



Mapping the Literary Landscape of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract— *This paper explores the journey of the literary evolution of Arunachal Pradesh from oral to text, tracing its development through significant socio-cultural and political changes from the mid-20th century to the present. Using a combination of historical analysis, personal interviews with prominent writers, and literary theories, particularly postcolonial theory, this paper chronicles the literary history of Arunachal Pradesh into three phases, providing a comprehensive understanding of its origin and development. This paper also examines the contributions of notable writers such as Lummer Dai, Yeshi Dorjee Thongchi, Mamang Dai, and Taro Sindik in shaping the literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, this study highlights the unique literary expression of Arunachal Pradesh and the journey of its literary evolution.*

Keywords— *Arunachal Pradesh, literary history, Arunachali writers*



I. INTRODUCTION

Perched on the periphery of the northeastern frontier region of India, Arunachal Pradesh is a mosaic of various tribes, cultures, traditions, languages, and faiths. Every tribe possesses a distinct language, belief system, mythology, legends, practices, folklore, worldview, philosophy, and customs that also dictate the literary expression of the region. Until the advent of modern education, orality was the prime source for maintaining cultural history, memories concerning migration, myths, and legends of the non-script tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. These generational-old tales were passed down orally and remained a significant source of inspiration for Arunachali writers.

The transition from oral to written literature in Arunachal Pradesh began with the advent of modern education and the influence of the socio-political evolution in the region. After 1947, the region witnessed material development under a free Indian Government. Exposure to education and rapid growth in literacy rate led first-educated generations to initiate a writing culture in the region. Since then, Arunachali writers have voiced the minds and emotions of their land and people through diverse genres and themes.

Modern Literature of Arunachal Pradesh speaks volumes about the rich and diverse culture of the region as well as the prevailing complexities of the present times. Writers such as Yeshi Dorjee Thongchi, Mamang Dai, and

Taro Sindik, who receive accolades and awards, testify to the unique literary expression and perspective that Arunachali literature brings to the broader Indian literary landscape.

The literary evolution of Arunachal Pradesh is marked by a profound transformation from oral traditions to vibrant written literature. This transition is best understood by examining it in three distinct phases, each reflecting the dynamic interplay of culture, language, and socio-political influences. The initial phase, spanning from 1947 to 1972, is characterised by the prevalence of oral traditions and the nascent stages of written literature influenced by the Assamese language and literature. The second phase, from 1972 to 1990, witnessed a literary hiatus due to linguistic transitions, political restructuring, and the emergence of consciousness among the Arunachalis to preserve the indigenous language and culture in the face of the growing threat of globalisation and modernisation. The contemporary phase, i.e. from 1990 to the present, reveals a flourishing literary scene with writers exploring diverse themes and genres and integrating elements of oral literature to bring attention to the prevailing issues and anxiety of the region.

Therefore, the present paper is an attempt by the researcher to cover the literary journey of Arunachal Pradesh, describing the transition from oral tradition to the current literary state. Looking at the socio-political

influence and historical landmark events that have shaped Arunachali literature, this paper aims to provide an understanding of the historical evolution of literature in Arunachal Pradesh.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology combines historical analysis of significant socio-cultural and political events that shaped the literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh. Personal interviews with prominent Arunachali writers were conducted using semi-structured interview schedules. In addition, literary theory, specifically postcolonial theory, has been applied to explore how colonial and postcolonial dynamics shaped the literary output of the region. By examining archival materials, historical documents, literary texts, and firsthand accounts from writers, the researcher traced the socio-political contexts that influenced literary growth in Arunachal Pradesh and the impact of modernisation and globalisation on its literature.

Personal interviews with the writers provided invaluable insights into their creative journey, inspirations, and the challenges they faced. These interviews enrich understanding of how individual experiences and cultural contexts shape literary works.

The application of postcolonial theory analysed how Arunachali Literature navigates issues of identity, cultural preservation, and resistance to socio-cultural hegemonies. This theoretical framework helps to understand how Arunachali writers assert their cultural distinctiveness while engaging with broader literary traditions. By highlighting the contributions of vital literary figures, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution and current state of literature in Arunachal Pradesh.

III. THE FIRST PHASE (1947-1972)

Arunachal Pradesh, a mountainous region, has been in oblivion for centuries. The colonial intrusion disrupted the region from its oblivion. The intentions behind the intrusion of the British Raj in the region were to exercise their economic interest in tea plantations and coal mining and to fulfil their missionary zeal. During the administrative control of the British Raj, no significant attempts were made to uplift the region. Therefore, the region was shrouded in darkness and plagued by illiteracy and ignorance for a long time. As soon as the Indian government became independent, it became a vision to reinforce and consolidate national unity. In this regard, the government realised the need to uplift the tribal communities of the Northeast frontier, particularly Arunachal Pradesh. Since the region

was located within international borders, it was necessary to foster development in this region.

The late Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was sensitive to his treatment of tribal communities, who had profound roots in their culture and relations with the land. Nehru adopted the 'Five Principles of Panchsheel,' which was the policy of non-interference with the indigenous people's mode of development and practices. This approach essentially helped preserve the tribal culture, faith, and tradition, allowing development to follow without disrupting the natural balance of tribal communities.

From 1947 to 1957, Arunachal Pradesh was under the administrative control of the Governor of Assam. During this period, the region was divided into three administrative tracts: Balipara, Sadiya, and Tirap Frontier Tracts. This era marked the introduction of formal education in the region. Prior to Indian Independence, only a few privately initiated schools existed in what is now the East Siang, West Siang, and Upper Siang Districts of NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency).

