Preface

The research work was initiated with the objective of exploring and analyzing the different approaches to the notion of ethnicity as reflected in the selected fictional works of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Umakanta Sarma and Yeshe Dorje Thongchi. The complex and intricate issues relating to inter and intra ethnic delineations in Bhattacharya’s Yaruimgam, Sarma’s Ejak Manuh Ekhan Aranya and Bharanda Pakshir Jhak, and Thongchi’s Sonam and Lingjhik, are studied in an attempt to construct a North East narrative that is significantly and distinguishably different from the mainstream Indian narrative. The study also considers how successful the authors are in their apparent aims and objectives of consolidating a larger national narrative. It also attempts to consider whether the narratives generate a dynamics of their own that goes against the apparent authorial intentions.

Chapter I, which forms the Introduction focuses on the concepts of nation, narration, ethnicity and North East with a view to situating the basic framework of the study. This chapter also contains an introduction to the three novelists and their selected fictional works taken up for the purpose of the study.

Chapter II, entitled Ethnicity and Narration: The Issues Involved attempts to explore the complex dynamics of ethnicity vis-à-vis the notions of subjectivity and identity. The issues relating to the nationalistic discourse, the disintegration of the appropriative Assamese discourse and the evolution of an ethnic narrative in relation to the North East is the main focus in this chapter.

Chapter III, titled Nationalistic Appropriative Discourse: A Study of Yaruimgam, explores the Sahitya Akademi award winning novel of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya and the failed attempt of its nationalistic appropriative discourse which the author originally
wanted to portray.

Chapter IV, titled *Nationalistic Humanistic Discourse: A Study of Ejak Manuh Ekhan Aranya and Bharanda Pakshir Jhak*, highlights the overt nationalistic humanistic discourse and how it has failed, as epitomised by the failure of the concept of greater Assamese nationality. The levels of assimilation and acculturation in an inter ethnic set up are explored in both the novels to demonstrate the complexities inherent in maintenance of the ethnic 'boundary'.

Chapter V, entitled *Nationalistic Ethnic Discourse: A Study of Sonam and Lingjhik* explores the evolution of a simple ethnic discourse in which the intricacies that lurk in the facade of apparent simplicity of the ethnic people are discussed. Thongchi's discourse is perceived as writing back to the supposed core by inverting themes and concerns prevalent in mainstream Indian fiction.

Chapter VI, the Conclusion lists the findings of the study in respect of the fictional works taken up to highlight issues and concerns quintessential to the North East situation. It points out the distinctiveness of concerns and preoccupations regarding nation, nationality, narrative, discourse and notions of identity and ethnicity as ensconced in them.

A Select Bibliography detailing both the Primary and Secondary Sources is attached after Chapter VI.

An Appendix in the form of select original transcripts from the novel *Lingjhik* by Y.D. Thongchi is also enclosed. It contains those excerpts of the novel which are quoted in their English translation in Chapter V of this research work. The original transcripts are marked for ready reference with the translated quotations. Collaborative translation has been used as the medium for the same, my supervisor Dr. Parag Moni Sarma being the collaborator in the source language.