

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EASTERINE KIRE'S WRITINGS IN ENGLISH

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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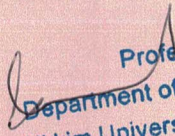
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Theoretical Perspectives on Easterine Kire’s Writings in English**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the Language and Literature embodies the result bona fide research work carried out by **Rebecca Karki** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, diploma, association and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.


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THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EASTERINE KIRE'S WRITINGS IN ENGLISH

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Rebecca Karki

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Chapter- I

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Easterine Kire's writings depict an enchanting and vibrant Naga culture as evident from the myriad, oral and the historical narratives of Nagaland which has always fascinated the outside world. Her works bespeak of life experiences deeply rooted in culture with artistic imagination that often projects an existential reality. The spirit of tradition captured in the forms of stories, dances, myths, and legends, represent the beliefs, cultures, and relation with nature displaying thereby, the vitality and vibrancy of the system. Easterine Kire's fictions present history, culture and the Naga Spirituality.

She was deeply concerned with the writings about the sufferings and the kind of life she and her people lived during the first few decades of the fierce war between the Indian Army and the Naga freedom fighters. The stress of living during such terror was personally felt by her. She asserts, "Threats were also directed at me when an article of mine appeared in the papers protesting the killings...every movement of my family closely monitored and the horror of sitting up in the night with a double barrel gun to protect my children against stalkers" (Kire). Her desire to represent the tradition is partly from her own experiences and the knowledge acquired from people's collective memory. Some of the major themes of her fictions in English are the men's relationship with nature and culture, the quest for feminine identity, women's repression and their silent

narratives. Selected genres of texts such as children stories, short stories and novella of Kire have been taken up for this proposed study.

1.2. The Author and Her Works

Easterine Kire as a poet, novelist, and writer of short stories and children's books emerges as one of the most prolific writers from Northeast India who preserves, revives and recreates the Naga tradition through her novels and short stories. She was born on March 29, 1959 into an Angami Naga family in Nagaland, India. She was awarded the Governor's medal for excellence in Naga Literature. Kire currently is based in Northern Norway. She moved to Tromsø, Northern Norway in March 2005. Besides teaching in Norway, she also concentrates on writing and has published books with growing passion to help her people "especially the young ones because this period away from my homeland has to be utilized positively" (Kire). Her latest work "Jazz Poem in Northern Norway" has an expressive outlook towards the demand of progressive readership. She aspires to write books for the younger generation which are culture-specific as she feels the only hope is in the young ones.

Easterine Kire started publishing children's books which present a graphic depiction of nature that is rooted in Naga culture- like, *Dinkypu* (2012), *The Log Drummer Boy* (2013) and *The Dancing Village* (2015), reflecting positive and rich values rooted in the Naga cultural values. Her book *Forest Song* (2011) is a collection of seven short stories about how deeply the stories entrenched Naga spirituality with different social issues where there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual. She also shows the similarities of beliefs shared by Nagas and Igbo African cultures. Her latest book *Don't Run My Love* (2017), centers on behavioral and social issues concerning the

lives of women. It raises questions of respectability and reputation in a patriarchal society. It is a story that talks about how men can turn vicious and how women are never really safe no matter where they are - be it in a village or in an urban society. This novella's storyline seems to be quite similar to the popular western children's fairytale.

1.3. The Naga Society

The Nagas, inhabiting North East Frontier of India, belong to the Mongolian race of the Indo- Mongoloid group of the Tibeto- Burman branch of Sino- Tibetan family. Nagaland, a state which is relatively an "unexplored", tribal region is home to sixteen tribes, which have their own distinct languages, social customs, traditions, beliefs and practices. The lives of the Nagas evolve around the tribes, villages, family, and clan. The tribes have their own dialect so each tribe communicates through Nagamese Creole and English. The people are self-sufficient, as their lives are based on the agricultural cycle. The Nagas always considered their land as an independent nation and every Naga village as an independent republic since no tribe has dominated or ruled over the other.