After 1947, the Government of India made significant efforts to establish new schools and strengthen the existing educational infrastructure. These efforts have led to a substantial expansion in the educational sector. Educational institutions grew considerably, culminating in the establishment of the first college, Jawaharlal Nehru College, at Pasighat in 1964. Further, development in the educational field was marked by the establishment of the first university in the State, Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly known as Arunachal University), in Doimukh in 1984.

As education began to thrive in the region, a significant challenge arose for the administration of choosing a common language as the medium of instruction. Arunachal Pradesh, known for its diverse tribes and many languages, lacked an established script for its indigenous tongues, further complicating this issue. Consequently, finding a suitable common language to serve as a medium of instruction in schools has become a demanding concern. Since Arunachal was part of the province of Assam, the NEFA administration, in its early stages, chose to adopt Assamese as the medium of instruction in schools.

Educational exposure initiated literary activities among first-generation school children. Educational opportunities foster creative thinking and expression among school children. They began to create their own literary works after being exposed to the Assamese language and literature. The young school children started with trivial writings: articles, poems, short stories, and essays related to different topics of Arunachal Pradesh. They also compiled folktales of their respective tribes in the Assamese language for handwritten school magazines circulated in schools in

Pasighat, Tezu, and Bomdila. Lummer Dai began his literary pursuit by writing for the school magazine *Giribani*, which circulated in Pasighat Higher Secondary School in the early sixties. He wrote his first article, "Aboror Hru Nuhuche Kyu?" in the Assamese language for *Giribani Magazine*. *Giribani* was the first school magazine to appear in the literary sphere of Arunachal Pradesh. Tagang Taki edited the magazine along with Bormoti Dai, the sub-editor.

The creative artistic zeal of these young children was further nourished by the guidance and encouragement of their teachers from Assam, who were serving in the schools of Arunachal Pradesh during those days. These young school students began writing in Assamese, and their writings were published in newspapers and magazines from Assam. The editors published their pieces and sent copies to them, fueling their motivation to write more. Assamese periodicals and magazines, such as *Deepak*, *Junbai*, *Ramdhenu*, and *Rudali*, available in the library, also served as significant sources of inspiration. In an interview with Tagang Taki on 25th Oct. 2017, he shared that while studying in Pasighat between 1952 and 1959, he sent his trivial write-ups, such as articles, folktales, and letters, to the editor of the Assamese political newspaper *The Socialist*. Fortunately, some of his works were published, which boosted his confidence in his literary pursuits. While studying at Cotton College in 1966 and at Guwahati University, he continued his writings and published them in Assamese magazines and newspapers, including *Navajug*, *Ramdhenu*, *Natun Asomia*, *Assam Bani*, *Deepak* and *Janambhumi*.

Later, when the first batch of educated young generations, such as Lummer Dai and Yeschi Dorjee Tongchi, went to Assam for higher studies, they got the opportunity to associate with the prime luminaries of Assamese literature, such as Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Giridhar Sharma, Hemanta Kumar Sharma, Jogesh Das, and Durgeshwar Sharma, which inspired their creative fervours. This association was fruitful. Lummer Dai, while studying at Cotton College, Guwahati, came into contact with the eminent Assamese literary figure Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya. This association inspired him to publish his short stories for leading Assamese literary magazines from those days, such as *Jonbai*, *Deepak*, *Ramdhenu*, *Navayug*, etc.

3.1 Play

Writers began their literary ventures by entering the realm of Play, seemingly the most complex of all literary genres. During those days, Play was a prevalent genre among writers. Presumably, this is because there was no other option for entertainment than plays, so people liked to read and watch plays on stage. Taging Taki wrote *Simantor Jui* (1962). The Play is based on the 1962 Indo-China War. He

wrote and directed another play, *Prashadopsaran* (1966-67). Tagang Taki also experimented with transliteration using the Assamese script to write plays in the Adi language. Between 1964 and 1965, he wrote a few more Plays, such as *Poribona Babul*, *Adi Biyakagan*, and *Gomung Bell*. He also wrote an unpublished play, *Kani Tina Abu*, to be staged in Aalo in 1964. This Play raises the social issue of opium addiction.

Rinchin Norbu Mosobi, a writer from the Sherdukpen tribe, and Samuru Lunchang, a writer from the Tangsa tribe, produced significant plays. However, the works of both writers are unavailable for literary enthusiasts. In an interview on 7th Nov. 2017, Y.D. Thongchi explained the unavailability of their works (quoting verbatim), "*In those days, people had no idea to preserve their works.*" He added that many manuscripts were lost when the Director of Education was relocated from Shillong to Itanagar.

Yeschi Dorjee Thongchi, in the early stage of his literary career, also penned a few plays, such as *Simantar Debanal* (Fire at the Border). Unfortunately, he does not recall the titles of his other plays, as he no longer possesses copies of his early works. Yeschi Dorjee Thongchi mentioned that *Simantor Debanal* notably represented Arunachal Pradesh during the National Drama Festival in Bangalore. Despite this success, Thongchi withdrew from writing plays after his two plays. Thongchi reasoned in an interview on 7th Nov. 2017 that during his stay at Cotton College Guwahati for his higher studies, he came across the works of famous Assamese dramatists such as Monirul Hussain. When introduced to a new innovative style and format for writing plays, Thongchi felt he did not possess enough calibration to write plays. Thus, he switched to writing short stories and novels.

