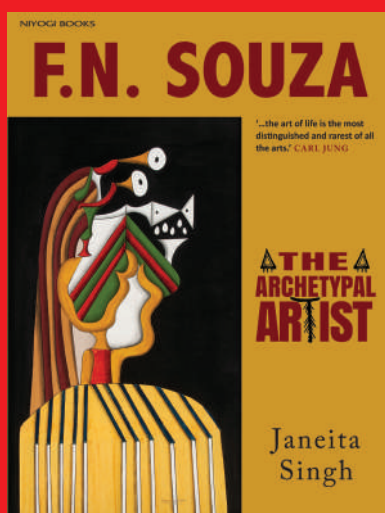


READING CORNER

HISTORY | LITERATURE | ART | ARCHITECTURE | CULTURE | HERITAGE | BIOGRAPHY | TRAVEL | WILDLIFE | ENVIRONMENT | RELIGION | SELF-HELP | FICTION | TRANSLATION | CINEMA | FOOD | CHILDREN



Winner
of **Art Book**
PRIZE
OXFORD
BOOKSTORE

*Art at its fiercest, is an act of freedom, resisting the times,
an allegiance to universal beauty and truth.*
—JANEITA SINGH

LONGLISTED
for
EXCELLENCE
IN
AWARDS



Storytelling as an Act of Resistance and Homecoming

Three years ago, I had resigned from the Indian public services to work in a conflict zone as a humanitarian worker. For those who had asked why I was discarding thirty years of job security and the comfort of home for a war-torn country like Syria, I had a manufactured response: 'Probably, home exists for me under missiles than with imbeciles.' Despite such an over-the-top confident assertion, the most tumultuous waves of doubt and fear lurked within me. What I believed was my strongest anchor at the time, my partner, could not find solid ground to take root, and was eventually lost somewhere along the journey. What remained instead, tethering me to home, was the unfinished manuscript of stories I was writing...about home.



I had started writing *Colour My Grave Purple* in 2020, when the world was brought to a standstill by the Covid-19 pandemic. I, on the other hand, was never busier. As a frontline government worker, I was working full-time to bring

order into a very chaotic situation. I had chosen government service due to 'tug-of-blood', as I liked to say back then. My father who had passed away in 2004 was in the Indian Police Service (IPS). So, upon returning to Assam from New Delhi, I started searching for what home meant during his time—a slow-paced yet rich life, with fragrant air carrying hints of tea and the night-flowering jasmine; stumbling upon symbiotic entanglements between humans and animals, very characteristic of Northeast India, on off-road work trips; watching community-led cultural events and the quintessential sutal, the wide spacious front yard in both village and urban homes, where people, regardless of ethno-religious identities, laze around, exchanging tales of a shared past. Joining the government was

not simply an attempt to emulate my father and devote myself in service to my people but also embed myself, after a long hiatus, into home.

Somehow, my homecoming was to someplace else.

The air was laden with dust and differences. The sutal seemed diminished in form and essence. I was once hurled a communal slur by a local youth for my inability to make an on-spot donation for a religious festival. In that moment, my mind had travelled back to a scene several years ago when my Muslim father, a benefactor of local theatre, had taken the whole family to watch a Bhaona performance—theatre rooted in Hindu Vaishnavism. My mind heard my own giggles of awe and the crowd's thunderous applause upon Lord Krishna's appearance. Off-road work trips were more a means to catch up on sleep, with an excessively demanding and understaffed government ecosystem ensuring I was gutted with work for sixty days at a stretch, without a break. Public service meant self-defacement before politician-contractor conglomerates, without much scope for social justice. I couldn't sight an elephant that wasn't bound for service. Like me.

Therefore, I wrote.

*Writing as an act of
homecoming—literature not
just a creative act,
but a return to land, memory,
grief, love and ancestral truth.*

For the next two years, I put my ears close to the paper cup telephone, with its string attached to another lifetime. I delved back in time and memory to inscribe the aroma of tea in the air I breathed. I conjured in writing women sieving rice and rolling pithas in small-town homes with porous boundaries, both of heart and hearth. I wove back the social fabric through stories about

people with varied identities and backgrounds coming together to challenge, question and resist. This is far from saying that every bit of remembrance was a journey back to a utopian past of joy, harmony and peace. Separatism-fostered insurgency has been a lived experience for every Assamese.

Revisiting the conflicted Assam of the '90s through fiction writing became, in an aberrant sense, a homecoming, an exercise in returning. Here, writing also became an act of defiance. To tell powerful truths with the moral courage to hope for a change in the truths that break and damage, and the resolve to strengthen those that build and sustain.

I finished writing my book in Syria. In that wrecked but astonishingly beautiful part of the world, I felt at home. Its magnanimous people and unhurried way of life, despite the pain and suffering, allowed me to live vicariously in the Assam of the yesteryears. Its thick canopy of culture offered me the creative space to regenerate the lush dark green canopies of our elephant corridors through ink and paper. Since I began writing, it wasn't simply a creative pursuit but an act of resistance to anything and everything that had stopped serving me—even my own home or the idea of it. Now, serving humanity while allowing myself the space to nurture the self has brought me in alignment. And this alignment is home.

