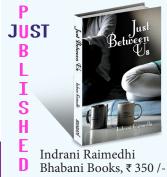
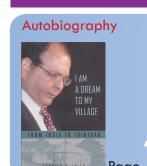
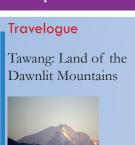
Volume I, Issue II, April-May, 2014

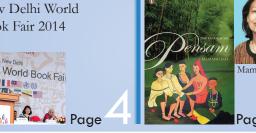
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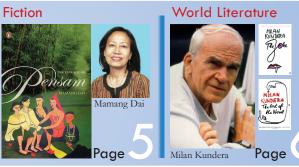


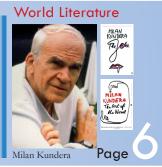


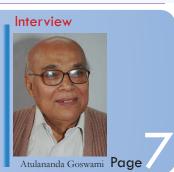


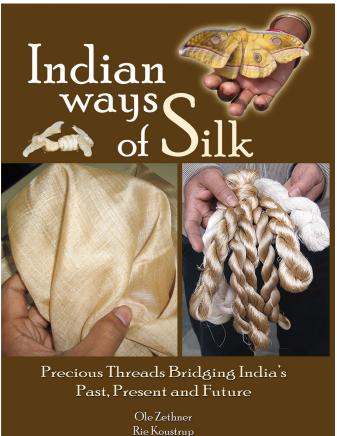












Dilip Barooah







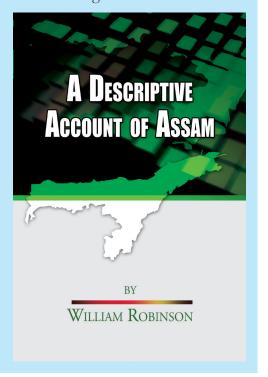




atural silk have played a great role in India since more than 4,000 years to the benefit of users and producers. The book presents many aspects of silk: biology, research, production, trade, culture and history that includes the role of silk in India's culture and history, India's place in global silk network, use of diversity of silk moth species, work environment for silk production, from craft to modern production, diversification to other uses of silk, etc. ..

his is a classic book not only on history but also on geography, sociology and anthropology as well. The book was written by William Robinson nearly 170 years back - a time when Assam had hardly passed 15 years under the rule of the English East India Company's Government in Bengal. Assam was passing through a period of transition in all respects: social, political, economical and administrative under the political dispensation. The book is a good repository of data and information on Assam in making then. The editor does not add anything to the original text of the author, and has simply supplied additional information in the end

notes against each chapter so that it makes for a good read.



India's King of Sardonic humour, is no more!

hushwant Singh, India's one of the most prolific authors, the grand old man of Indian journalism, died on 20th march, aged 99, at his home in New Delhi of cardiac arrest.

Born on 2 February 1915, at Hadali in Punjab, now in Pakistan, Singh occupied India's literary centre-stage for half a century with his novels. Some of his novels written in his early decades scandalised India with their sexually explicit scenes. He is best remembered for his historical novel Train to Pakistan, which recounts the tragedy and bloodshed of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 into India and Pakistan. Born into a well-off family, he initially practised law in Lahore. But partition triggered him to change professions. In Khushwantnama: The Lessons of My Life, published last year, Singh ruminates on a life lived



fully and the lessons it taught him. Singh, famous for his bold and outrageous sense of humour penned his epitaph before his death.

"Here lies one who spared neither man nor God/Waste not your tears on him, he was a sod/Writing nasty things he regarded as great fun/Thank the Lord he is dead, this son of a gun."

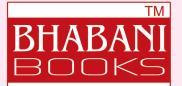
He is survived by his son and daughter.

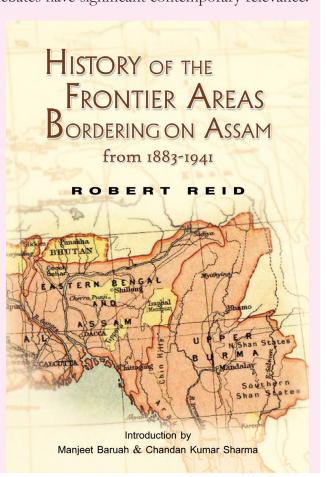
Northeast India. Reid's account amply demonstrates that for the colonial system a frontier was a set of sociospatial relations and not mere drawing and administration of international boundaries. The framework to understand these relations was founded on some anthropological and colonialist presumptions. Researchers can dispute these presumptions today. But the striking significance of the book in this regard lies in its candid admission of policies and actions, as well in the thought behind them vis-à-vis the practices on (colonial) frontier. On such frankness in discussing official policies on Northeast India, the post independence Indian state is possibly yet to equal. At the same time, Reid also shows that colonialism was not a monolith. There were debates and ambiguities within colonialism vis-a-vis the making and governance of the Northeast frontier. Reid's work is a wealth of insight into these debates. These debates have significant contemporary relevance. They highlight

obert Reid's A History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam is a fascinating piece of colonial writing. It is a window into the colonial mind with its notions of people and space that comprise

relation between thought policy making and with regard to frontier processes and provide a context to study social and political transition from colonial to postcolonial Northeast India.

The book will be useful to researchers, a d m i n i s t r a t o r s policy and makers interested in sociopolitical development Northeast India and frontier studies in general.





Editorial

Books, Book Fairs, Literary Festivals in India

ooks have been an integral part of human civilization and it is more so in a knowledge-based society today. The emergence of internet and digital media make people think that books may take a back seat in the near future. But the reality is not that. The records show that the book industry is registering a growth of 25-30% every year. Without denying the importance of internet of digital media in its core fields, book industry is seen to have consolidated further with its unique features in fact, across the globe including India.

In the last New Delhi World Book Fair-2014, Mr. M.A. Sikandar, director, the National Book Trust, India said that considering the growing need of book promotion, NBT is thinking of making their mega event-NDWBF an annual feature. He further revealed that 'unlike any other country in the world, seventy percent of Indians are young, who will only read for the next twenty-five years.' Obviously, the scenario is far less gloomy, than it is hopeful provided the players will adopt proactive policy measures.

If we scan the global scenario, it is found that India's is the third biggest publishing industry in the world. It needs to be highlighted that most of the players in this industry are private players and they do not have much infrastructural facilities to promote their products in the international market in a cost-effective manner, as individually it is not possible to have much control over the international market. Here lies the importance of government policies. The government should immediately think for creating a forum like Book Promotion Council in India, which would certainly come handy in supporting the industry that is already in the third position in the global market.