It should be noted that the dramas produced in the initial stage often revolved around the themes of the Indo-China conflict of 1962. However, it is more accurate to conclude that drama did not become a widespread or fully developed literary form during this period. On the other hand, folktales emerged as a significant source of literary inspiration. Folktales, a primary part of the oral tradition of tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh, were documented and given a new life by writers of this era. In Assamese, folktales are term as "Hadhu" or "Sadhu."

3.2 Folktales

In the absence of writing culture, the non-script tribal of Arunachal Pradesh owns rich oral literature. Folktales, a significant form of oral literature, are integral to their culture. With this newfound way of literary expression, first-generation writers begin their literary endeavours by compiling folktales. They began to write folktales of their respective tribes, which served as a rich foundation for

literary exploration. It offered them a wealth of themes, characters, and motifs that writers later reinterpreted and expanded on in their fiction and poetry.

Kensam Kenglam compiled the folktales of the Tangsa tribe titled *Tangsa Jonjatiyor Hadhu*. The National Book Trust of India published this book. He also published a few folktales in Assamese children's magazines, establishing him as a children's author. Kensam Kenglam was honoured posthumously with the Sahitya Surya Lummer Dai Award in 2013 for his literary contributions.

Rinchin Norbu Mosobi belongs to the Sherdukpen community also compiled the folktales of his tribe under the title *Sherdukpen Hadhu*.

Tagang Taki was the first postgraduate student in the Minyong community (sub-tribe of the Adi community). Being the first person with such immense qualifications, he felt responsible for working to uplift his community. He devoted himself to developing and preserving Adi language and literature. He bore the responsibility for systematising Aabang. Aabang can be described as the oral literature of the Adi tribe, which comprises folktales, myths, legends, and shamanic chants that shape the belief system, practices, philosophy, wisdom, and worldview of the Adi community of Arunachal Pradesh. Taki arranged it systematically to make it accessible to readers. He compiled Aabang in a book, *Adi Sadhu*, published in 1964.

To promote the literature of his community, Lummer Dai also compiled a book on Adi folktales titled *Udayashalar Sadhu* while studying at the Pasihat Higher Secondary School. This book was published in 1959 by Assam Sahitya Sabha. The recognition of such a prestigious organisation encouraged him to continue his literary pursuits.

During the mid-seventies, Assam Sahitya Sabha embarked on a project to publish the folktales of the tribes from Assam and its neighbouring states. For this project, the General Secretary of the Assam Sahitya Sabha Hemanta Kumar Sharma asked Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi to compile a book on folktales from Arunachal Pradesh. Then Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi compiled a folktale, *Kameng Simantor Sadhu*, in 1976, published by Assam Sahitya Sabha.

3.3 Novel

During this phase, writing fiction began to make significant strides. Lummer Dai published his first novel, *Pharar Xile Xile* (1961), which the Assam Board of Publication published. The publication of *Phar Xile Xile* is a landmark event in the literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh. It was the first novel by an Indigenous writer of Arunachal Pradesh, which made Dai the first novelist from Arunachal Pradesh. With this publication, Dai became a well-known name in Assamese Literature and a source of inspiration for many writers in Arunachal Pradesh. Throughout his literary

career, Dai authored five novels: *Pharar Xile Xile* (1961), *Pritivir Hanhi* (1963), *Mon Aru Mon* (1968), *Kanyar Mulya* (1978), *Upar Mahal* (2002). The novel *Pritivir Hanhi* established Dai as a prominent figure in Assamese Literature. Dai's novel vividly portrays tribal cultural life and the society in which he was born and raised. His fictional characters were not merely products of creative imagination but a depiction of flesh-and-blood individuals. His works are an authentic representation of the cultural life of the Arunachali people.

3.4 Poetry

In this phase, there was also a burgeoning interest in poetry. Y.D. Thongchi published his first poem, "Jonbai," in 1967 in an Assamese children's magazine, which had the same title, *Jonbai* as of the poem. He also wrote poems on patriotic themes which were published in the Assamese children's magazine *Deepak*. Among first-generation writers, only Thongchi endeavoured to write poetry. However, his poetic endeavours were short-lived because of the emergence of a new trend in Assamese poetry led by renowned poets, such as Mukto Chando, Nilamoni Phukan, Nabakanta Baruah, and Bhaben Boruah. Unable to adapt to new styles and techniques, Thongchi withdrew from writing poetry. Despite this, his poems paved the way for his literary followers in Arunachal Pradesh the possibilities to explore the genre of poetry.

The most remarkable event in this phase was the emergence of composition lyrics and modern songs in indigenous languages. The composition of the lyrics began before poetry appeared. Taluk Tasing and M. Jamoh were the first to translate Assamese songs into Adi. Jamoh translated Assamese Jatiya Sangeet "*O Mur Apunar Desh*," a famous song from those days, into Adi.

Tagang Taki was a writer, lyricist, and music composer. It was a time when Arunachal Pradesh, as a young political unit of India, was on its way to a socio-political transition to grow and develop towards a better future. To motivate and encourage his people, Tagang Taki composed a song, "*Mimum Yaame Noluwa banbo Nyamne noluwa, lenla kaju aoe nobong torpene*" (O energetic youths, come out, you are the sons that should be working hard for society) to exhale patriotic feelings among the Arunachalis. It was the first modern Arunachali song recorded on an All-India Radio Shillong in 1963. In the same year, Mrs Nani Dai (wife of Lummer Dai) also recorded a song, "*Esing-eme yaying-yage..motelo ngoluke dolung...*" (The beautiful place afar in green and yellow woods is our village) in the Adi language. The trend of writing lyrics and song composition has been taken to the next level by lyricists, such as Duri Taipodia and Henkar Rokom Bado in Arunachal Pradesh.