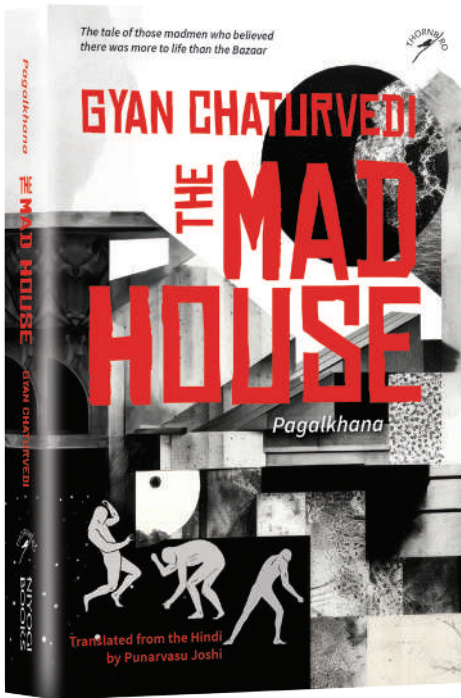
SHEHNAB SAHIN



Born in Assam and educated at Delhi University and the University of Torino, she briefly served in the civil services before working with war-displaced Syrian and Lebanese communities.

*Flip through to discover how stories
become acts of defiance, carrying the
pulse of protest through time and place...*

2 | RESISTANCE IN LITERATURE, LITERATURE IN RESISTANCE



Gyan Chaturvedi revolutionized Hindi satire with his storytelling, and is a Padma Shri and Vyas Samman awardee.

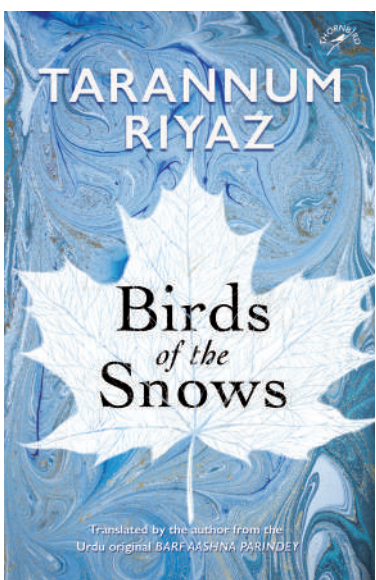
◀ THE MADHOUSE

In the early 1990s, three words changed everything: liberalisation, privatisation, globalisation. What began as economic reform quietly seeped into everyday life reshaping value systems and redefining dignity. In this new economy of dreams, those who could not buy in, vanished. At the centre of it all is the citizen caught between want and worth, always watched, always judged. Around him grows a hungry marketplace that sells back his own dreams and desires.

Punarvasu Joshi, an academic with a PhD in nanotechnology, has translated and edited key Hindi literature.



▼ BIRDS OF THE SNOWS

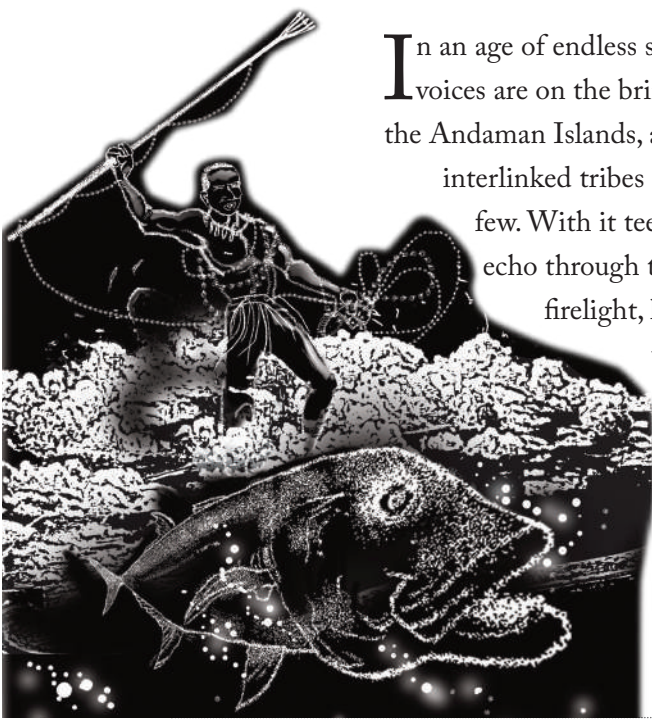


Tarannum Riyaz was a noted Urdu writer, critic, poet and translator. She authored more than 20 books of fiction, criticism and poetry.

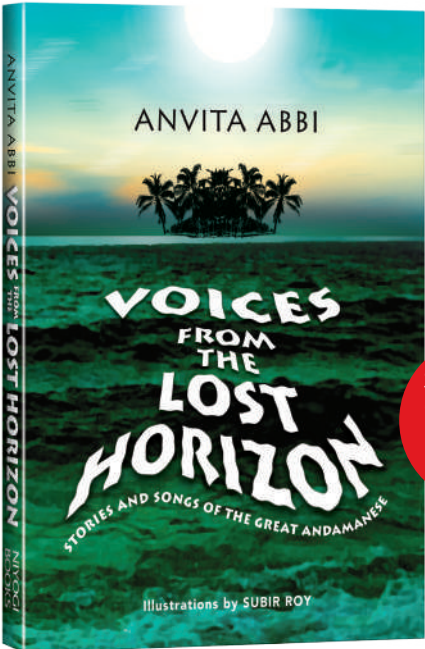


In a Kashmir slowly shifting from rural rhythms to the pull of urban aspirations, a young woman charts her own course: observing birds, tending to ailing professors, honouring care while seeking space for herself. Amid university corridors and fading family customs, her life unfolds with restraint and grace, shaped by quiet acts of duty and self-definition. Her world is marked by love that doesn't announce itself, responsibility that weighs heavy, and freedoms negotiated gently rather than claimed loudly. It's a story that finds echoes in daughters, sisters, and friends across cities where modernity walks hand in hand with inherited expectations.

VOICES FROM THE LOST HORIZON



In an age of endless scrolling and digital noise, some voices are on the brink of being forgotten. Across the Andaman Islands, a language once spoken by ten interlinked tribes now survives on the lips of just a few. With it teeters an entire world: songs that echo through the forest, stories whispered by firelight, knowledge rooted in the tides and trees. What has been gathered here is not just folklore, but the fragile thread of memory, held carefully before it disappears. Each word, each note, carries the weight of an ancient people's bond with land, sea, and spirit, a quiet resistance to erasure.