The event like New Delhi World Book Fair, Jaipur Literary Festival, International Kolkata Book Fair and many other regional and state-level book fairs and literary festivals are individually doing wonderfully, for the benefit of the industry by way of various innovations in promotional methodology. But a well-planned government policy for book promotion in India is the need of the day. \square

Autobiography

Living with the Dream

"I was born in a state of abject poverty and destitution and earned my keep as a child-labourer in the sugarcane fields and emerged from the abyss of helplessness and despair and became a dream to my villagers."



Kenneth R. Lalla

Jugal Kumar Goswamy

ream has no barrier and day-dreaming is a favourite pastime of man. It gives one the luxury of attaining the unattainable. But few have the fortitude to chase the unattainable and ultimately grab it—more so if someone is a child labourer without a father (and a mother), and who does not get the opportunity to start his formal education till the age of seventeen, to become one of the brightest jewels of his country. However, that is the story of Kenneth R. Lalla (b.1926), son of a bonded labourer in the sugarcane field of Trinidad and Tobago (West Indies) who was forcibly taken there from India by an agent of the planters.

Kenneth Lalla's fascinating story of his journey through slavery, through poverty and through illiteracy to the pinnacle of success – he was even considered for presidentship of his country— is narrated in his autobiography, *I am a Dream to my Village* (NBT edition). In one of the sentences in the foreward of the book Lalla writes,

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"I was born in a state of abject poverty and destitution and earned my keep as a child-labourer in the sugarcane fields and emerged from the abyss of helplessness and despair and became a dream to my villagers."

Though there is no marked division the book can be read in two parts— the first part is about struggle, the second part is about success.

Lalla's father Birbhadra Lal Das arrived under strange circumstances in 1909 at Trinidad and was employed in the sugarcane fields owned by European planters at Dow village in the district of California. Trinidad was a British colony and the labourers had a hand to mouth existence. Balabhadra's

desire to return to his home in Darbhanga, Bihar, failed because it was not possible for him to raise five hundred rupees needed to earn his release. The reluctant man settled down, married and had three children. Kenneth was the third child and was about three years old when his mother Ramkalya eloped with another person. The father being a labourer, there was nobody to look after the children and Kenneth roamed about the village streets and fields. His brother Kanta was irresponsible and never had any obligation towards his family. Balabhadra had some education while in India, he was conscientious and a moralist and imbued Ken with values. He also wanted to give his youngest child some education. But the early attempt at it failed. Then the father's illness and subsequent death made the young boy a bread earner at the age of ten, going through jobs fit for the much older.

A DREAM

TO MY

KENNETH R. LALLA

Kenneth R. Lalla, NBT, ₹ 135, PB

I Am A Dream to My Village:

From India to Trinidad

VILLAGE

Lalla writes about some 'miracles' in his life which contributed to making life worth looking forward to. The most significant of these was his meeting with Jean Lalsingh, his uncle's girlfriend, who later took him to the city of port of Spain to stay with her. It was she who gave him his name Kenneth in place of his original name Ramsanta which she found 'coolish'. Sensing his natural intelligence she admitted him to school (he was seventeen then) which opened up a door to a new world. However, after sometime Jean left for America to join her husband there leaving Ken lonely and helpless. He returned to his village, but managed to continue with his studies despite extreme hardship and with a little assistance from his mother (who came back after the death of her second husband) and his sister-in-law. Though he could never forgive his mother for deserting his father, whom he idolized, he still took good care of her later and sacrificed a lot for her treatment in her illness.

Through great difficulty and with assistance from his teachers and well-wishers he managed to pass the Cambridge School Certificate Examination. It opened the door for him to enter government service and to fight financial insecurity. It also paved the way for him to study law in London and became a Barrister-at-law. His career graph had an upward swing after that. He proved to be a morally upright lawyer, became MP for a term and then chairman of several government bodies and commissions including chairman of Public Service Commission where he introduced several reforms. He used his high positions to highlight the difficult situation of the Indian community which was often deprived of basic rights by the African people who were in the majority. His good works earned him accolades from all sections of the people and he was so loved and admired that Prime Minister George Chambers was about to make him the President of the country in 1986 when Chambers unfortunately lost the election.

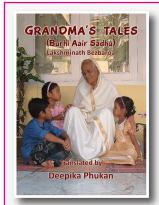
The success part of the account is heart warming, but the core of the book is the early struggle of a lonely child labourer, given to day dreaming. He chose a lonely spot in his village where he would retire to and dream about an impossible future so that the dream would suppress his hunger and loneliness. It also helped him to take in his stride all the obstacles and tribulations thereof faced by him as a petty labourer.

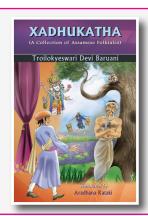
The book cannot boast of much literary merit, but it a very heart touching account of one who, despite handicaps, could turn unattainable dream into reality and is humble enough to remain grounded and to be ever grateful to those who helped him to hope and succeed.

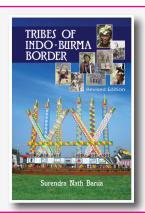
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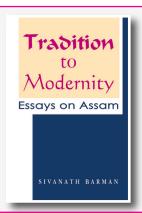


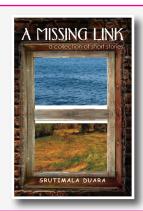
The author's family

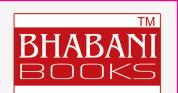












Opp. Don Bosco Church, Provincial House, ARB Road, Panbazar, Guwahati - 1 Ph: +91-361-2738837 web: www.bhabanibooks.com e-mail: books@bhabani.com Travelogue

Tawang Land of the Day

EAND OF THE DAWN-LIT MOUNTAINS

POMI BARUAH

BOOK 3
QUEST 3

Tawang: Land of the Dawn-lit Mountains, Pomi Baruah (Author & Publisher), ₹ 1800, HB

Land of the Dawnlit Mountains

Mist covered forests, crimson hues of sunrays on the snow-laden mountains, lush green landscape giving a feel of harmony, streams juggling into water bodies, vibrant blooming flowers— this is the land of Tawang ...

Pomi Baruah

t was love at first sight. I fell in love with Tawang, the moment I set my eyes on it, from inside the Pawan Hans chopper, that cold January morning. I had heard myriad stories about the mesmerizing beauty of Tawang and seen hundreds of photographs that vouched for it, but I never really had the opportunity of visiting this beautiful place prior to January 2010.

As I headed for the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati, the next morning, to board the chopper for Tawang, I had no expectations or inkling of what was coming up. I just wanted to soak in the much-talked-about beauty of the place, rest my jangled nerves and sleep away to glory.

The beauty of Tawang took my breath away and left an everlasting imprint on my mind. The mountains looming majestically above, their peaks in delicate ecstasy with the beautiful blue sky, the clouds charioting distant dreams, the stunning reflection of sunrays on the snow-capped mountain, the mysterious deep lakes with their silent stories, the rippling waters of the clear streams, the drumming of the cascading falls and the innate divinity of the numerous monasteries stirred my entire being.

