



Note on Orthography and Usage

I HAVE CHOSEN TO RETAIN the common usage “Assam” in preference to recent variations such as “Asom” and “Axom.” While I use “Assamese” to refer to the inhabitants of Assam, I use “Asomiya” for the language.

I use “tribe” and “tribal” in deference to common usage in northeast India, where these words are not yet politically incorrect, indeed are seen as a badge of honour as against references to “caste” populations. In other regions of India “Adivasi” or “Adibasi” (original dweller) has supplanted “tribal,” but the former term is used in northeast India solely by the descendants of “coolie” labourers who wish to build political and other links with their brethren elsewhere. Even among them the term “Tea-Tribe” is in wider use.

Other terms such as “coolie,” “savage,” and “native,” which convey opprobrium yet have historically specific meanings, are used with quotation marks at first appearance, but those are dropped thereafter in the interests of keeping the text readable.

Surnames such as “Barua,” which are transliterated differently by different people, are used in a single form except in quoted matter. Given the many people with the same surname, first names and initials are used to distinguish one from the other.

Place names such as “Guwahati” and “Nagaon” are given in their current form. However, I have retained older, better-known spellings for places such as Calcutta and institutions such as Gauhati University.