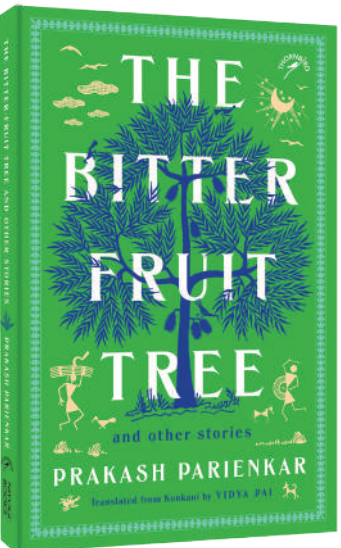
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Anvita Abbi, former professor at JNU, scholar of minority languages & recipient of the Padma Shri Award.



▼ THE BITTER-FRUIT TREE AND OTHER STORIES



Far from the shorelines most postcards know lie the forested folds of north-east Goa, where the Mhadei river moves with a will of her own. Time flies differently in Sattari, where the Western Ghats begin to loosen their grip and the red earth remembers every step.

The river swells and shrinks, delivers and destroys, and those who live by her banks live by her moods. These are stories of people who farm with the rhythm of rain and refusal, who fight for burial grounds with little more than dignity to their name, caught in a world where the land is both kin and adversary.



Prakash Parienkar is an academic & Sahitya Akademi award winning author.

Vidya Pai is a renowned Konkani to English translator.



The 1950s in Tamil Nadu were a turning point for India's handloom weavers caught between tradition and industrialisation, survival and resistance. In towns like Madurai and Ambasamudram, these artisans found themselves under siege: cheap mill-made cloth flooded markets, yarn prices soared due to costly imports from the US, and government apathy pushed many into debt traps laid by unscrupulous merchants. Amid this, two families, one of a ruthless trader, the other of a debt-ridden weaver, struggle to keep their futures intact. But as the decade unfolds an organised protest culminates in a victorious procession of weavers demanding their rights.

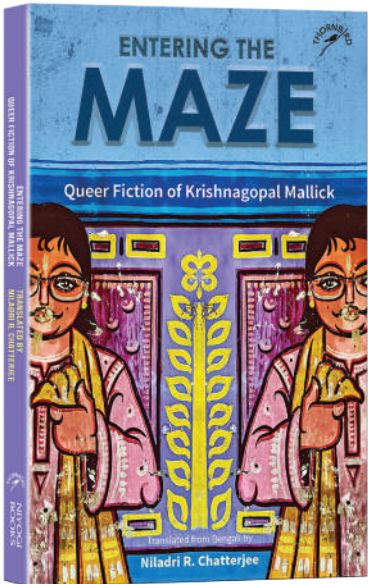


Tho Mu Si Ragunathan was a Tamil writer, translator, journalist and literary critic.

P.C. Ramakrishna is a veteran theatre actor and director with The Madras Players.



HANGING BY A THREAD ▼



◀ ENTERING THE MAZE

In a city where tram bells still echo through narrow lanes and rooftops hold more secrets than skylines, a quiet man sets type by hand and tells stories most people are too afraid to speak. By day, he edits the news; by night, he resurrects forgotten voices through little magazines born in

the back room of his crumbling home. Behind the sharp edges of his deadpan humour lie everyday lives shaped by longing, shame, resistance and tenderness, lives that unfold in small rooms, at tea stalls, in silence.



Niladri R. Chatterjee is Professor, Department of English, University of Kalyani, West Bengal.



WHITE CRANE, LEND ME YOUR WINGS



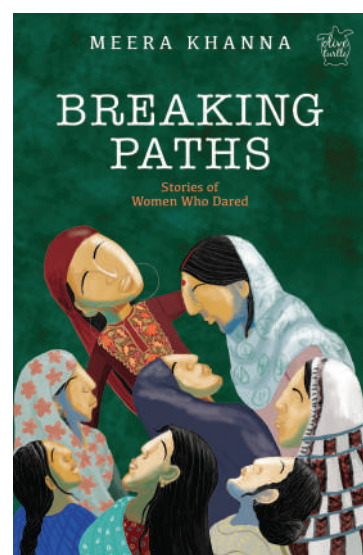
Set in the early decades of the 20th century, just before China's invasion of Tibet in 1950 across the vast, wind-swept valleys of Eastern Tibet, a story unfolds, of two boys growing up in the shadow of tribal pride, ancient rituals, and the distant rumblings of a changing world. Against this backdrop of upheaval, a failed Christian mission sets off a chain of events that spirals into a tale of rebellion.

Tsewang Yishey Pemba

was the first Tibetan to become a doctor and surgeon in Western medical science, Hallet Prize awardee, and founder of the first hospital of Bhutan.



BREAKING PATHS

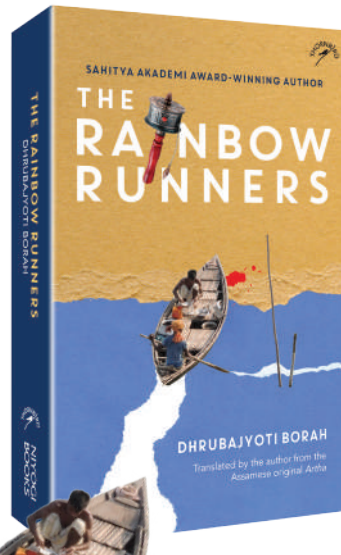


Every day, she wakes to a world that tries to shrink her through expectations, duties, and quiet erasure. In courthouses and classrooms, on factory floors and village squares, she stands watching and waiting. The women in these stories rebel: some walk out of violent marriages; some demand what's rightfully theirs: land, identity, space; and some change the course of their lives with one bold decision; others do it slowly, with quiet persistence. Inspired by real incidents, these stories speak of gender rights not as a slogan but as a lived reality: messy, complicated, hard-earned.

