

Meghalaya – Shillong

Meghalaya's literary history bridges a vibrant pre-colonial oral tradition and a rapidly expanding contemporary footprint in English and regional languages. Rooted in the Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia hills, it evolved from indigenous folklore and missionary-led documentation into a distinct space for modern Indo-Anglian fiction.

1. Oral Tradition & Folklore

- **Folktales:** Passed down through generations, these stories explain the origins of natural landmarks (like rivers and living root bridges) and feature mythical creatures, giants, and local spirits.
- **Notable Collections:** Books like *Around the Hearth: Khasi Legends* by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and *Folktales from Meghalaya* by Sobhona Bhattacharjee preserve these fables in print.



2. Transition to Written Literature

- **Missionary Influence:** Written literature largely began in the 19th century when Christian missionaries (notably Welsh Calvinist Methodists) arrived. They introduced the Roman script for the Khasi, Garo, and Pnar languages and translated religious texts, which standardized the written forms of these native tongues.
- **Pioneering Authors:** Visionaries like U Soso Tham (often called the father of Khasi poetry) bridged the gap between folklore and modern written verse, utilizing traditional fables to impart moral lessons.

3. Contemporary Literature in English

Authors from Meghalaya have gained significant national and international acclaim, frequently exploring themes of identity, culture, feminism, and the political turbulence of Northeast India.

- **Janice Pariat:** Known for her lyrical prose, her notable works include the short story collection *Boats on Land* (which weaves history and myth) and the novels *The Nine-Chambered Heart* and *Everything the Light Touches*. She also edited the anthology *We Come From Mist: Writings from Meghalaya*, showcasing female voices from the state.
- **Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih:** A towering figure in regional literature who writes in both English and Khasi. His notable works include *Around the Hearth* and the novel *Funeral Nights*.
- **Anjum Hasan:** Based largely in Shillong, her novels, including *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti, Neti*, capture the unique, cosmopolitan, yet isolated vibe of the state's capital. [1, 2, 3]
- **Bijoya Sawian:** Known for preserving traditional myths and writing rich family dramas set in the Khasi Hills, such as *A Family Secret: And Other Stories*.