During the course of the three days of my stay in Tawang, I travelled the area in and around the Tawang district extensively. As we drove around clicking hundreds of pictures, I could not help but thank Providence for having brought me to this mystic land. The journey

proved to be a sacred and ethereal experience too and I was deeply drawn to this place.

Often when I fondly reminisce my quaint romance with Tawang, I am instantly transported to the majestic snow-clad Gorichen peak, the picture-perfect Sela Pass, to the Gaden Namghyal Lhatse Monastery, to the several *Chortens, Manes* and *Ani Gonpas*, the fluttering prayer flags, the smiling faces of the Monpa children and the glorious flowers

that adorn the Monpa homes. The intonations of the hymns divine, the fragrance of the incense sticks, the light of a hundred butter lamps, and the whirling of the prayer wheels, with the mystic formula, *Om Mane Padme Hum*, inscribed on them, all have become a part of my being.



Pomi Baruah

I consider the entire process of the making of my coffee table book a spiritual journey. I was required to devote time to studying books and other reading materials, spend hours at the Tawang Library, at the Monasteries and Ani Gonpas, and travel through the difficult terrain. Now when I look back I realize I wouldn't have been able to achieve any of these without the help and guidance from the Divine. There was definitely something that kept goading me to go ahead.

My book wouldn't have seen the light of day without the contribution of many people across the two states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. I was overwhelmed with the love and warmth of the people of Tawang who came forward to help me in every possible way they could. Although I was a new face in Tawang and hardly knew anyone there, I was offered all possible help from everyone I met. In total, I made five trips to Tawang and every trip had something new to offer me. I made several friends in Tawang, who have left an indelible impact on my life. Their straightforward nature, generosity, their desire to share their knowledge, their unflinching and selfless attitude left me amazed. I instantly formed a connection with them.

During the course of my research I received valuable insights and inputs from a number of people of Tawang. I am ever grateful for the guidance and grace received from His Eminence, Rinpoche of Tawang Monastery, Reverend Guru Tenzin Thinley Namgey and the blessings of His Eminence, Rinpoche of Khinmey Gonpa, Reverend Gyurmey Losel Gyatso. I also had the golden opportunity to visit Padmashree Lama Thupten Phuntsok and see his "Manjushree Vidyapith" a home for the homeless, destitute, physically challenged children.

The memory of my several visits to the Tawang Monastery, the Gaden Namghyal Lhatse Monastery, which is considered to be the supreme fountainhead of the religious life of the Monpas, shall forever be etched in my heart. I remember having spent hours sitting on the Monastery hill admiring the beautiful sunset and clicking innumerable photographs with my Monpa friends, Ms Passang Khirmey, Nima Khenrab and Thupten Tsering Shastri, a young monk, who taught me the meaning of several Buddhist chants and hymns.

This book has been an attempt at paying my sincere homage to the scintillating beauty of Tawang and a gift to the unforgettable hospitality and love of its people. In this humble endeavour, I have tried to capture the enchanting essence of Tawang, enchanting pristine hues and its infallible tranquility in the backdrop of its military and geo-strategic importance. I hope I have been able to do some amount of justice to the beautiful land and its beautiful people. \square

Novel

Introducing Krishani Khound's The Veiled Integrity

Anil Kumar Boruah

here was a time when Indians writing creative fiction were really few and far between. They all had an elite demographic profile with exclusive public school background. This elite group took writing more as a hobby or as a means of adding further value to their already distinguished profile in various professional slots. The class, tone and tenor of fiction they produced, with rare exceptions, were mostly about elementary human passion, barely reflecting on the political intrigues of the day, state of governance, or such other issues of contemporary significance.



Krishani Khound

Presently there is a large group of young Indians from varied demographic denominations writing creative fiction in English who unlike their predecessors of yore are more focused on the emerging realities of their time that make perceptible difference to their life as well as to the nation. It is perhaps because India has changed a great deal in the meantime and continues doing so as well. It has also become more argumentative, more intriguing, more rancorous and also more probing than ever before.

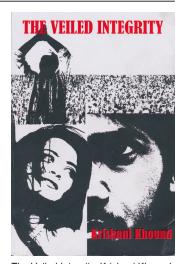
The muck and grime that have so thoroughly desecrated the face of our bodypolitic have not passed by without rupturing the sensibilities of this band of young writers as also without provoking a response.

Krishani Khound's maiden novel—The Veiled Integrity—is in a sense, a chronicle of her ruptured sensibilities vis-a-vis the crumbling socio-political value system in contemporary India where the nefarious nexus of perfidious politics, manipulative media and befuddled bureaucracy exerts its toxic punch to subvert all codes and conventions only to enjoy the

fruits of empowerment as legitimate entitlements.

The Veiled Integrity is an apt commentary on the hypocrisy and chicanery that have been so insidiously corroding the vitality of our revered mores of public life and professional ethics with impunity.

The story revolves round Laila Khan— an ambitious starlet from across the border who by queer turn of events, arrives in India to make it big in the tinsel town of Bollywood. Obsessed with the idea of a life in glamour and glitz, she is too gullible to acquire any presience to the sleazy underbelly of Bollywood where the cut throat guiles of survival constantly demand their pound of fleshboth literally and figuratively, at whatever cost. Anyone not inducted well enough into the ways of the industry is more likely to end up as the babes in the wood, in the cold wilderness of Bollywood; and that exactly happens to Laila as well. As she is crawling up the ladder of



The Veiled Integrity, Krishani Khound, Power Publisher, ₹ 290, PB

fame, she is suddenly found dead with the ignonimity of an unwed mother-the foetus still inside her womb and dead too. Her tragic and unreal death, instead of being mourned and condoled, remains a topic of salacious conjectures till long after her death-courtesy a sensation mongering media.

The novel starts with the breaking news of Laila Khan's death. As they story unfolds in flashback, different characters come to the fore and play their alloted role within their given space—none stumbling on to the other-as if to help the narrative sustain its fluid symmetry. The author also smartly weaves out the basic story with perspicacious exposition of the persona behind each character and interfacing one another, in course of the denouement. The contrived interface of the characters—though at times extended to the threshold of monotony, has served its purpose. On one hand it exposes the characters inside out while on the other it helps the reader connect the dots and discover the men and women they truly are, beneth an opaque patina of propriety.