Writer, poet, and social activist **Meera Khanna** is the Trustee and Executive Vice President of the NGO, Guild of Service.



THE RAINBOW RUNNERS



Amidst 1990s insurgency-hit Assam, Sriman finds himself entangled in an unnameable, inexplicable, and unforgettable web. Fear clings to him, muting his life and pushing him toward the margins of a society already creaking under its own history of violence. As he moves through smoky newsrooms and the uneasy alliances of surrendered militants, what begins as survival becomes a slow reckoning with selfhood.

Dhrubajyoti Borah writes in Assamese and English and has authored more than 20 novels.



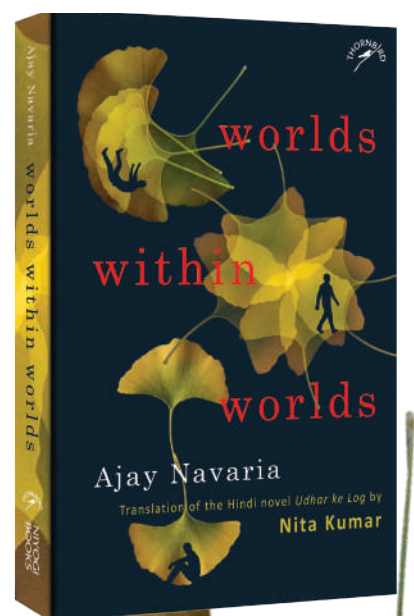
WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

Degrees, a university job, a doctor for a wife, friends in powerful places—a urban middle-class life. But what happens when a surname on a form or a silence in a meeting brings caste back into the room? Set in a city where class and caste collide every day, this story follows a man who begins to question whether education or success can shield him from the discrimination embedded in the everyday.

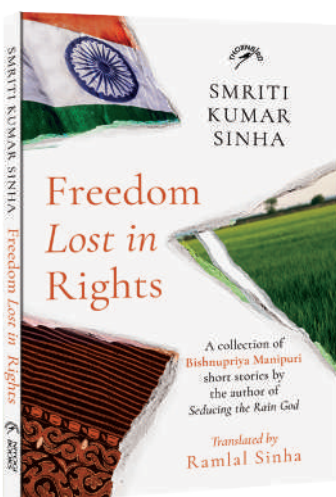
Ajay Navaria is a Professor of Hindi Literature at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi.



Nita Kumar is the retired Brown Professor of South Asian History at Claremont McKenna College, California.



FREEDOM LOST IN RIGHTS



Smriti Kumar Sinha, currently Vice Chancellor of Pragjyotishpur University, Guwahati, is a leading short story writer in Bishnupriya Manipuri.



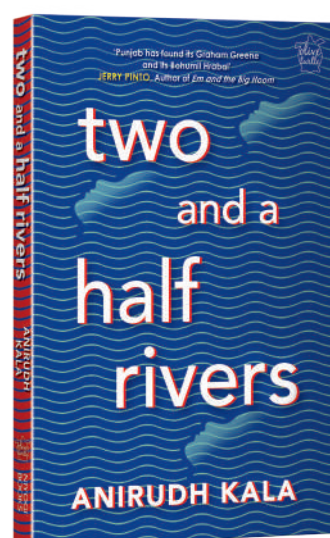
Ramlal Sinha is a translator and the Executive Editor of *The Sentinel*, Assam.



Every day, she wakes to a world that tries to shrink her through expectations, duties, and quiet erasure. In courthouses and classrooms, on factory floors and village squares, she stands watching and waiting. The women in these stories rebel: some walk out of violent marriages; some demand what's rightfully theirs: land, identity, space; and some change the course of their lives with one bold decision; others do it slowly, with quiet persistence. Inspired by real incidents, these stories speak of gender rights not as a slogan but as a lived reality: messy, complicated, hard-earned.



TWO AND A HALF RIVERS



The 1980s summers of Punjab: when newspapers spoke in code and rivers carried more blood than silt, a divorced doctor retreats to the countryside seeking quiet, but finds himself ensnared in the crossfire of militancy and state violence. Around the same time, in caste-stricken North India, a young Dalit couple dares to dream beyond their village, hoping that Bombay might offer them a life untouched by inherited humiliation. The two narratives overlap between the waves of the two and half rivers.

Anirudh Kala is a psychiatrist by profession and author.



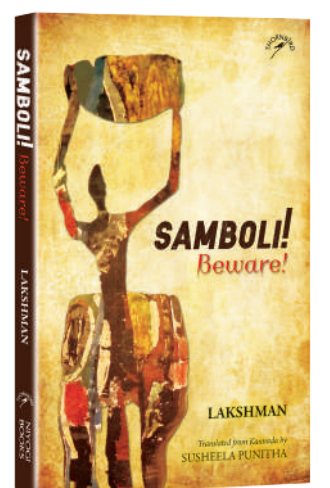
SAMBOLI! BEWARE!

How does a word meant to warn others of your presence become a call to claim your place? This story begins in the narrow conservancy lanes and moves through the defiant, sometimes quiet, sometimes loud acts of those who dared to rewrite that script where untouchables were once forced to walk; pole in hand, bells jingling. Set against the backdrop of caste brutality, the plot grips the present, where old hierarchies dictate who gets to belong.

Lakshman has many collections of poems, short stories and two novels to his credit and has received many awards.

