

An Analytical study on Socio-Cultural Representation in the Translated Tales of North-East India

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Abstract- North-East India is one of the most culturally diverse regions of India, marked by multilingual communities, rich oral traditions, ecological intimacy, ritual systems, and strong patterns of collective memory. Literary collections such as *Earth Songs: Stories from North-East India* and *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India* indicate the growing visibility of the region's translated narrative traditions in literary and academic discourse. At the same time, modern translation studies has established that translation is not merely a transfer of words from one language to another, but a process of cultural mediation that shapes how texts travel and how cultures are represented.

The present paper examines how translated tales from North-East India represent socio-cultural life and how translation reconfigures that representation for wider readerships. The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and interpretative methodology based on close reading, thematic analysis, and culture-oriented translation criticism. It argues that the translated tales of North-East India are not only literary texts but also cultural documents that preserve community values, ritual consciousness, ecological relations, gendered roles, and inherited memory. At the same time, the paper demonstrates that translation both preserves and transforms these meanings. While translation enables broader literary visibility and cross-cultural access, it may also soften oral texture, local symbolism, and community-specific resonance. The study concludes that translated tales of North-East India are significant literary sites through which regional culture becomes visible, mobile, and discussable in English literary discourse.

Keywords: North-East India, translation, socio-culture, tales, folklore, oral tradition, cultural identity, literary visibility

I. INTRODUCTION

North-East India occupies a distinctive place in the literary and cultural map of India. It is a region shaped

by ethnic plurality, multiple languages, oral traditions, ecological diversity, and rich cultural memory. In recent years, edited collections such as *Earth Songs: Stories from North-East India* and *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India* have helped bring the region's translated and English-accessible narratives into wider literary circulation. These publications confirm that North-East Indian writing has emerged as a substantial area of study rather than a marginal literary appendix.

Within this broader literary field, tales occupy a particularly important place. They are not merely stories told for amusement; they are narrative forms through which communities preserve values, beliefs, customs, anxieties, ecological perceptions, and collective memory. Through tales, communities pass on cultural understanding from one generation to another. In many oral societies, the tale functions as a form of ethical instruction, cultural continuity, and social imagination.

The present study focuses specifically on translated tales of North-East India. Since many narratives from the region circulate beyond their immediate communities through English translation, translation becomes central to their literary life. Translation scholars such as Susan Bassnett and Lawrence Venuti have shown that translation is never a neutral process. It is deeply implicated in representation, mediation, and interpretation. In the case of North-East Indian tales, translation makes the narratives more visible while also altering the conditions under which they are received and understood.

This paper therefore explores how socio-cultural life is represented in translated tales of North-East India and

how translation preserves, reshapes, and circulates those meanings. It argues that the translated tale is not simply a linguistic copy of a source narrative, but a culturally mediated literary text that stands between rootedness and mobility.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the socio-cultural elements represented in translated tales of North-East India.
2. To examine how translation communicates indigenous and local meanings to wider audiences.
3. To analyze how oral and culturally rooted narratives are transformed in written English translation.
4. To understand the role of translated tales in preserving identity, memory, and regional literary visibility.
5. To assess the gains and losses involved in the translation of socio-culturally dense tales.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do translated tales of North-East India represent socio-cultural life?
2. In what ways does translation preserve or transform local meanings?
3. How do translated tales contribute to the literary visibility of North-East India?
4. What is gained and what is lost when oral or culturally rooted tales are rendered into English?

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature relevant to the present topic may be grouped into four major areas: studies on North-East Indian literature, folklore and oral tradition studies, translation studies, and research on culture and representation.

Scholarly and editorial work on North-East India has increasingly emphasized the region's literary

significance. Collections such as *Earth Songs* and *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India* show that the literary traditions of the region are rich, diverse, and worthy of serious academic engagement. These works bring together narratives from multiple states and communities and have played a major role in increasing the visibility of North-East Indian writing within wider literary discourse.

Folklore studies provide the conceptual background for understanding tales as cultural texts. Folktales, myths, and oral narratives are widely recognized as carriers of social values, symbolic systems, moral teaching, and communal memory. Such scholarship is especially relevant for the present study because many tales from North-East India originate in oral storytelling traditions and remain deeply tied to performance, social context, and inherited cultural logic.

Translation studies provide the theoretical tools needed to understand how these tales move into English. Bassnett's work helps establish translation as an interdisciplinary field concerned with literary and cultural transfer, while Venuti's work on domestication, foreignization, and translator visibility demonstrates that translation shapes how cultural difference is represented. These insights are highly relevant to tales from North-East India, where local terms, oral rhythms, ecological references, and ritual meanings often resist straightforward translation.