The story per se doesn't have any intrinsic strength of novelty in the sense that it reads like that of a much familiar potboiler from Bollywood. But what it lacks in novelty is amply made up by Krishani's uncanny flair for story telling with enviable lucidity. Considering that this is her first novel or for that matter her first published work, she definitely has an exciting and more rewarding journey ahead to tell us may more tales of enduring value. \square

The New Delhi World Book Fair 2014 convinced book lovers once again that books are the best means of reaching out to distant minds and societies.

Amritjyoti Mahanta

orhonor pora duroir manik hatote pabo pari. (Through reading one can harvest gems of distant lands). So wrote Satyanath Bora a century ago. This simple sentence, apart from affirming a truth as old as civilization itself, was also part of a muscular assertion of Assamese language and cerebration at a significant transitional phase of the society in the Brahmaputra valley. It is amazing that the significance of this innocent looking observation is felt with increasing relevance even after a century amidst many other means of social and intellectual connect. The New Delhi World Book Fair 2014 convinced book lovers once again that books are the best means of reaching out to distant minds and societies.

Event

In every edition of this Fair, there is a Guest of Honour Country and this year it was Poland. It is one of those countries that do not help form an idea about it in an average Indian's mind the way England or South Africa does. It is this enigma that makes one more curious about the country. Poland is a country that has a war-torn history but a robust literary tradition. Many may not be aware that Polish literature has four Nobel laureates. This is not to say that Nobel is the yardstick to judge the merit of literature, but every connoisseur would admit that it is powerful indicator of the international attention in these writings, or more appropriately perhaps, the angle of attention on a writer. A nation existing between two other powerful nations-Russia and Germany-Poland's socio political history has often been turbulent. Justyna Sobolewska writes-"Poland's history consists of a whole string of conflicts punctuated by short periods of peace. For the entire nineteenth century, Poland did not exist at all, except in its language and literature." 'Literature', she writes, "was the only vector of identity." At an interactive session of Polish and Indian writers, I met Jacek Dehnel, a young writer, poet and translator. His novel Lala has

proved to be a huge success which has already been translated into many languages. There he weaves his family's history with that of Poland. I had not read Sobolewska's write-up till then. Nor had I come to know about Lala. Yet I asked Dehnel- how does the present Polish generation look back at their vesterdaythe second half of the twentieth century?

With disarming candour, Dehnel replied that as one born in 1980, he does not have any first hand experience of the period, when the country was in the erstwhile Soviet bloc. The young writer points out to one appreciable initiative of that era; the administration in that phase took great initiative in the spread of education and reading habit. Schools and libraries were established in large numbers in the hinterlands of the country. It probably had a major contribution in the country's transition to a liberal civil society where the citizens no more had to suffer the claustrophobic atmosphere of decades ago.

Polish literature, like literature in other languages, delineates the society, its crisis and concerns. To give just one example-

What is poetry which does not serve Nations or people?

A connivance with official lies,

A song of drunkards whose throat will be cut in a moment,

Readings for sophomore girls? ('Dedication'-Czeslaw Milosz. Translated by the poet)

These lines are also just another example of the fact that sometimes a piece of literature brings out a period of a nation or a society more adequately than history per se. To cite from the oeuvre of Assamese fiction, Seuji Pator Kahini by Rasna Barua is a soulstirring tale of the crimson hearts amidst the verdant rows(tea-garden). Similarly, Dawar Aru Naai by Jogesh Das is a very graphic narration of the connect of Assamese life in the Second World War. These are portraitures which cannot be matched by a historical document with methodically culled facts. In

the context of Poland's Polish literature, the observation of Czeslaw Milosz helps us to understand the reality better: 'It is only



Hon'ble President while delivering the inaugural speech.

Ruskin Bond interacting with his young fans.

Their Books between two world powers. A Polish poet is always in between."

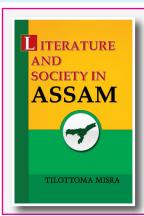
Ashok Vajpayee quotes this from the Nobel winning Polish poet while referring to Polish poetry as a Satyagraha. He says- "The Polish poetics however, in the later half of the twentieth century acquired a truth-speaking poetics in a particularly sharp, bright and effective manner. We are tempted to call it a poetics of Satyagraha. While the original Satyagraha was born out of and practiced in the Indian struggle against the British empire and its tyranny, the notion could be meaningfully stretched to the Polish situation which came under two tyrannies one after the other: the Nazi and the Soviet. Both tyrannies, like all other tyrannies, allowed very little space for freedom and evoked resistance. Poetry in Polish literature became a site of resistance."

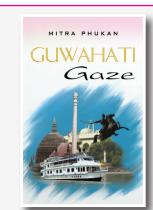
While going through these interpretations, I remembered Navakanta Barua's remark in his travelogue- Deshe Deshe Mor Desh. (1989)-"Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote Full Circle as a 'victim' of a particular social system. But what new gems had he contributed after coming to live in the free world?" The next moment he despairs-"The age of great writers and works seems to have come to an end with the Second World War. Now there is overtly propagandist literature of the socialist bloc on the one hand and the 'best sellers' on the other- the readers are Trishanku in between." A section of the readers may seek to rescue themselves from this ambivalence of the writer. But probably the great Assamese poet was historically correct when he desisted from according a finality to the terms like 'oppressive', 'liberal' etc. At times we may be restrained by forces and realities not overtly visible like a war or a jail.

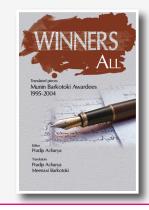
I started this write-up with a quote from Satyanath Bora, an important pen from the Jonaki era whose contribution in shaping modern Assamese prose cannot be forgotten. And this is the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of the giant of the Jonaki era-Lakshminath Bezbaroa. Of the many facets of the Sahityarathi's contributions, his assertion of an Assamese identity with a healthy symbiosis of the traditional elements and those from West and the neighbourhood is one reverentially talked about by the posterity. However, if tomorrow a survey is carried out how many Assamese have read a few pages from Bezbaroa's oeuvre other than in school-syllabus, it is doubtful whether the majority of the respondents would come with an 'yes'. Should this doubt be not a warning enough to goad us to show our mighty heritage of Sankaradev, Sahityarathi, Rupkonwar and Sudhakantha as one step in claiming our place in global society instead of wasting our energy in trying to be part of some unaesthetic and mistaken definitions of identity formation?