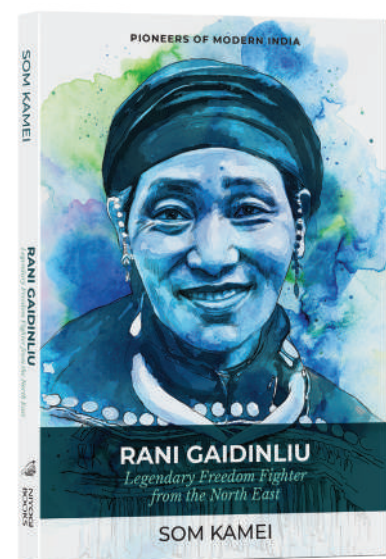


Susheela Punitha has received the Sahitya Akademi Translation Award for English in 2015 for her translation of U R Ananthamurthy's novel "Bharathipura."



4 | RESISTANCE IN LITERATURE, LITERATURE IN RESISTANCE

▼ RANI GAIDINLIU

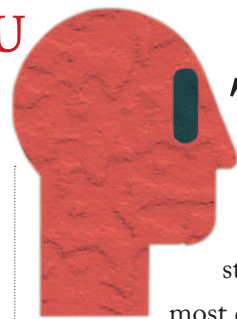


Rani Gaidinliu, fearless, and unrelenting, was barely a teenager when she began defying an empire and rose from the hills of Manipur to lead her people in a battle that was both political and deeply personal. After the hanging of her mentor, Haipou Jadonang, she became the face of resistance against the British, enduring years in prison even before she turned thirty. But her fight didn't end with Independence; she rallied the Zeliangrong Nagas to defend their homeland, language, and indigenous faith from slow erasure.

Som Kamei is a member of the Indian Postal Services. He writes on cultural and social issues of North East India.

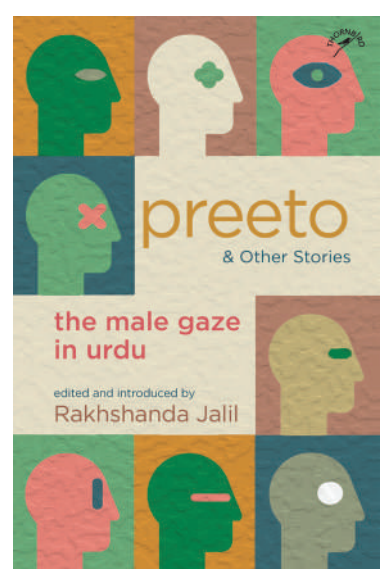


PREETO & OTHER STORIES ▼

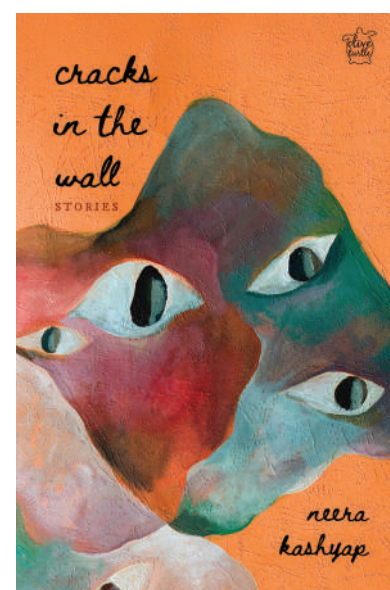


The women in these stories walk through crowded streets and narrow expectations, navigating life with resilience and grace. These stories, imagined by some of Urdu's most compelling male voices, trace the shifting contours of how women are seen not merely through power, rebellion, and quiet refusal. From old cities to new anxieties, what emerges is not one woman but many, each straining against the frame built around her.

Rakhshanda Jalil is a writer, critic and literary historian. She has published over 15 books and written over 50 academic papers and essays.



▼ CRACKS IN THE WALL

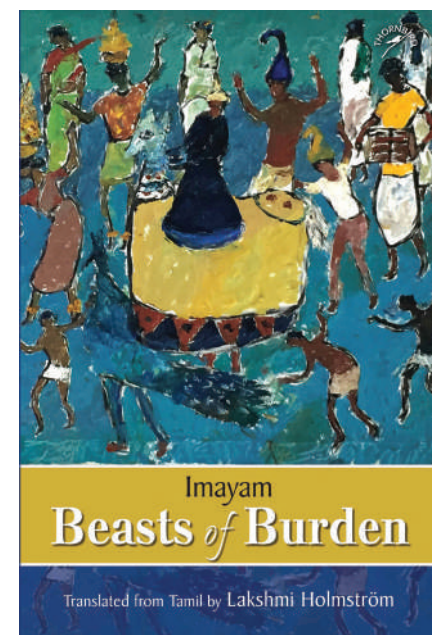


Spanning rural and urban India and set in the early years of the 21st century, resistance in this anthology begins not with grand gestures but with small ruptures: a woman choosing therapy over silence, a mother refusing to let either state or insurgents dictate the fate of her child, a wife pushing back against the erosion of her selfhood in a gilded prison of affluence. Whether the conflict is with addiction, patriarchy, class, or inner demons, these stories chart the gritty routes that healing takes hesitant, messy, transformative.

Neera Kashyap was a journalist and has authored poetry, short fiction, essays and book reviews which have appeared in various Indian and international literary journals and anthologies.



BEASTS OF BURDEN ▼



Set in the early 1970s, *Beasts of Burden* captures a village in Tamil Nadu caught at the cusp of economic and social transition. At the heart of the story stands Arokkyam, a washerwoman from a Dalit Christian family, whose daily toil and unflinching dignity anchor the narrative. Her unsparing resistance is depicted through granular detail and uncompromising realism.

