

1 November 1992



Sahitya Akademi



India International Centre

Invite you to

**meet the author**

**Indira Goswami**





**T**his girl's stars are so bad that you will do well to cut her up in two pieces and throw her into the Brahmaputra," was what an astrologer had said about Indira Goswami to her mother. But possessed of an indomitable nature, Indira came out after each tragedy as if "baptised by fire". Literature was for her a refuge and writing became her passion.

Born in an upper class Assamese Brahmin family, Indira Goswami, popularly known as Mamoni Raisom Goswami to her readers and friends, grew up in Shillong where her father was a senior officer in the Education Department. Extremely close to him, his untimely death

was a great blow to her. The sensitive person that she was, she took a long time to get over it. What followed was an abortive bid to take her own life, futile attempts by her mother to marry off her rebellious young daughter, and various other emotional entanglements in search of happiness.

And then came the most memorable phase of her life, peaked by immense happiness and immense sorrow—her marriage in 1965 to Madhavan Raisom Iyengar and his terrible death in a jeep accident barely two years after their marriage. His death left her completely shattered for some time. But slowly from the dark recesses of despair she rose to come to terms with life again finding solace in completely losing herself in research and writing. After a brief stint as a teacher in Goalpara Sainik School, she joined the Delhi University.

Indira Goswami's innate sensitivity and capacity to give felicitous verbal expression to the same was first recognized by her patron Kirtinath Hazarika, a leading editor in those times. It was he who encouraged her in her early literary efforts and



*With some eminent writers.*

published all her stories.

Indira Goswami's writings touch upon diverse themes ranging from the sordid to the sublime. "Her canvas is wide and includes impressions of life and people in all their spectacular variety and richness." Sensitive without being sentimental she manages effortlessly to draw her readers into the narrative. Using very few stylistic devices to mar the flow of her pen, she weaves fascinating tales against a backdrop of human deprivation and exploitation and an authentic feel of the locale of her stories. *Chinavar Srota* (As the Chenab Flows), her first novel, is a sympathetic portrayal of the lives of a group of labourers engaged in building a bridge over River Chenab. It is a work marked by vivid realism, penetrating insight and a deep poetic sensibility. *Mamaro Dhara Tarawal* (Rusted Sword), which received the prestigious Sahitya Aka-

demi Award in 1983, exposes brilliantly the hypocrisy, deceit and selfishness that masquerades as respectability. All the characters in this novel come to life with a rare brilliance and reality. Another of her novel *Une Khowa Howda* (Moth-eaten Howda), which raised quite a few eyebrows when it was first published, exposes some unpleasant aspects of life in the village Sattras (Vaishnav Ashrams of Assam). A close observer of life in these Sattras, of whom her father was an important functionary, she had an intimate and first hand knowledge of what went on these sequestered institutions.

*Ahiron*, another of her novel revolves round the lives of the labourers engaged in building an aqueduct over River Ahiron in Madhya Pradesh. Highly readable, it is a message of hope in a world marred by grief and brutality. *Neel Kanthi Braja*, the novel with which she came



Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma releasing Selected Works of Indira Goswami, 1989.

into prominence, is a moving portrayal of the lives of the wretched widows of Vrindavan. Abandoned by their relatives, these hapless women are often driven to prostitution for their living. The bestiality in men was for the first time viewed by her from very close quarters in this holy land of Krishna. Pulsating with life and inviting the reader's participation in it, Indra Goswami, without being too obviously feministic has deftly portrayed the anguish of these women and lashed out against it in her typical humanistic fashion.

In her much acclaimed autobiography *Adha Lekha Dastavej* (The Unfinished Autobiography) we get a glimpse into her life upto 1970. Adopting a technique of presentation that keeps the reader spellbound, she sizes up the events and characters and people she has come across in her own life with a clarity that must be the envy of many a biographer. The rare courage with which she has faced life, which has not been too kind to her, comes out powerfully in this book. Her deep observation of the life and locale wherever she happened to be is also evident throughout. In fact it has all the makings of what an



*At Belgium.*

autobiography should be and leaves the reader eager for a sequel.

A competent short story writer too, Indra Goswami has more than 300 short stories to her credit. Her stories and novels have been widely translated into English and other languages.

Having done her Ph. D. on a comparative study of the Ramayana in Assamese and Hindi, she is currently Reader in the Department of Modern Indian Languages in the University of Delhi. Her research papers have been published in numerous research journals and



*With Akademi President Dr. B.K. Bhattacharyya.*

she has presented papers in many National and International seminars. A recipient of several prestigious literary awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, Indira Goswami has travelled widely in India and abroad. She is also a member of the Association of

Indian Authors, the Central Board of Secondary Education, the Assam Lohak Samabhai and the Board of Studies (Assamese) in the Banaras Hindu University. She was in the Advisory Board of the Central Sahitya Akademi from 1983 to 1988.