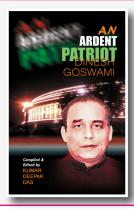
Voices from NDWBF 2014

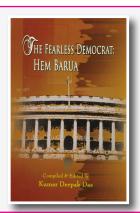
- Ruskin Bond commented: "It is great to see intelligent and bright people around in the World Book Fair. Intelligence and brightness comes from reading books. If you read books you can become writer. Do open the books."
- Hon'ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee while addressing the inaugural session at NDWBF promoted the motto "All for knowledge and knowledge for
- Praising Indian Books, Ms Lim Li Kok, MD, Asiapac Books commented: "The Indian books, which are available in the market is of very good quality, be it production, pictures, layouts, designs, content or paper quality, publishers have shown holistic improvement. Now Indian Books are among the best
- Shri A. Sethumadhvan, Chairman, NBT, during the inauguration of Indo-Czech Meet remarked, "Literature has no boundaries, Literature always helped countries to forge new relationship and start a new chapter in cultural exchange. Books unite countries and culture."
- Sahitya Akademi produces one book in every 22 hours and 400 books every year. Half are reprints of existing books and others are completely new and original
 - K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
- S. Chand group celebrates 75 successful years in publishing. A Coffee table book containing the history of 75 years of S. Chand group was also launched on the occasion.

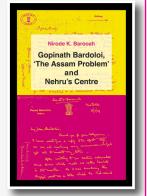












Northeast

This novel is a strong political voice from the periphery in the genre of narrative fiction, designed to dismiss the stereotypical thinking of the outsiders.

The Legends of Pensam, Mamang Dai, Penguin India,

THE LEGENDS OF Penson

The Periphery Writes Back

Pori Hiloidari



Mamang Dai

Pamang Dai is an important voice in Indian writing in English and particularly in literature from the Northeast India. Born in Arunachal Pradesh, she has, to her credit, novels, nonfictional prose-works, a collection of poems and children's books written in English. The Penguin Publication published her novel, The Legends of Pensam in 2006. This novel can be read as a strong political voice from the periphery in the genre of narrative fiction, designed to dismiss the stereotypical thinking of the outsiders about the remote land of Arunachal Pradesh, its people and its culture.

Reading Mamang Dai's novel, The Legends of Pensam reminds me of Afro-American writer Toni Morrison for two reasons. One, for the advocacy of magic and the supernatural, dismissed as discredited knowledge by the West, as an alternative way of knowing things; two, for the insistence of having the nourishing presence of an ancestral figure who embodies a conscious historical connection between the past and the present of a community of people. The Legends of Pensam is also about a community, the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh, positioned in a difficult situation of identity crisis in the face of sweeping changes brought in by the colonial regime in the early part of the 20th century. Caught in between a decaying old order and the new wind of changes, Adi people are in an 'in-between state'. The Legends of Pensam, amongst other references, alludes to this problematic location, which is a position of indeterminacy and fluidity in any politics of identity formation and yet the novel explores the prospects and promises offered by this middle ground.

The Legends of Pensam does not have any central character or plot in a conventional sense because it chooses to explore the driving force that nourishes the life, not of an individual, but of a community, in a marked departure from the western norms of fictional writing. Hoxo (the boy who fell from the sky), his friend Rakut, the old rhapsodist who sings the songs of creation and tells the riddles of life, the courageous women like Nenem and Pinyar and a host of other characters are in the foreground guarding the community's ancestral roots with an unshakable belief in the magic of their folk wisdom. Their story also defies all attempts at rational interpretations. Logic fails to explain the occurrences like Hoxo's falling from the sky or Kalen's sudden death in the forest. They might be the manifestation of the intrusion of the spirit world, with its jealous rage, into the territory of mankind. These events remain fixed in their collective memory for future remembrance and welfare of the community, but any attempt at logical explanation proves abortive, as in Hoxo's words "Who could tell about these things?" 'The songs of the rhapsodist' section narrates stories of their ancestor's lives in the form of ritualistic dance and song performances. The outsiders sometimes try to enter the amazing labyrinth of stories through the reductive logic of rationalisation and failing there, they call this realm of ancient wisdom 'sinister'. For the outsiders the forest is a hideous trap, but the community life in this remote landscape is empowered by a strong sense of ecological rootedness, which indeed is the essence of their folk imagination.

The 'Daughters of the Village' section shows how folk wisdom enables them to believe in the inexorable laws of the world. Pinyar, the village woman had to lose her husband in a hunting accident and yet she harbours no ill feeling against the man who is responsible for her husband's death. The symbolism of the road and the mountain is obvious in this novel, which is reminiscent of the world of Ben Okri's The Famished Road. In this novel as well, the road is said to bring 'bad news'. It brings in electricity, bridges and migrant labourers, putting the identity of the people at stake. Everyone is at pains to see the green, virgin land and its ageless tradition being ravaged by the white people, their Eurocentric civilizing mission and reductive laws of knowledge construction, but the indefatigable spirit of life finds expression in stories and songs, fairs and festivities following the hard and toiling times. Instead of getting lost or uprooted in the face of the new waves of changes, they curve out a middle way between

a decaying order and an emerging global modernity, as holding the microphone in his hand, the celebrated performer admits: "I must change with the times." They are peripheral people who know that 'change is a wonderful thing'. They celebrate the magical moment of mingling yesterday with today and in this process the most important thing is the power of words. The sustenance of their folk wisdom depends on the power of oratory as it is through an oral tradition that their stories get transmitted from one generation to another.

When there is an onslaught on their sacred ways of life and old sense of pride, people eagerly wait for a golden chance, a platform to preserve their rich legacy, as the old rhapsodists are now a dying breed. But the media constructed hyper reality where one has only to sell one's customs and rituals does not offer any answer. Against these hopeless waiting for a golden chance, people of the village try their best to preserve the magic of their words. After all who can say that this land of race and symbols, fire and river, fish and star is not bigger than the land of cities and streets, high-rises and automobiles! The narrative of this novel consists a number of stories because it is through the stories and their remembrance that this community can make necessary negotiation with change. They celebrate the middle ground, the legend of Pensam that accommodates polarities of life. This finds symbolic narration in the last paragraph of the novel when the narrator looking through an old binocular gets to see in front of her eyes both grubby streets and sailboats, apartment blocks and green mountains. "If a person forgets he loses his soul", if a community forgets its cultural roots, it loses its right to survive and flourish in this world. The Legends of Pensam offers this proposition for all the indigenous communities and cultures across the globe, people who have to assert their own identity in the face of sweeping changes in the new global order.