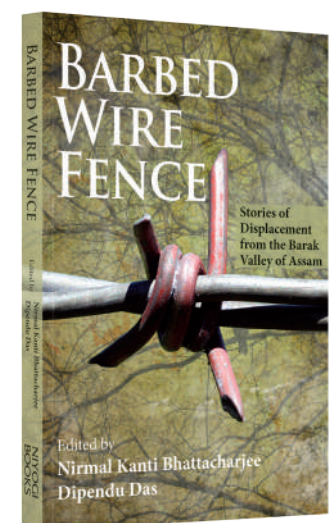


Imayam is a prominent and well-known Indian novelist writing in Tamil.

Lakshmi Holmström was an Indian-British writer, literary critic, and translator of Tamil fiction into English.



BARBED WIRE FENCE ▼



A community uprooted over decades, the first after the Sylhet Referendum of July 1947, then again during the 1971 Liberation War, was forced to rebuild lives in Assam's Barak Valley, where they were branded as outsiders. This collection of short stories brings alive the agonies of families torn from East Bengal, grappling with broken identities, and the relentless struggle to belong as immigrants.

Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, former Director of National Book Trust and KK Birla Foundation, Delhi, is the Editorial Director, Niyogi Books.

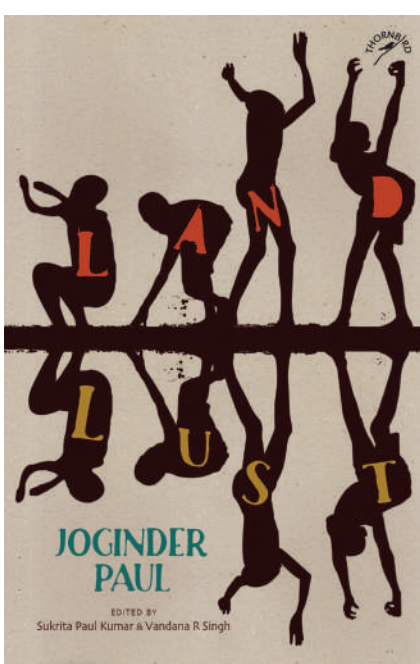


Dipendu Das teaches English at Assam University, Silchar.



▼ LAND LUST

Under the blistering sun of colonial Kenya, resistance breathed through small acts of dignity, through unspoken solidarities forged across colour lines, through the quiet grief of land wrested away. The characters in these stories—South Asians, Europeans, and Africans, move through plantations, markets, and homesteads caught in the crosshairs of imperial exploitation, where race and power dictate who lives with roots and who lives on borrowed soil. Joginder Paul's writing questions what it means to belong when your skin, language, or labour are always seen as suspect.



Joginder Paul was born in Sialkot (now in Pakistan). His first story was published in the well-known Urdu journal *Saqi* in 1945; while his first book of short stories in Urdu was published in 1962.



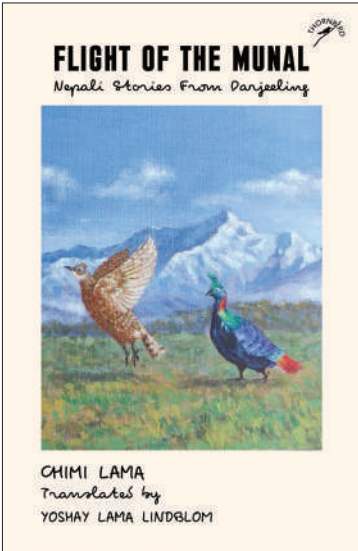
Sukrita Paul Kumar is a noted poet, critic, academic and held the Aruna Asaf Ali Chair at Delhi University till recently.

Vandana R Singh is an author, translator, editor, and Chandigarh Sahitya Akademi awardee.



FLIGHT OF THE MUNAL

TRANSLATION

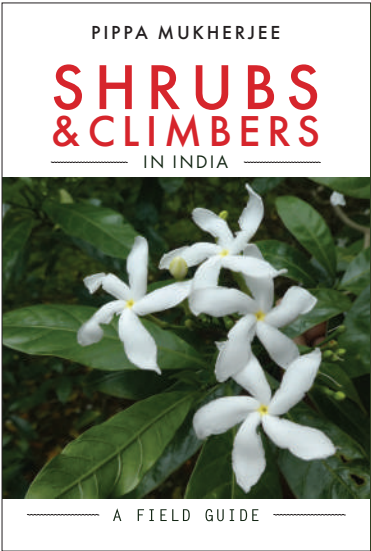


In a world hemmed in by mountains and tradition, Flight of the Munal traces the lives of Indian–Nepalese women navigating silence, stigma, and survival

while fighting silence, shame, and survival in her own way. From sex work to domestic abuse, from lost girlhoods to stolen dreams, Chimi Lama’s powerful stories, translated by Yoshay Lama Lindblom, uncover a world rarely seen but deeply felt.

SHRUBS & CLIMBERS

NATURE



Rooted in the Western Ghats, this field guide explores over 200 Indian species of shrubs and climbers. With vivid documentation, local names across regions,

and insights into growing these plants in home gardens and public parks, it bridges science and accessibility, making India’s lesser-known flora both understandable and unforgettable.

SCARLET DRAGONFLIES

FICTION

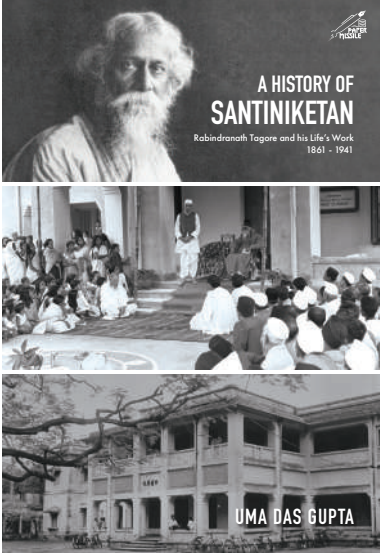


In the shifting tides and dense silences of the Sundarbans, capture the fragile, feral dance between survival and surrender. Amrita Nilanjana’s striking short

stories blur the boundaries between man and beast, beauty and terror, tenderness and brutality. With prose as wild and precise as the landscape itself, this collection bears witness to a world both haunted and alive—where every breath is an act of defiance, and every story, a storm waiting to break.