Although Arunachal Pradesh was one of the later entrants in the literary sphere compared to other Northeastern states, its inaugural steps in the field of literature were nonetheless impressive. In its initial phase, writers looked into different genres and forms of literature, including plays, poems, fiction, essays, articles, and short stories. However, it should be noted that female writers were absent in this phase. This may be because the attitudes of tribal parents towards girls' education were not very encouraging during those days. They were more of unconcerned about providing educational opportunities to female child compared to male child.

IV. THE SECOND PHASE (1972 – 1990)

The second phase covers the period from 1972, when Arunachal Pradesh became a union territory, to the attainment of the status of full-fledged statehood.

The region was transformed into the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) from the North East Frontier Tract (NEFT) in 1954. The administration control was then under the Governor of Assam, and its administrative headquarters was located in Shillong. By 1972, the NEFA became an Indian Union territory and was renamed Arunachal Pradesh. In 1974, the administrative headquarters moved from Shillong to present-day Itanagar. On 20th Feb. 1987, Arunachal Pradesh was declared a fully-fledged state of the Indian Union. During this period, Arunachal Pradesh underwent significant socio-political changes, which impacted its language and literature.

4.1 Period of Literary Hiatus

Developments in education and increased literacy have made the tribal people realise that proficiency in English and Hindi would enable them to access more opportunities in jobs and other establishments. As a result, during the second phase, Arunachali began to demand the replacement of Assamese and introduced Hindi and English as mediums for instruction in the schools. Consequently, the use of Assamese as a medium of instruction in schools was abolished replaced by English and Hindi under the language policy 1972 in Arunachal Pradesh. In addition, political dynamics also played a significant role in this language shift. In the article "Crossing Linguistic Boundaries: Two Arunachali Writers in Search of Readers" (2007), Tillotoma Mishra cited that the promotion of Hindi in the region since 1956 is a result of identity assertion and a major political decision by the Indian government after independence to integrate the region through language. Mishra states that the main reason for integrating the region with mainland India instead of Assam was the threat of a Chinese attack in the late 1950s. The policy aimed at quicker and more effective "integration" of tribals into the Indian "mainstream", which led to the vigorous promotion of Hindi in NEFA.

After adopting English and Hindi as a medium of instruction in schools, there was a gradual decline in reliance on the Assamese language. The newly introduced language made people distant from the Assamese language; language once held a substantial place as a means of communication, and a language of literary expression lost its significance from the mind and heart of the NEFA frontier. Writers writing in Assamese found their audience to shrink, and their works were challenging for the local population to comprehend, who were now more proximate to Hindi and English. This shift led to a decline in the reach and influence of Assamese Literature in Arunachal Pradesh.

Language and literature share a dynamic relationship. Thus, the language shift prompted a literary hiatus during this phase. The situation was like a literary drought, particularly in creative writing in Assamese. The emerging young writers who were more fluent in Assamese discontinued their writing endeavours.

Until the region was part of Assam, the writers found sincere support from the editors and litterateurs from Assam, who considered them a part of their community. They encouraged and supported them in their literary pursuits. However, the North-Eastern Areas (reorganisation) Act of 1971 separated the NEFA from Assam. This Act established the NEFA as a Union Territory in 1972 and renamed it Arunachal Pradesh. This separation further weakened the once cherished bond between the people of the hills and plains, severely impacting the growing literary field.

The literary encouragement the writers once drew from the association of Assamese literary bodies dwindled. The language that once united the people of the hills and plains lost significance. The writers, who primarily wrote in Assamese, struggled with English and Hindi. Moreover, even if they managed to write, no platforms were to publish their work. Unlike opportunities available in the Assamese literary platform, there were no accessible literary platforms in English and Hindi where they could publish their works. The popular magazines of those days from the mainland were inaccessible and rarely featured works from the writers of Arunachal Pradesh, as the region remained unfamiliar to them.

After publishing *Konyar Mulya* in 1975, Lummer Dai, who had by then become an acclaimed Assamese writer, decided to withdraw from the writing. Fearing that future generations educated in English and Hindi would be unable to read the language he writes, he expressed concern that there would be no audience for his works in Arunachal Pradesh for whom he writes.

In an interview with Tagang Taki on 25th Oct. 2017, he shared his experience about the uncertainty writers writing in the Assamese language faced in this phase. Taki

compiled a collection of Adi folk stories, *Nibo Aru Robor Sadhu*, in Assamese between 1965 and 1967. When he submitted it for publication to the Director of Education in Shillong, it was rejected because the book was written in Assamese language, a language that was no longer widely used or read by the people of Arunachal Pradesh. However, in 1998, Taki managed to publish the book after three decades of struggle.

The abolition of Assamese as a medium of instruction in schools in 1972 severely impacted literary production in the Assamese language. The authors faced uncertainty regarding their readership, as the new generation was more inclined towards learning the English and Hindi languages taught in schools than Assamese. Despite this challenge, writing in Assamese continued with writers such as Yeshi Dorjee Thongchi, Kaling Borang, and Maliyang Perme. However, in the second phase, the literary sphere of Arunachal Pradesh did not flourish as much as it did in the first phase.

4.2 Novel

Despite the challenges of language and readership, only Yeshi Dorjee Thongchi, among those writing in Assamese in Arunachal Pradesh, continued the literary endeavour in this phase. Thongchi's most critically acclaimed novels, *Sonam*, *Lingjehik* and *Mon Ounth Mukhar Hriday*, were written during this period. Although he wrote in a distant language, the setting of his novels was on the backdrop of Arunachal Pradesh.