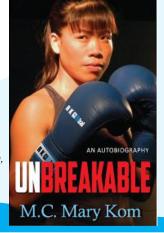
Salutations for Mary Kom Iron Lady of India

he only woman boxer in India to win a bronze medal, Mary Kom through her pleasing demeanour and relentless courage has worked hard to make a mark in the World Boxing panorama by winning medals in each of the six world championships. Her autobiography Unbreakable, is gripping and

full of action, much like her punches. o



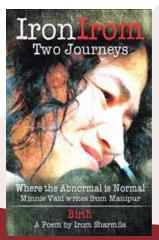
Unbreakable, Mary Kom, Harper, ₹ 199, PB

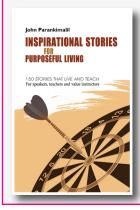


riter and filmmaker Minnie Vaid's book on Irom Sharmila, Iron Irom: Two journeys, is an inspiring tale. "Irom's story has been written in first-person account and in a non-intellectual way so that people can easily understand and get involved in

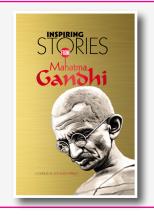


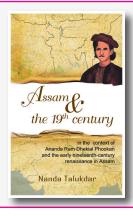
Iron Irom: Two Journeys, Minnie Vaid, Rajpal Publishing, , ₹ 175, PB

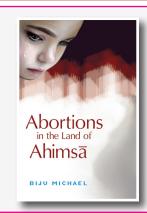


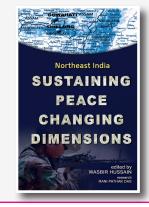














International

The Origins of Postmodernity

Fredric Jameson is noted for his landmark work on postmodernism which according to Jameson is 'the cultural logic of late capitalism'.

Perry Anderson

Kumud Boruah

he Origins of Postmodernity written by Perry Anderson, the British Marxist historian and the former editor of "New Left Review" was published by Aakar Books, Delhi-91 for South Asia, in 2013, in agreement with Verso, London, the first publisher of the book in 1998.

According to the writer, the book was the result of his consent to introduce a new collection of writings by Fredric Jameson, the American Marxist and cultural critic, *The Cultural Turn.* Fredric Jameson is noted for his landmark work on postmodernism which according to Jameson is 'the cultural logic of late capitalism'. Although in his later years as a leftist thinker, Anderson himself thinks that some larger debate around Jameson's work in general is overdue, to relate postmodernism to 'Late Capitalism' is a genuine discourse which has been found to be convincingly attributed to the postmodern human situation, after the Second World War, across the globe. Anderson's essay in this sense, would only offer a more historical account of the 'origins' of the idea of postmodernism hitherto unavailable to many readers.

A pertinent question always arises while dealing with serious discussions on

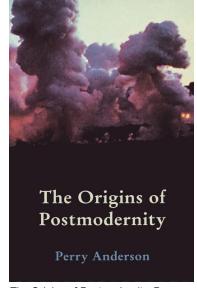
postmodernism, whether it is an idea or a phenomenon? If I recollect from memory, Dr. Hiren Gohain, the Assamese Marxist Scholar's view, he once in the late nineties, termed it as an emotional reaction to our life in general. I personally find it interesting to be studied both as an idea and as a phenomenon.

In his essay, Perry Anderson has argued that contrary to the conventional thought, both 'Modernism' and 'Postmodernism' were born in Hispanic America, rather than at the centre of the cultural system of the time: according to him, the idea of postmodernism first surfaced in the Hispanic inter-world of the 1930's, a generation before its appearance in England or America.

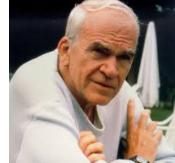
Once an ardent follower of Marxist sociological ideas and social transformations, Anderson gradually lost faith in the Marxist dictum that capitalism will inevitably be succeeded by Socialism and perhaps the same apprehensions are being reflected in his discussions while reviewing and re-envisaging

the arguments forwarded by Jameson in support of the cultural turn at the advent of postmodernism.

However, it is possible that the curious reader will find sincere effort at dealing with the significant question like: Where does the idea of the postmodern come from? Who first conceived and who developed it? 'How have its meanings changed'? 'What purpose do they served'? The readers will hopefully notice that the answer to the last question will not quite be the same as furnished by Fredric Jameson, the reason being the change of heart as far as Anderson's intellectual progress in concerned. \square



The Origins of Postmodernity, Perry Anderson, Verso, ₹ 1238, PB



Milan Kundera

Milan Kundera The Undisputed Marker of Postmodern Literature

Kundera uses various techniques exemplified through his mode of narration and polyphonic compositions of music. Music plays a crucial role in all his novels.

Bondita Baruah

ne of the most significant and recognised authors of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, Milan Kundera is a name which marks a distinct style of writing in genres such as poetry, essay, drama, short story and most importantly, the novel. Being a critically acclaimed author, for his works, Kundera's novels are often divided into seven parts, dealing with a gamut of themes, meta-themes—where often the stories are in third person with the authorial intrusion in the first person. Exile, identity, border, existence, music are some of the themes in his works which the writer posits with some philosophising. In fact, each Kundera novel released at a particular time, has raised a debate relevant to the contemporary scenario.

Born in Brno in the year 1929, Milan Kundera time and again is regarded as one of the controversial authors of his times. As a writer, belonging to the fraternity of intellectuals, Kundera had to undergo various hardships in the initial years of his career before moving to France. His novels while merging personal significances with the political, are a critique

of the totalitarian regime. He portrays his characters depicting their existential situation, sometimes in conflict within as well as outside themselves

A critic remarks, "His novels depict a world of awkward orgies and disastrous pool parties, mad scientists and self-pitying poets who contract pneumonia out of spite. While Kundera's works tackle profound issues of human identity, they also playfully juggle ambiguities, ironies and paradoxes."

During the flourishing days of the Prague Spring of 1968, Kundera was one among the writers who availed the privileges provided by the movement, giving vent to his freedom of expression. Originally, Kundera wrote in the Czech language, but since 1993 he has been writing in French. His works have been translated to various languages and have also been adapted to movies; in present times Kundera is regarded as a Czecho-French writer.

Though political and historical themes abound in his novels, Kundera always insists that the novel should be understood as a work of art. These themes are important in so far as they help him to discover new aspects of human existence through his characters. Moreover, while dealing with his characters, the writer does not concentrate on giving information about their physical appearance. He believes that "the reader's imagination automatically completes the writer's vision."

Kundera uses various techniques exemplified through his mode of narration and polyphonic compositions of music. Music





plays a crucial role in all his novels. The writer calls his works a "poetic meditation on existence." Introduced by Bakhtin, the concept of polyphony for Kundera is the presentation of 'two or more voices' in a simultaneous manner which are 'perfectly bound together' yet have their own independence. His polyphonic narratives bring heterogenous themes together with a structure which is based on dividing the chapters to seven. The last two sections of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, regarded as one of his most significant works bear remarkable illustration of polyphony. In a compelling manner Kundera presents the deaths of Tomas and Tereza first just giving us the news in Section Six; then going to the details in Section Seven—how a car accident took away their lives while they were on a retreat to the Bohemian countryside. It is as if Kundera does not want us to face the sudden death which would come as a shock.