Research on culture and representation further strengthens this framework by showing that literature is a powerful site for identity formation and social memory. Regional narratives, especially those of communities underrepresented in dominant discourse, become important means of cultural visibility. Yet the literature also shows a gap: there is still relatively limited integrated research focused specifically on how the socio-cultural life of North-East India is represented through tales in English translation. The present study responds to that gap.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and interpretative methodology. It is exploratory because

it addresses a comparatively underexplored literary field. It is qualitative because it focuses on meaning, representation, symbolism, and cultural mediation rather than numerical data. It is interpretative because it relies on close textual reading and thematic analysis.

The method of analysis is text-centered but context-sensitive. The translated tale is treated as the primary textual object, while the socio-cultural world from which it emerges remains central to interpretation. The study draws conceptually on translation studies, folklore studies, and cultural studies. Translation theory explains the mediation of local meaning into English. Folklore studies explain the social and symbolic function of tale traditions. Cultural studies allow the tales to be read as expressions of community life, memory, and identity.

Since the paper studies tales through English translation, the translated text is treated as a legitimate literary form in its own right rather than merely as a derivative copy of an inaccessible original. This allows the paper to focus directly on the literary and cultural life of the translated narrative.

VI. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Tales as Repositories of Community Life:

The translated tales of North-East India reveal that storytelling is deeply tied to community life. Characters are often situated within kinship networks, village structures, clan relations, and systems of social obligation. They are not represented as isolated individuals detached from collective life. Instead, their actions carry ethical and communal consequences.

This feature is culturally significant because it reflects a relational social world. Values such as loyalty, duty, humility, generosity, and respect for elders often form the moral basis of the tale. Through narrative, the community remembers and reproduces its own structures of belonging.

6.2 Ritual Belief and Indigenous Worldview:

The tales also preserve belief systems and indigenous cosmologies. Spirits, sacred presences, ancestral

forces, warnings, taboo, and symbolic animals often appear as natural parts of the narrative world. Such elements are not simply “fantasy” in a superficial sense; they reflect a worldview in which the visible and invisible coexist.

This indicates that tales preserve forms of knowledge that are social, symbolic, and spiritual at once. Through translation, these meanings become available to readers outside the source culture, although the force of ritual and symbolic references may be altered in the process.

6.3 Ecology and Environmental Intimacy:

The ecological dimension of North-East Indian tales is especially striking. Forests, mountains, rivers, rain, animals, and agricultural cycles are often central to the narrative world. Nature is not merely a background but an active presence with social and symbolic importance.

This ecological representation reflects the lived cultural reality of many communities in the region, where environment and social life remain closely connected. In translated form, this ecological consciousness still emerges with considerable force and contributes to the distinctiveness of the tales.

6.4 Gender, Family, and Cultural Roles:

The translated tales also reveal significant patterns of gender and family life. Women often appear as figures of care, endurance, intelligence, continuity, and memory, while men are often associated with protection, labor, or public responsibility. At the same time, the narratives do not present these roles in a completely rigid or simplistic way. Women often occupy morally central positions in the story and may become the carriers of wisdom or resilience.

Family in these tales functions not only as a domestic structure but as a moral and cultural institution. Through family relationships, the tales communicate obligation, affection, inheritance, and continuity.

6.5 Translation as Cultural Mediation:

Translation is central to the literary life of these tales. It enables the stories to move beyond their source communities and become part of larger literary discourse. At the same time, translation inevitably mediates meaning. Bassnett and Venuti have shown that translation involves strategic decisions about fluency, difference, visibility, and cultural transfer.

In the case of North-East Indian tales, this means that local terms, oral structures, kinship categories, ritual expressions, and symbolic images are often reshaped for English readers. Translation therefore preserves the tales by making them readable, but also reconstructs them in the process.

6.6 From Orality to Written English:

One of the most important transformations in translation is the movement from oral storytelling to written English prose. Oral tales depend on voice, repetition, cadence, performance, and collective listening. Written translation often regularizes these features for readability.

As a result, the translated tale gains portability, permanence, and academic visibility, but may lose some of the oral energy and community resonance that shaped its original life. This shift from orality to textuality is one of the most important sites where socio-culture is both preserved and transformed.

6.7 Literary Visibility and Regional Identity:

Translation gives the tales of North-East India wider literary visibility. Once translated into English, they may enter anthologies, university syllabi, literary criticism, and comparative studies. This visibility is culturally significant because it allows the region to be represented through its own narrative traditions rather than through external description alone. Collections already in circulation demonstrate that such literary recognition is institutionally real.

The translated tale therefore contributes to identity as well as literary presence. It enables the North-East to appear in wider discourse as a source of powerful and distinctive storytelling.

6.8 Gains and Losses in Translation:

The gains of translation include accessibility, preservation, cultural recognition, and wider discussion. Translation allows tales to travel beyond local language communities and enter broader literary memory.

The losses include weakening of linguistic nuance, oral texture, community-specific resonance, and some symbolic depth. Translation therefore cannot be understood as perfect equivalence. It is better understood as meaningful but incomplete cultural mediation.