A HISTORY OF SANTINIKETAN

HERITAGE & CULTURE

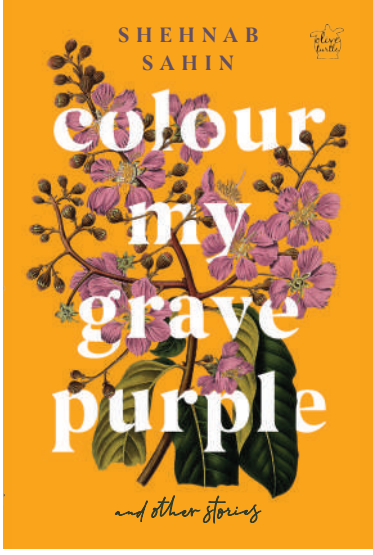


Long before independence, Rabindranath Tagore dared to rebuild rural India with science, self-reliance, and soul. From sending his son abroad to study agriculture

to reviving village crafts, he imagined a future where villages thrived on their own terms. At Santiniketan, this vision came alive, becoming a living experiment in grassroots transformation.

COLOUR MY GRAVE PURPLE

FICTION

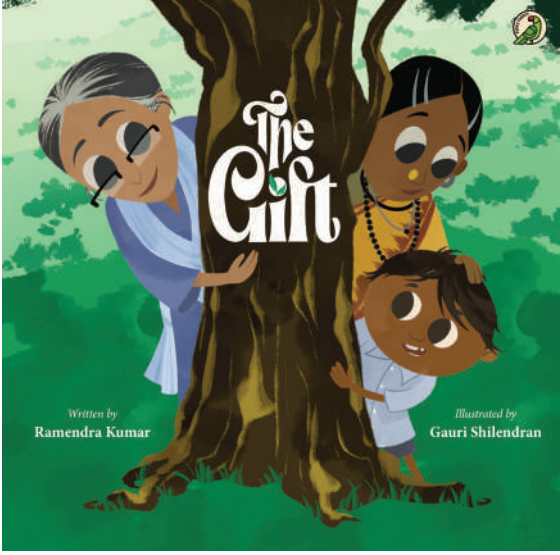


Colour My Grave Purple is a historical fiction anthology from Assam, spanning the 1850s to 2000s. Blending natural and

supernatural, it follows vivid tales of people, cultures, and politics, featuring figures from drunk elephants to a British–Naga queen. It traces Assam’s encounters, unrest, and identity from modern times to a bygone era.

THE GIFT

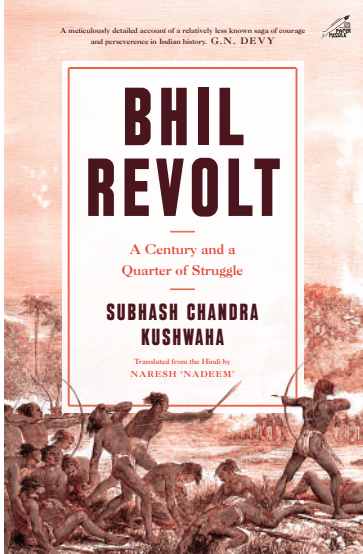
HEALTHCARE



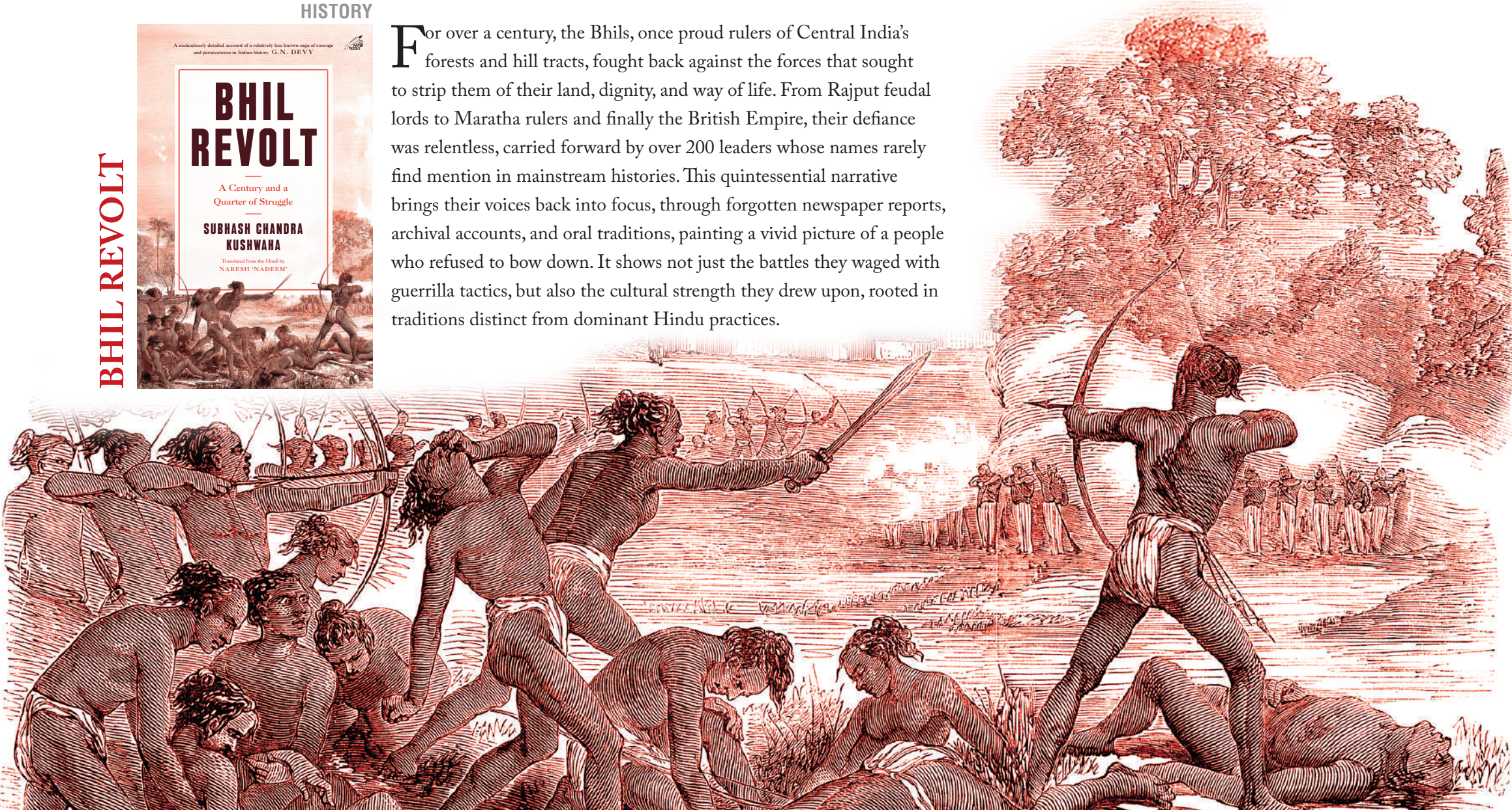
When a village boy falls ill, Dr. Aquinas Edassery, a retired doctor answers the call with urgency and compassion. What begins as one act of care unfolds into a lifetime devoted to healing remote communities, showing that courage and service often shine brightest in places farthest from the spotlight.