As in music where two or more voices are simultaneously presented to create polyphony, in the novel's realm too, the writer tries to juxtapose multiplicity of narrative voices/ structures to achieve the same effect. In *The Joke*, Kundera lights up the narrative with four narrators, Ludvik Jan being the chief one. Each segment is presented through points of view that shift from one to the other, thereby magnifying the beauty of the novel and making it a multiperspective one.

In his polyphonic novels, Kundera by special means of employing ideas, celebrates human life as it progresses in all its chaos and 'existential contingency.' His works are examples where he adopts structural properties of music to prose. In his non-fictional work, *The Art of*

the Novel, Kundera provides the musical structure of his novel Life is Elsewhere dividing the seven parts into tempos such as moderato, allegretto, allegro, prestissimo, moderato, adagio and presto. Steven Paul Scher calls this an instance of "music in literature." This musical polyphony however exists at a different level than in a musical composition. In The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, seven disjointed parts are again brought to a polyphonic whole through the "omnipresence of the authorial voice who comments, digresses and interjects often in casual and non-fictional ways and through repetition with variation of certain themes and motifs."

Polyphony, in Bakhtin's opinion, represents the most far reaching representation of human freedom and open time ever reached. Kundera makes similar representation through polyphony in his novels. In his non-fictional work *Testaments Betrayed*, Kundera explains that polyphony is essential not to escape the happenings of the real world but to apprehend it in a better way. His novels are "nothing less than strategies for surmounting one's sense of entrapment in events outside one's control or even awareness."

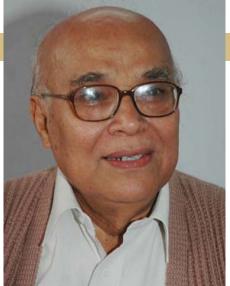
The musical structure is evident in all of Kundera's novels, with the exclusion of *The Farewell Party*. While every note has its individuality, it combines with other notes to become a polyphonic whole. The web of interrelated modes along with characters, themes, narrators is employed by Kundera through the multi layered perspective of music to avoid monotony which language sometimes produces. \square





Cityscape

Mitali Goswami's rendezvous with Atulananda Goswami



Atulananda Goswami

Pulor Jun, I was taken aback and very pleasantly surprised by the young man's eagerness and curiosity to see the location after reading my story. Again, once while travelling to Guwahati from upper Assam, where I had gone to receive the Makhan Duara Award,

tulananda Goswami is a name that invokes the soulful strains of the violin played by a moonstruck young man seated besides the Hamdoi Pul and the picture of an elderly Namghariya sitting silently with head bowed by the altar in a village Namghar as dusk sets in . Such is the visual immediacy of his narratives that they live on in the readers mind and heart long after he or she has put away the book.

Creator of the inimitable Hamdoi Pulor Jun and Naamgharia and many other masterpieces, Atulananda Goswami writes straight from the heart and hardly ever fails to make an impact. At once writer, critic, editor and translator Goswami has won the prestigious Assam Valley Award for 2014, instituted by the Williamson Magor Group. A recipient of several other awards for his prolific output in fiction, non-fiction, criticism and translation, Goswami can be best described as a son of the soil, whose writings bring to life both the village and urban life of Assam. A believer in humanist qualities and values, in rootedness and personal bonding, Goswami has enriched Assamese literature with his numerous short stories, novels, translations as well as his critical essays. His collections of short stories include Hamdoi Pulor Jun, Galpa, Rajpat, Palatak, Asroi, Seneh Jorir Gathi, and Baibhab—Bilap. He was awarded The Sahitya Akademi Award in 2006 for his collection Seneh Jorir Gathi and the Katha Award in 1992 for Boliya Hati.

Here we have the man himself in candid conversation with Mitali Goswami.

- MG: How conscious are you as an artist or is your writing totally spontaneous?
- AG: My writing is very spontaneous. I write as I feel a situation and it is to this naturalness that people connect. If the common reader can relate to my story I am satisfied. When a thought comes to me I try to picturize the situation and jot down that thought as immediately as possible. I also want the reader to feel as if he is a party in the creative process so that he can relate to the situation. I try to write in simple language, without embellishments and to recreate a scenario that the reader is familiar with.
- MG: You are a man of science as well as of humanities. Do you feel that this is an ideal combination to bring out the best from a writer in terms of analytic skill and an intuitive response to situation?
- AG: It is really difficult to say what is ideal for a writer or whether such a combination really helps. I have done my Graduation in both Science and Arts with Physics and Chemistry and then again with English and Assamese. I did not go on to do a post graduation but took up a job instead and began my journey as a writer at the same time. I think my training in Science as well as in Humanities did contribute to my writing, it is very difficult to say which contributed more.
- MG: How close are your stories to your own life experiences? What is it that stimulates you to write?
- AG: I don't think my stories are close to my life, I am more of a detached observer of characters and situations which I later use in my narrations. I try to present my stories objectively without getting too involved with them, to the pain or sorrow in them. But funnily my life sometimes gets close to my creations. I want to tell you how. I remember once, when I was at a meeting and a young man came up to me and told me how he had gone to the Golaghat District of Upper Assam, in fact to the exact location of after reading *Hamdoi*

the vehicle I was travelling in came to a stop in the same place and what caught my attention were the roadside signboards in the small stalls in the area. Each of them had the words Hamdoi Pul written rather prominently in unusually large letters that seemed to proclaim the locality, and later I came to know that the place had become a sort of literary tourist attraction with many people coming from various places just to see the Hamdoi Pul. I also remember the time when Gunin Hajarika, then a minister came to a halt beside me at a wedding and said that he was just back from Golaghat for some party work and that he had gone to see the Hamdoi Pul. I remember his exact words "Apunar Hamdoi pul sai ahisu dei" (I have seen your Hamdoi pul). You see it has become my hamdoi pul. Such experiences have really enriched my life.

- MG: Quite a number of your stories show the deterioration of human values, of the bonds of love and of relationships. Are you yet hopeful for mankind?
- AG: You know there are some emotions that are universal. They are the same everywhere, irrespective of place or time. These are timeless emotions and they will never change or die. The impulse to hold out a hand, to give a healing touch to someone, to speak a kind word will never cease. There is hope and always there will be hope. I am optimistic.
- MG: Art for art's sake or art for social causes. What do you believe in?
- AG: Art is the central idea of my story *Hamdoi Pulor Jun*, and there I have shown that true art is something personal and private, not for an audience or for commerce. It is a story that speaks for the purity of art, yet in many other stories I have focused on social issues.
- MG: You have had firsthand experience of War, be it the World War, the Chinese aggression, the Indo-Pak war. Has this experience ever featured in your writings?
- AG: War has never inspired me enough to write but I have written one story, titled "Infa Liong", with the background of war, it is a story of two childhood friends, one Assamese and the other Chinese who grow up together near Makum, and are more close than blood brothers. They are separated for several years and their final meeting happens at the war front where they come face to face as enemy soldiers. Even as they gaze at each other in bewilderment and the shock of recognition, the Chinese boy drives his bayonet into the chest of the Assamese boy whose junior officer in turn shoots the Chinese soldier dead. Here, what I wanted to portray, was the deep personal betrayal and erosion of human qualities that war brings about.
- MG: Tell us something about AG, the translator?
- AG: Besides other journals and magazines my translations have been published in *Prativa India*, under the editorship of Sitesh Alok and Aruna Sitesh, who was then the Principal of I P College, New Delhi. I have translated works that have inspired me mostly both into and from English. I am very particular about what and how I translate and believe that apart from having mastery over both the source and target languages the translator must be very perceptive and be able to make things fall in place, to retain the harmony and music of the original. That is why I like to translate my own works as it gives me greater independence and precision.