Thongchi's famous novel *Mon Ounth Mukhar Hriday* was written in 1989-90. It first appeared in episodes in *Prantik*, an influential Assamese magazine in the early '90s edited by highly respected Dr. Bhabendranath Saikia. Despite being published in such a prominent literary magazine, the novel initially struggled to find a publisher, not due to its quality but because it was written in Assamese. Thongchi approached many publishers, but all of them rejected it. However, the novel was eventually published in 2004 and translated into English. The difficulty in publishing his work discouraged the literary zeal of Yeshi Dorjee Thongchi. After the first publication of the novel *Mon Ounth Mukhar Hriday* in *Prantik*, Thongchi took a long break from his writing career for almost 20 years. In an interview on 18th Mar. 2018, Thongchi expressed regret for not writing for such a long time, as he believed he could have produced more work if he had continued writing.

4.3 Development of Indigenous Language and Literature

By the early 1970s, Arunachal Pradesh had attained the status of Union Territory. This milestone was followed by a full-fledged statehood in 1987, significantly contributing to the overall development of the region. The development in all spheres has created an avenue for interaction with other

cultures and faiths. However, developments and cultural interaction have brought new challenges. The influence of foreign cultures and religions posed a severe threat to the culture and traditions of the indigenous people, with indigenous languages and oral literature at risk of fading from the memory of the young generation.

R.N. Koley, in the article, "A commentary on socio-religious movement in Arunachal Pradesh" notes that after independence and with the spread of education, the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh began interacting with the outside world and other societies. This exposure prompted them to explore various aspects of life, leading to psychological pressure from new influences. This situation could lead to frustration and feelings of inferiority, making tribals vulnerable to abandoning their own faiths in favour of those from other groups. Fortunately, the administration focused on respecting and preserving tribal traditions and promoting their oral literature. This support helped the tribes to maintain confidence and pride in their own cultural heritage. In addition to administrative efforts, influential intellectuals and writers also played a crucial role in the cultural reinforcement.

This situation fostered a renewed sense of preserving the culture and, therefore, the identity of the people and land. Intellectuals and social activists were committed to preserving their culture and traditions. Consequently, this era witnessed the emergence of numerous anthropological writers who dedicated themselves to documenting the cultural history of Arunachal Pradesh. Notable among these writers are Dr. N. N. Osik, Oshong Ering, Bani Daggen, Tumpak Ete, Arak Megu, Takeh Kani, T. T. Tara, Gyati Rana, L. Khimhur, and many others. Even established first-generation writers began focusing on anthropological subjects and began to write in English to reach a broader range of audience.

The zeal to preserve the culture, which was in a vulnerable state of diminishing, led to the formation of various organisations aimed at this cause. The Adi community of Pasighat played a leading role in this endeavour to preserve and develop indigenous languages and literature. Under the guidance of the Talom Rukbo, several organisations, such as the Adi Cultural and Literary Society and, Adi Agom Kebang, emerged with a shared vision to preserve and promote Adi culture and language. As noted by Green Tamuli, "These organisations have been devoted to documenting, preserving, and promoting Adi culture and literature. Notable among them are the Adi Cultural and Literary Society (1978), Adi Agom Kebang (1982), and the Dr. Verrier Elwin Institute of Aabang Research" (2011, pp. 52-61).

These organisations published books and magazines featuring poems, short stories, critical essays,

and folklore in the Adi language using Roman Script, marking the beginning of creative writing in the indigenous language of Arunachal Pradesh.

The festival souvenirs were published as books to preserve and promote the cultural heritage associated with the tribes. The publication of Solung Souvenir began as an annual event where intellectuals from the Adi community published their creative works. They wrote not merely out of desire but out of necessity to preserve their culture through writing.

In those days, no other platforms, such as newspapers and magazines in English, Hindi or any other languages, were available in Arunachal Pradesh, where these writers could publish their writings. For passionate writers who wrote to preserve and promote cultural heritage, festival souvenirs were the only source where they could get an opportunity to publish in a year. Since 1980, many began writing for the festival souvenir, marking a resurgence of creative writing after a long hiatus. During this period, creative writings, such as poems or short stories, were primarily published in the festival souvenir.

The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act of 1978 was enacted to protect, preserve, and promote indigenous cultural identities and faiths. As a result, Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang was founded under the leadership of Talom Rukbo in 1986. This organisation played a crucial role in documenting the oral literature of the Adi community and publishing it in book form.

Rukbo significantly contributed to its growth and preservation by writing plays and poetry in the Adi language using Roman script. He authored a play, *Kari Toro*, in Adi, using the Roman script. The Adi Cultural and Literary Society published his plays. Rukbo also wrote a collection of poems to broadcast on All India Radio Pasighat for a Radio program. In 1996, Dr. Verrier Elwin Aabang Research Institute compiled and published this collection of poems in book form under the title *Baali Apun*. Rukbo's contributions extend to the composition of numerous hymns. Hence, the credit for pioneering the trend of creative writing in indigenous languages goes to Talom Rukbo, a visionary social thinker. He played a leading role in developing the Adi language and literature. The Adi Literary Society honours Talom Rukbo as the 'Father of Adi Literature,' recognising his invaluable contributions and lasting impact on the cultural and literary heritage of the Adi community.

