Boro	67
Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong	69
Roma Kanta Basumatary	71
Rupnath Brahma	72
Sobha Brahma	74
Swarna Prabha Chainary	76
Garo	
Manoranjan Marak	78
Karbi	
Bidor Sing Kro	80
Bonglong Terang	82
Hang Miji Hanse	83
John Timung	84
Longkon Teron	85
Lunse Timung	87
Dr. Phukan Ch. Phangcho	89
Poresh Chandra Rongphar	91
Rongbong Engti Kathar	92
Rongbong Terang	93
Semsonsing Ingti	94
Rabha	
Charu Mohan Rabha	95
Upen Rabha Hakacham	97
Sandesh Bakshaka	99
Santali	
Prithivi Majhi	100
Tiwa	
Biren Bordoloi	102
Rajendra Nath Bordoloi	103

Manipur

Paite/Tangkhul

Dr. T.S. Gangte	107
Chihanpam Sareo	108
H. Kamkhenthang	109
Robin S. Ngangom	112

Meghalaya

Khasi

Bewan Lionel Swer	117
Bijoya Sawian	119
B. Pakem	121
Desmond L. Kharmawphlang	122
Filmeca Marbaniang	123
J. S. Shangpliang	124
Jeebon Roy	126
Kitbor W. Nongrum	128
Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih	131
Minimon Laloo	133
Radhon Singh Berry Kharwanlang	135
R.T. Rymbai	136
S.S. Majaw	138
Streamlet Dkhar	139
Sylvanus Lamare	141
Webster Davis Jyrwa	144

Mizoram

Mizo

B. Lalthangliana	149
C. Laizawna	151
C. Thuamluaia	153
Darchhawna	154
Dengchhuana	156
James Dokhuma	158
J. Malsawma	160

Khawlkungi	162
Laltluangliana Khiangte	164
Lalsangzuali Sailo	167
L. Biakliana	170
Lalhmingliana Saiawi	172
Rev. Liangkhaia	174
Lalengmawia Ralte	177
Lalhmuaka	179
Captain L. Z. Sailo	181
Lalrammawia Ngente	184
Nuchhungi Renthlei	185
R. Thungvunga	187
R.L. Thanmawia	188

Nagaland

Tenydie

Neichuriazho Chucha	193
R. Vashum	194
Rev. Dr. V.K. Nuh	196
Kekhrievou Yhome	199

Tripura

Kokborok

Chandra Kanta Murasingh	203
Bimal Deb Barma	205
Binoy Debbarma	207
Milan Rani Janatia	208
Nanda Kumar Debbarma	209
Sunil Deb Barma	211
Bodhrai Debbarma	213
Rabindra Kishore Debbarma	214
Sabita Debbarma	215
Sefali Debbarma	216
Shyamlal Debbarma	217
Snehamoy Roy Chowdhuri	219

Writers of Sikkim Living in West Bengal
Lepcha and Nepali

Lyangsong Tamsang
R.P. Lama

223

225