HISTORY

BHIL REVOLT



For over a century, the Bhils, once proud rulers of Central India’s forests and hill tracts, fought back against the forces that sought to strip them of their land, dignity, and way of life. From Rajput feudal lords to Maratha rulers and finally the British Empire, their defiance was relentless, carried forward by over 200 leaders whose names rarely find mention in mainstream histories. This quintessential narrative brings their voices back into focus, through forgotten newspaper reports, archival accounts, and oral traditions, painting a vivid picture of a people who refused to bow down. It shows not just the battles they waged with guerrilla tactics, but also the cultural strength they drew upon, rooted in traditions distinct from dominant Hindu practices.



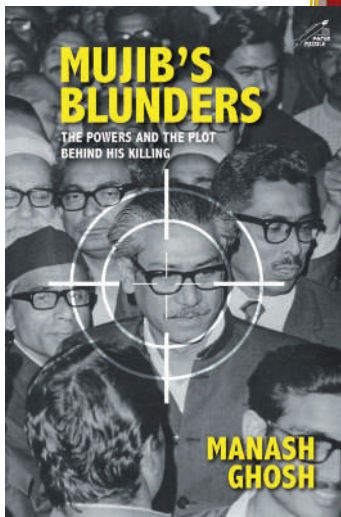
BOOK LAUNCHES



L-R: Trisha De Niyogi, COO and Director of Niyogi Books; Patricia Loison, Director, Alliance Française de Delhi; Hemangini Dutt Majumdar, author of the book; Padmapriya Janakiraman, actor, producer and Founder, Collective Crew and Padma's Lit Club; Sadaf Hussain, chef, author, podcaster and finalist, MasterChef India 2016; and RJ Sarthak, broadcaster, columnist and music curator.



L-R: Trisha De Niyogi, COO & Director, Niyogi Books; Shaurya Shaukat Sircar, editor of the book; Goutam Ghose, Award-winning Indian filmmaker; Manash Ghosh, senior journalist & author of the book; and, Col. A.K. Chatterjee, veteran of 1947 war & former diplomat, at the launch of Mujib's Blunders at Oxford Bookstore in Kolkata.



L-R : Razaul H. Laskar, Foreign Affairs Editor, Hindustan Times; Manash Ghosh, senior journalist and author of the book; Gautam Lahiri, senior journalist and President of Press Club of India; and Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, academic, translator and Editorial Director, Niyogi Books, at Press Club of India, Delhi.

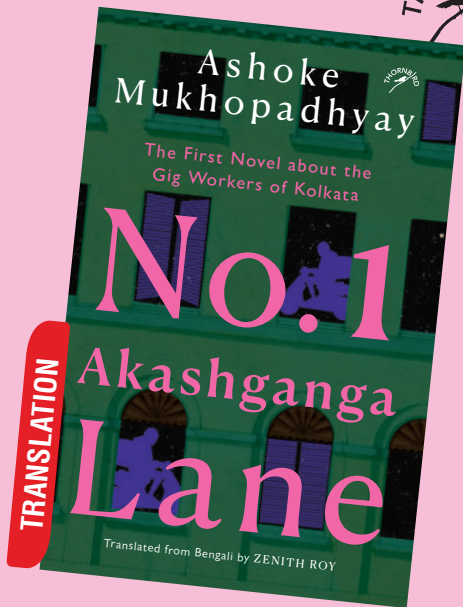


L-R: Nishi Pulugurtha, academic and editor of the book; Trisha De Niyogi, COO and Director of Niyogi Books; and Nabanita Sengupta, academic and editor of the book.

FORTHCOMING



In a world of aristocrats, clergymen, and learned elites, one working man dared to redraw the earth itself. *The Mapmaker* traces William Smith's extraordinary journey from muddy canals and coal mines to his audacious vision of the first geological map, revealing both the brilliance and the cost of resisting the boundaries of class and knowledge.



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