4.4 Appearance of Writings in Hindi

During this period, intriguing developments occurred. This phase led to the emergence of creative writing in Hindi. In 1972, a Hindi magazine, *Tangpu*, was introduced in Logum Jini, a small village in the West Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. The magazine was edited by Dr. Raman Shandilya,

a teacher from Bihar who served in Arunachal Pradesh. The magazine was printed in Patna. The contents included short stories, poems, lyrics, and shamanic chants in the Hindi and Galo languages (using Devanagari Scripts). Ligin Bomjen, Tadak Gara, and Taken Pakam contributed richly to the magazine. However, the magazine breathed for only nine months. The lack of financial support and the hardship of getting it printed from a distant place such as Patna in those days was a real challenge. Though *Tangpu* was short-lived, it may be considered the initial literary endeavour in the Hindi language of Arunachal Pradesh.

Jumsi Siram carried forward the spirit of Hindi writing at a later stage, emerging as a pioneer of Hindi literature in Arunachal Pradesh. He belongs to the first generation of Hindi speakers of Arunachal Pradesh and has played a crucial role in shaping its literary landscape. Siram began his literary journey with modest contributions, such as writing personal letters to the editor of the popular Hindi film magazine *Madhuri*. In 1993, he published his debut novel *Ayu-Aluk*, which established him as a leading figure in the Hindi literary scene of Arunachal Pradesh. Since then, he has authored numerous poems, articles, and novels. Siram credits his teacher, Dr. Raman Shandilya, for providing encouragement and guidance during the early days of his literary career.

Before Siram, Wangsam Zongsam made a maiden attempt to write in Hindi. He composed a patriotic poem titled "Ek Akash, Doh Desh," which he recited at a function in Anini in 1971 to pay tribute to the martyrs of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. While Zongsam's effort did not lead to a significant literary contribution, it stands as an early effort of Hindi writing in Arunachal Pradesh.

This phase also marked a significant development in scriptwriting for movies in the Hindi language, particularly with the contribution of Nabam Tata. While Tata was a student of class ix, he wrote a play to be performed at the All-Arunachal Pradesh Drama Competition, an inter-district event held in 1974. The Play gained immense popularity, catching the attention of notable figures such as Debakanta Barua and Sanjay Gandhi, who happened to be in Arunachal Pradesh. They recommended adaptation to feature films. Dr. Bhupen Hazarika accepted the task of transforming the Play into a movie. The movie was released in 1976 with the title "Meri Maa Meri Dharam," which was considered the first movie of Arunachal Pradesh.

V. THE THIRD PHASE (1990 TO TILL DATE)

The third phase encompasses the period after Arunachal Pradesh attained full-fledged statehood to the present day. The attainment of statehood brought political stability and economic growth to Arunachal Pradesh, amplifying its

ongoing socio-cultural transitions. These transitions have rapidly increased the process of urbanisation, cultural integration, and literacy rates, all of which have contributed to changing mindset and lifestyle of Arunachalis.

The spread of global cultural values and practices has introduced a mass media culture in the region. Lummer Dai started the first newspaper in the state *Echo of Arunachal*, which was established in 1988, followed by the *High Land Observer*, which was later renamed as *Arunachal Times* and a few others, such as *Arunachal Front*, *Independent Review* and so on.

Tajing Taki, then the editor of *Highland Observer*, and Pradeep Kumar Behera, the editor of *Arunachal Times*, provided literary space in their dailies to budding writers. Such opportunities boasted the confidence of novice writers in their literary pursuits. Yumlam Tana, who is now a well-known writer then as a novice, published his first short story, "The Car Monument" in *Highland Observer* in 1995. Since then, he regularly published his short stories and political cartoons in the *Highland Observer* until it was renamed the *Arunachal Times*. Pekba Ringu wrote a series of romantic love stories, "An Arunachali Love Story" (2010), "A NEFA Romantic Story" (2011) and "A Unique NEFA Story" (2012), which appeared in the 'Spark Column' of *Arunachal Times* in episodes.

While modernisation and development have brought about significant progress and improved socio-economic conditions, they have also brought about undesirable experiences in the region. The traditional culture of Arunachal Pradesh faces significant challenges as it confronts the forces of modernisation and urbanisation. The encroachment of modernity disrupted and disintegrated the traditional ways of life, disrupting the socio-cultural equilibrium and degrading nature, tribal morals, and values.

In recent years, globalisation has created new opportunities for exploration and growth. People have increasingly moved across the country, seeking higher education and employment. However, this expanded exposure has also brought back painful experiences of racial and cultural discrimination, often from own fellow citizens. A stark example is the case of Higio Gungte, a student at Christ College in Bangalore from Arunachal Pradesh, who was brutally assaulted by his landlord and forced to lick his shoe. Another tragic incident involved Nido Tania, a 20-year-old student from Arunachal Pradesh, who was murdered in Delhi's Lajpat Nagar on 29th Jan., 2014, all because of racism.

A close analysis of the situation revealed that the lack of representation in broader political scenarios and silence in historical narratives for a long time, combined with geographical challenges, created a sense of apathy between the region and the rest of the country. This apathy

results in the mainstream population often failing to understand or appreciate the distinct cultural identities and customs of the people of this side of the country. This bitter experience of racial and cultural discrimination, stereotyping from their compatriots and the other issues of urbanised tribals prompt intellectuals and writers to reflect on their culture and history. These experiences gave birth to a group of writers who may be called second-generation writers in the literary sphere of Arunachal Pradesh. Their approach, writing style and language depart from those writers of the previous generation. Educated in English and Hindi mediums and growing up in the global world, second-generation writers draw inspiration from oral literature and follow Western writers as their models. Writers such as Mamang, Dai, Yumlam Tana, Taro Sindik, Jamuna Bini, Joram Yalam, and Gumlat Maio used cultural history, memories of migration, colonial past, myths, and legends with modern genres to portray the minds and emotions of their people.

