Central Institute of Indian Languages

53rd Foundation Day Lecture Series

Lecture 32

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Tibeto-Burman languages of North-East India with reference to Manipur

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Ch. Yashawanta Singh retired from Department of Linguistics, Manipur University and is currently Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. He is a specialist in Tibeto-Burman linguistics and works extensively on Meitei and many smaller languages of Manipur. He has contributed to several important projects in the country including UGC and ICSSR. He was involved in various Consortium Projects such as Development of North East Languages - WordNet (IIT, Bombay); Shallow Parser Tool for Indian Languages (Central University of Hyderabad), and Indian Languages Corpora Initiative (JMU). His publications include Manipuri Grammar (in English and Manipuri), Koieng Grammar, Tarao Grammar, Rongmei Grammar. He is also a creative writer and has three books of poetry to his credit.

North East India can be called as a mini-India because of its diversities in language, culture, ethnicity, etc. The region has three major language families, namely, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Indo-Aryan with Tibeto-Burman being the largest group spread across eight states. Most of these languages are undescribed and several are endangered. Manipur is home to many Tibeto-Burman languages with several degrees of endangerment, most of which are less-studied and low-resourced. In this talk, I will describe the linguistic scenario of Manipur with special reference to the Tibeto-Burman languages, discuss the status of language documentation and description, and emphasise the need to conserve, protect and promote these languages for both scientific and community use.

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