VII. FINDINGS

The study yields the following key findings:

1. Translated tales of North-East India function as important socio-cultural texts rather than merely entertaining narratives.
2. They preserve crucial dimensions of community life, ritual consciousness, ecological ethics, and cultural memory.
3. Translation increases the literary visibility of North-East India and allows its tales to enter wider academic and literary discourse.
4. Translation also transforms the narratives by modifying oral rhythm, symbolic density, and local linguistic nuance.
5. The translated tale should therefore be understood as a culturally mediated literary form that both preserves and reconstructs socio-cultural meaning.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The present paper concludes that the translated tales of North-East India are important sites of socio-cultural representation. They preserve the values, beliefs, kinship patterns, ecological relations, ritual imagination, and communal memory of the region in literary form. At the same time, they show that literature is not merely a matter of plot or language, but of cultural life moving through narrative.

Translation emerges here as both necessary and transformative. It gives the tales broader literary visibility and helps protect them from cultural invisibility. Yet it also modifies their oral texture, cultural density, and symbolic resonance. The translated tale is therefore neither a perfect substitute for the source narrative nor a detached invention. It is a reconstructed cultural text that carries traces of its original world into wider discourse.

In this sense, translated tales from North-East India contribute significantly to English literary studies, regional literary visibility, and the understanding of literature as a site where culture travels, survives, and changes.

IX.FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH:

The present study opens several important directions for future research. Since the socio-cultural life of North-East India is vast, diverse, and constantly evolving, no single study can claim to exhaust all possible dimensions of its tale traditions or their translated forms. The current research has focused on selected tales in English translation and has examined how they represent socio-cultural life through narrative and mediation. This creates a strong foundation for further scholarly work across literary, cultural, and interdisciplinary fields.

One major scope for future research lies in comparative regional study. Future scholars may compare tales from different states of North-East India such as Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Sikkim in order to identify both common cultural patterns and region-specific narrative distinctions. Such comparative work may reveal how different communities represent kinship, ecology, morality, ritual belief, and identity in distinct yet interconnected ways.

Another important area for future study is source-text and translation comparison. The present research has primarily focused on translated tales, but future scholars with access to original source languages may undertake a closer comparison between the original oral or written form and the English translation. Such studies may help identify more precisely how symbolic terms, oral rhythms, local idioms, cultural

references, and emotional tones change in translation. This would deepen our understanding of cultural retention, loss, and adaptation.

There is also significant scope for performance-based and ethnographic research. Since many tales of North-East India belong to oral storytelling traditions, future studies may document live storytelling practices, performance settings, storyteller–audience interaction, and community-specific narrative contexts. Such field-based research would complement literary analysis by showing how tales function in actual social life and how performance contributes to meaning.

A further promising direction is gender-focused research. Future scholars may explore how women, femininity, domestic knowledge, motherhood, female agency, and gender relations are represented in translated tales of North-East India. Such work could also examine whether translation reshapes gendered meanings and whether female-centered narratives receive different literary treatment in English.

Another rich field for future work is eco-critical and environmental interpretation. Since many tales from the North-East preserve intimate relationships with forests, rivers, hills, animals, and seasons, future research may study these narratives through eco-criticism, indigenous environmental ethics, and sustainability discourse. This would be especially relevant in the present time, when ecological questions have become central to humanities research.

Future scholars may also investigate identity, memory, and indigeneity in greater depth. The translated tale may be studied as a site where indigenous knowledge systems, collective memory, ancestral consciousness, and regional identity are preserved and negotiated. Such research could connect literary studies with memory studies, postcolonial studies, and decolonial approaches.

There is also strong scope for research on translation strategies and translator agency. A more focused study may examine the role of the translator in shaping the cultural life of the tale. It could explore questions such as whether translators choose domestication or foreignization, how glosses and explanations affect cultural meaning, and how translation choices influence the literary visibility of North-East India.

Future work may also move toward digital preservation and archiving. With the decline of some oral traditions due to modernization and language shift, researchers may create digital archives of tales,

multilingual storytelling repositories, and annotated translation projects. Such efforts would not only preserve narrative heritage but also make it more accessible for future generations of readers and scholars.

Another significant area is curriculum and pedagogic research. Scholars may examine how translated tales of North-East India can be included in school and university syllabi, comparative literature programs, and translation studies courses. This would help bring regional narrative traditions into mainstream academic learning and expand literary studies beyond conventional canons.

Finally, future studies may explore interdisciplinary connections between translated tales and fields such as anthropology, sociology, religious studies, history, linguistics, gender studies, and environmental humanities. Since tales are not only literary forms but also cultural records, they offer wide possibilities for collaborative and cross-disciplinary scholarship.

Thus, the future scope of research in this area is broad and intellectually promising. The translated tales of North-East India offer an important and still underexplored field for literary, cultural, and translational inquiry. Future research can expand this foundation by moving into comparative, linguistic, ethnographic, ecological, digital, and interdisciplinary directions, thereby deepening our understanding of the region's rich narrative heritage

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