Through her fiction and poetry, Mamang Dai seeks to revive the unwritten history of her homeland. In her fiction, she blends fact and imagination to reclaim colonial and pre-colonial historical narratives left unrecorded and untouched in the sand of time. Her novels *Legends of Pensam* (2006), *The Blak Hills* (2014), *Escaping the Land* (2021) and anthologies of poetry *The River Song* (2004), *Midsummer Survival Lyric* (2014), and *The White Shirts of Summer* (2023), vividly present the worldview, philosophy, faith, beliefs, values, and morals of the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Dai's contributions have been widely recognised. She has been honoured with the prestigious Padma Shri 2011 and Sahitya Akademi Award 2017 for her contribution to the literature. These accolades not only affirm her extraordinary talent as a writer but also highlight the literary perspective of Arunachal Pradesh.

To respond to the crises of time, writers have effectively captured the mindset and challenges of the contemporary generation, who find themselves in a constant conflict between tradition and modernity. Yumlam Tana, in his anthologies of *Man and the Tiger* (1999) and *The Wind Also Sings* (2015), explores the significant transformations that have occurred since 1947, focusing on the effects of urban expansion on tribal societies in his poetry. His work highlights how the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh navigate the complexities of maintaining cultural heritage while adapting to modern urban environments. Through his poems, Tana addresses the issues of indigenous identity, focusing mainly on the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh and, more broadly, on the identity of the tribes of Northeast India. He writes:

"The book of maps
Says nothing about our lands and forest right"

(Extract from the poem "A Dirge from the North-East," *The Wind Also Sings*, 2015)

Tana shares a common purpose with many other poets and writers from Northeast India, who have used their art to amplify the voices of marginalised tribal communities of the Northeast. Tana strives to bring attention to the unique cultural, social, and political issues that prevail in regions, ensuring that the stories and struggles of these often-overlooked communities are heard and recognised on a broader scale.

Here, it is noted that the first notable work of writing in English by an Arunachali writer is Yumlam Tana's *Man and the Tiger*, published by the Writers Forum, Ranchi, in 1999. Followed by Mamang Dai's debut novel, *The Legends of Pensam*, in 2006, published by the esteemed publishing house Penguin Books India. These publications marked a significant milestone in the literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh. Yumlam Tana and Mamang Dai inspired many aspiring writers in Arunachal Pradesh, fostering a passion for creative writing in English.

Meanwhile, the socio-cultural transition and increasing literacy rates among girls have also influenced gender roles in tribal society. This shift has led to the rise of prominent female writers, with Mamang Dai being the most celebrated poet and novelist. Her literary contributions have paved the way for other women writers, such as Jamuna Bini, Joram Yalam, Ponung Ering Angu, and others who continue to make their mark in the literary world.

Significant progress has also been made in creative writing in the Hindi language, mainly driven by the efforts of vibrant writers such as Joram Yalam, Jamuna Bini, Taro Sindik, Tai Tagung, and others. Taro Sindik received the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2017 for his first poetry collection, *Aksharo ki Vinti*. This recognition underscores the significant contributions of Arunachali writers in Hindi literature.

Following the footsteps of Mamang Dai, writers such as Jamuna Bini and Joram Yalam, two prominent literary figures in the Hindi language of Arunachal Pradesh, also profoundly explored the cultural history of their respective tribes. Joram Yalam critically reinterprets the myth of Abo Tani in her short stories, *Tani Momen* (2014) and in the novel *Wild Flower* (2020). In *Shakshi Hai Peeples* (2013) and *Gay-Geka Ki Auratein* (2023) Yalam sheds light on the cultural life of the Nyishi tribe.

Jamuna Bini's anthology of folktales, *Oii Mokh* (2020), is a projection of the culture, faith, and belief of the Nyishi community through folk stories. *Ayachit Athithi Tatha Anya Kahaniya* (2021), a collection of short stories, and *Jab Adivasi Gatah Hai* (2021), an anthology of poetry, explore the challenges that tribal communities of Arunachal

Pradesh are dealing with because of the intervention of modernisation and the global culture.

The trend of scriptwriting in the Hindi language, initiated by Nabam Tata in the late 70s, is now being carried forward by the young and talented playwright, poet, and actor Tai Tagung. Tagung, while studying in Delhi, away from his native land, realised that his own country's fellowmen looked at him differently because of his cultural background and distinct appearance. Despite being in his own country, the cultural differences alienated him. This struggle for identity and the desire to quest for identity inspired him to write a play in Arunachali Hindi *Lapiya* to assert the identity of the Arunachalis. The language employed in play has drawn significant attention from academics, linguists, and scholars on the Hindi spoken in Arunachal Pradesh. Linguists are intrigued by the unique form of Hindi spoken in Arunachal Pradesh.

In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O states that one of the functions of language is that it is a carrier of culture. Language communicates culture, which creates an identity of a culture. The quest for identity has led some social scientists and linguists to make passionate and devoted efforts to developing scripts for Arunachali languages. Tony Koyu, a social scientist, linguist, and author, was determined to develop a writing system in Arunachal Pradesh developed the Tani Lipi script. Before Tani Lipi, many organisations concerned with language and literature attempted to devise scripts by modifying Roman scripts. Since the language of Arunachal Pradesh is tonal-based, most scripts developed by modifying Roman script cannot adequately represent the peculiar sounds and pronunciations of indigenous languages. The Tani Lipi script, independent of all existing scripts, can represent all the sounds, tunes, and pronunciations of the unique tribal languages of Arunachal Pradesh, as claimed by Tony Koyu.