As I walked away from the artistically kept house I carried in my heart the image of a sensitive man, a perfect host, a loving husband and father and a wonderful grandfather who is truly friend, philosopher and guide. \square

Awards & Honours Honours



Prafulla Gobinda Baruah while receiving the award posthumously on behalf of RG Baruah

- The Sahityarathi Laxminath Bezbaroa Award has been conferred to RG Baruah posthumously and to The Assam Tribune group of Newspapers for this year. The award was given on March 26, 2014.
- > The Sayed Abdul Malik Sahitya Bota was conferred to Shri Imran Shah, President of

Asam Sahitya Sabha and awardee of Assam Valley Literary Award, on March 9, 2014 at Amateur Theatre Hall, Golaghat.

- The Governor of Assam, JB Patnaik presented The first Mamoni Raisom Goswami (Dr. Indira Goswami) National Literature Award, 2014, to one of the most widely acclaimed writers in India, Mahashweta Devi on 2nd march at ITA Pragjyoti Cultural Complex, Machkhowa.
- The Padmanath Vidyabinod literary award and the Bhuparjatak (Globe-trotter) Ramnath Biswas literary award, instituted by the Ramanath Bhattachaya Foundation, Mumbai, were presented to Assamese poet Hirendra Nath Dutta and Bengali poet Swapan Sengupta of Tripura respectively at a function held at the Vivekananda Kendra on March,9.



Mahashweta Devi while receiving the award from the Governor of Assam



Readers' Paradise Jaipur Literary Festival 2014

First started in January, Jaipur Literary Festival, 2006, sees thousands of people flooding into the realm of literary world every year.

Srotoswini Sarma

s the awed traveller enters the intellectual realm of the Jaipur Literary Festival, one is humbled, manifold at the experience of watching and listening to the many literary and social personalities that grace the festival with their views of the world. First started in January, Jaipur Literary Festival, 2006, sees thousands of people flooding into the realm of literary world every year. Having been to the Literary Festival in 2013 and 2014, I must admit that I was absolutely spoilt for choice as to which talk to attend and which to skip.

Over the past two years, going to the Lit Fest has given me the opportunity to communicate with scholars of phenomenal repute – William Dalrymple, Reza Aslan, Gloria Steinem, Maaza Mengiste, Ashis Nandy, Jhumpa Lahiri – among many others who had come to the Festival. More importantly, it is their "different" ideas about society and history that one gets exposed to, and enriched by, in the discursive forums in Jaipur. For example, I had never thought of Jesus actually being a historical figure and not a divinely ordained deity. In his book, *Zealot: the Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, Reza Aslan goes back to the written history of first century Palestine to justify his argument and attributes Jesus with the character of one Jewish political revolutionary, leading the masses to revolt against the Roman siege of their land. Dalrymple, well-known and celebrated as he is in the literary world, has been over the years, an instrumental figure in the development and enhancement of the literary Fest; and is omnipresent in the workings of it, so much so, that you'd surprisedly bump into him at least once a day.

For the ardent bookworm, the Jaipur Lit Fest offers a chance to engage with the creators of the books that you love, and the characters that you adore, and the theories and ideas that you swear by; and also get signed copies of their works! By the end of the day, to counter the seriousness of the lectures in all the sessions, the venue transforms into a pleasurable garden-party thematically, where everyone gets together, with a little music and refreshments, to discuss the events of the day and to relax. In the evening, visitors flood over to Clarks', Amer, which is at a half-hour auto ride from the venue, for the musical show of the day. The objective is to cater to the interests of a diverse section of people by fusing together folk and mainstream traditions of music to an amalgamation of different-sounding rhythms, beats and tunes that captivate its audiences. Altogether, the experience of the Jaipur Lit Fest leaves an imprint of memorabilia upon its visitor, and you leave it with a sense of having learned and understood much more than you could in classroom dynamics or textbooks.









BookMark lends a different facelift to JLF 2014

s the publishing industry in India has seen a successive makeover in the last two decades, to think about publishers not being a part of JLF would have been a great blunder. To prove this true the amiable dialogue between JLF and many small and big publishing houses led to their participation in JLF this year. Vani Prakashan, DC Books, Niyogi and Yoda Press were among them.

Sanjoy Roy, the JLF organizer and Teamwork chief provided a unique platform named BookMark for interaction of authors and publishers. Jaipur BookMark mainly focused on new developments, formats and trends in publishing and how these have their impact in the grooming industry. Emphasising on the importance of 'regional languages', Roy said BookMark would be a stepping stone to promote the treasure trove of different regions through the medium of language penned by the local authors. BookMark is not necessarily about the written word', 'it is about freedom of expression and the idea of tomorrow.'

□

Bhabani Books' participation in New Delhi World Book Fair, 2014





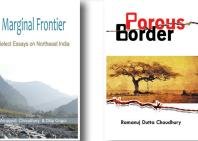


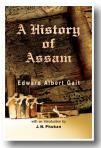


Gandhi

Guwahati Gaze

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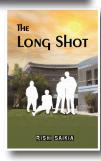




Our recent publications







A List of Our Books

The World of Assamese Folktales
Sanjeev Kr Nath, ₹ 175, PB
Situating Assamese Middle Class: The
Colonial Period
Dr. Ramesh Chandra Kalita, ₹ 250, PB
A Descriptive Account of Assam
William Robinson, ₹ 590, HB
Secret Killings of Assam
Mrinal Talukdar, Utpal Borpujari,
Kaushik Deka, ₹ 200, PB
Literature and Society in Assam
Tilottoma Misra, ₹ 250, PB

Gandhi and Truth
Joy Kachapapilly, ₹ 200, PB
The Final Hour
Deepika Phukan, ₹ 250, PB
Abortions in the Land of Ahimsa
Biju Michael, ₹ 375, PB
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