## A Select Bibliography

### ASSAMESE

#### NOVELS

- NEEL KANTHI BRAJA: Guwahati, Lawyers Book Stall, 1976; Students Store, Guwahati, 1988
- AHIRON: Guwahati, Students Store, 1988; 1989 (2nd Edn.)
- MAMARA DHARA TAROWAL: Guwahati, Saraighat Printers, 1980; 1984 (2nd Edn. Guwahati Dutta Barua & Co.); 1987 (3rd Edn., Guwahati Chandra Prakashan); 1990 (4th Edn., Guwahati, Chandra Prakashan)
- UNE KHOWA HOWDA: Guwahati, Bani Prakashan, 1988; 1990 (2nd Edn.)
- SANSKAR UDAYBHARNUR CHARITRA ETAYANDI: Calcutta, Sreebhumi Publishers, 1989; 1990 (2nd edn)
- ESHWARI JAKHAMI YATRI ETYADI (Anthology of one novel and two long stories): Guwahati, Jyoti Prakashan, 1990
- ADHA LEKHA DASTAVEJ (Autobiographical Novel): Guwahati, Students Store, 1988; 1990 (2nd Edn.)

#### SHORT STORIES

- CHINAKI MARAM: Guwahati, Lawyers Book Stall, 1962
- KAINA: Guwahati, Dutta Barua & Co., 1966
- CHINAVAR SROTA: Guwahati, Lawyers Book Stall, 1972
- HRIDAYA EK NADINAM: Guwahati, Sahitya Prakashan, 1990; 1991 (2nd Edn.)

### ENGLISH

- THE SHADOW OF THE DARK GOD AND THE SIN (English translation of *Neel Kanthi Braja*): New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1986
- SELECTED WORKS OF INDIRA GOSWAMI: Delhi, D.K. Publishers, 1988
- I AND MY WRITING: Delhi, 1990
- AN UNFINISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHY (Tr. of *Adha Lekha Dastavej*): New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1990
- SAGA OF SOUTH KAMRUP (Tr. of *Une Khowa Howda*) (In press)
- SELECTED SHORT STORIES OF INDIRA GOSWAMI: Delhi, D.K. Publishers (in press)

### HINDI

- NEEL KANTHI BRAJA. Delhi Janaprita Publication.
- JIVAN KOI SAUDA NAHIN: Delhi, Saraswati Vihar, 1992

### TRANSLATION

- PREMCHANDER CHLOTI GALPA (Anthology of Short Stories of Premchand); New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1975, 1990 (2nd Edn.)
- ADHA GHANTA SAMAYA (Tr. of Malayalam Novel *Aranazhikaneram*): New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1978.
- JATAK KATHA (Stories from Jataka): New Delhi, Publications Division

## A Chronology

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|-----------|--|--------|--|
| 1964 :    | First short story 'Chinaki Maram' published.   | 1986 : | Visited Europe and the U.K.  |
| 1965 :    | Marriage with Madhavan Raisom Iyengar.   | 1988 : | Assam Sahitya Sabha Award for <i>Une Khowa Howda</i> (Moth-Eaten Howda).<br>Visited Bangkok.<br>Dramatization of <i>Mamare Dhara Tarowal</i> in Assamese.  |
| 1967 :    | Death of Madhavan Raisom Iyengar in a jeep accident.   | 1989 : | Received Bharat Nirman Award.<br>Dramatization of <i>Udayabhanu Charitra</i> .<br>Member of Arts Faculty, Delhi University (till 1992).  |
| 1968 :    | Joined Goalpara Sainik School as a teacher.  | 1992 : | Visited Indonesia as delegate of Government of India at the 9th International Conference on Ramayana.<br>Received Sauhardya Samman from Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sanshan.<br>Dramatization of the well-known story 'Samskara' into Assamese.<br>Short story 'Udang Bakash' made into a telefilm in Assamese |
| 1969-70 : | Granted Sri Sankar Dev Scholarship. Joined Delhi University as Lecturer of Assamese.   |        |  |
| 1972 :    | First novel <i>Chinavar Srota</i> published.   |        |  |
| 1973 :    | Conferred Ph.D. by Gauhati University for her thesis 'Comparative study of the Ramayana of Madhava Kandali and that of Goswami Tulsi Das'. |        |  |
| 1976 :    | Visited Japan & S.E. Asia.   |        |  |
| 1983 :    | Received Sahitya Akademi Award for <i>Mamare Dhara Tarowal</i> .<br>Member of Advisory Board for Assamese, Sahitya Akademi.                |        |  |



*Receiving Bharat Nirman Award.*