Koyu authored two books of fiction, *Ale Leki Lo Domey* (2006) and *Yabur* (2018), to showcase the reliability of the Tani Lipi script, marking the first attempt at creative writing in the script of an indigenous language.

Meanwhile, to promote Adi language and literature, the Adi literary body formed the Siang Literary Forum in 2005 under the patronage of Adi intellectuals and the guidance of some non-indigenous people serving under the government of Arunachal Pradesh. These remarkable people are Shri R.N. Koley, who was Assistant Director of Research (Cultural), Green Tamuli, Headmaster of Police Colony School, Pasighat, and Dr. Subash Nayak, Associate Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat. These people generously helped to shape the core objectives of the Siang Literary Forum.

The Siang Literary Forum publishes a magazine and the Solung Festival Souvenirs *Linggong* and *Silifor Review*. These literary outlets include folktales, poems, short stories, and mini-stories. The magazine is divided into two segments: writing in indigenous languages and English. These writings are primarily based on the backdrop of the culture and tradition of Adi society. Kaling Borang, an executive member of this forum and an expert in the Adi language, coined appropriate terms for various forms of literature. He termed folktales as 'Baanku-Baapit Dooying', poems as 'Taabe Yoting', short stories as "Luman Dooying", Mini stories as "Remik Dooying" and translation as "Atlatkunam". The initiative of the Siang Literary Forum to publish magazines and journals created a conducive literary environment, especially for youth in Adi-dominated areas. This played a significant role in the growth of Indigenous Literature in the Adi language, which motivated and provided a platform for many literary aspirants.

Historical records show the British established their headquarters in Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, around 1911. It is observed that wherever the Britishers set up their headquarters, they typically developed towns and educational institutions - primarily for their own benefit. However, the local population also reaped the benefits, mainly through access to education. This early contact with the British administrations gave the Adi belt area a distinct educational advantage. Compared to other regions of Arunachal Pradesh, the people of the Siang Valley were exposed to education much earlier, fostering an increased interest in learning. Since education is closely linked to the growth of literature, this may be the reason why literary activities in the Siang region began to flourish earlier than in other parts of the state.

The contemporary literary scenario in Arunachal Pradesh is growing significantly with works coming out from the pen of emerging young and dynamic writers such as Banta Natung, S. Sumyan, Subhi Taba, Gumlat Miao, Pekba Ringu, L.W Bapu, Ponung Ering, Tangir Tabi, Nyali Ete, Daniel Ering, Gyati Ampu, Miranda Pertin, Henkar Rokom Bado, Doyir Ete, Moge Rina, Bompri Riba, Kolpi Dai, Kennong Darang, and Kaling Dai. Following literary predecessors such as Lummer Dai, Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi, and Mamang Dai, these writers, with their unique style and expressions, address cultural and social realities through various thematic lenses.

In recent years, there has also been a revival of writers' writing in the Assamese language. Despite various challenges, Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi and Kaling Borang were able to sustain the tradition of Assamese Literature in Arunachal Pradesh. Borang published his first collection of poems in Assamese, *Chilukor Juri* (2003). It is the first poetry book written in the Assamese language in Arunachal

Pradesh. Y.D Thongchi, after a gap of almost 20 years since his last publication in 1989, resumed his writing. His recent works, includes *Sava Kota Manu* (2004), *Bishkanyar Deshat* (2006), *Moi Akou Janam Lom Part I* (2011), and *Moi Akou Janam Lom Part II* (2018), are in the Assamese language.

The unique history and culture of Arunachal Pradesh have also attracted the attention of many non-indigenous writers, scholars, and translators. Writers such as Stuart Blackburn in *Into the Hidden Valley* (2016) present the colonial history of Arunachal Pradesh. Nandy Menon in *Ninu* (2020) narrates the socio-political evolution of Arunachal Pradesh.

The present phase also witnessed translation as an emerging genre in the literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh. Books written in Assamese, Hindi, and other indigenous languages are now being translated into English and vice-versa. The works of Lummer Dai and Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi, which were inaccessible to the reader due to the language barrier, are now available in English and Hindi translations.

To create a conducive literary atmosphere and to offer essential support and nurture emerging writers, the Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS) was founded on 2nd Dec. 2006 at Itanagar. The APLS is an outcome of the collective effort of first-generation writers spearheaded by Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi. APLS now has a literary unit in the thirteen districts across Arunachal Pradesh. APLS aims to provide a platform for emerging and established writers. APLS organises monthly literary sessions on the Second Saturday of every month. It publishes a multilingual quarterly magazine, *Prayas*, to provide literary space for Arunachali writers. In addition, the APLS strives to revitalise different literary societies and forums to enrich the cultural and literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh.

VI. CONCLUSION

The literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh, as meticulously mapped in this study, reveals a rich tapestry woven from the threads of oral traditions, socio-political transformations, and the resilient spirit of its people. Literary evolution from oral to text marks a significant journey from a region steeped in age-old myths and folklore to one that embraces modernity while preserving its cultural essence.

In conclusion, the literary journey of Arunachal Pradesh is a testament to the rich cultural heritage, adaptability of its people, and their enduring quest for identity and expression. Diverse literary expressions, from oral traditions to modern writings in multiple languages, reflect the unique place of writings from Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian literary mosaic. As Arunachali literature

continues to grow and evolve, it promises to contribute significantly to the richness and diversity of Indian Literature by offering a distinctive voice that resonates with historical depth and contemporary relevance.

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