Prior to the British rule, headhunting was widely prevalent but with educational advancement and the progress of Christianity, the practice gradually disappeared. The largely illiterate Naga community was confined only to the oral tradition which consists of such forms as myths, legends, and folktales. Through these major forms of oral tradition, the lore of the people is kept alive connecting the past to the present. N. Scott Momaday, an American Indian writer defines Oral tradition as that "process by which the myths, legends, tales and the lore of a people are formulated, communicated and preserved in language by word of mouth, as opposed to writing" (qtd. in Sen: 99). The Nagas use the means of storytelling to propagate the cultural values, their view of reality

and value systems. The young Nagas find their folklores and folktales narrated by an elderly person around the herd. Pou quoted Amadou Ba's importance on Oral narrators. He asserts, "Every old man that dies is a library that burns" (qtd. in Pou: 73).

Even today Naga literary tradition is largely oral in character though there is a significant body of written literature as well which is on growing importance. In Pre-literate Naga society, the elders made conscious effort to impart and preserve ways of the tribes, so the establishment of 'Morung' was promoted to encourage the tradition of learning. Pou explains the importance of the 'Morung' by quoting Easterine Kire. She says:

These were large houses in which young boys were initiated at the age of fourteen or fifteen in order for them to receive cultural education and learn the ways of the tribe. Young girls at the age had a corresponding house. Both houses had a presiding elder or parent, who was responsible for their cultural initiation (qtd. in Pou 74).

The Morung serves as an educational centre for young men and young women. The young men acquire cultural values; learn stories and gain an understanding to be a responsible member of the society. The young girls of the same age group learn the things associated with women.

1.4. Christianity and Western Education

Long ago, prior to the British rule, when the Nagas lived secluded from the outside world for decades, they could do anything they wished. They talked about myths, stories, songs and sang lays and paid tribute to their land. The nineteenth century constituted a remarkable era which brought the Nagas into contact with the outside world, witnessing

the arrival of the British administration and American Christian missionaries. Naga territory began to be rightly claimed from the time when the British troops under Captain Francis Jenkins and R. B Pamberton attempted to discover a route from the land of maitais: Imphal to the land of the Assamese: Assam through the Angami – Naga region/locality. The first time the Nagas were visited by Europeans was on January 18, 1832 Jimomi quotes Mackenzie, “When Captains Jenkins and Pamberton with a party of 700 soldiers and 800 coolies marched from Manipur valley via Popolongmai, Samaguting and Dhansiri to Mohung Dizao on the Jamuna. They had literally to fight their way through the whole Kacha Naga and Angami Naga Country” (qtd. in Jimomi: 26).

The Nagas were totally innocent, pleased and satisfied within their own small world. They were inattentive about the western world which was trying to overpower and establish control over their territory. They got distracted by the advent of the British rule. The Naga tribesmen opposed the British authority to keep hold of their socio-cultural system. They finally defeated the British in 1880, which later came to be known as one of the terrible fighting in the hills (Pou 61). The white people invaded the Naga territories, where mostly they came as missionaries, ethnographers, geographies, and anthropologies.

British colonialism shattered the old traditional practices and replaced it with their new ones. Elwin asserts that the British officials perceived as “necessary to civilise and humanize the hill communities through the spread of modern education and Christianity” and the British labeled the territory of Nagas as “backward area”. They controlled the primitive tribes “in a simpler and more personal manner than those of the more civilised and longer settled tribes” (Elwin 34, 35). Therefore, the American Christian missionaries were assigned to educate the Nagas, their main purpose was to spread Christianity.

During the war period, the life of the Nagas was totally disturbed. Easterine Kire asserts “the villages that were found rebellious were burned and their population scattered into other villages for specific period of time. The burning of houses and scattering of village populations destroyed the setting of oral narratives effectively” (Mahanty). Oral literature was silenced for a period of time because of the wars. Kire avers the Nagas experienced “the silencing of Oral narratives at critical periods in their history” which was “the first silencing of our narratives” (Mahanty).

Prior to the advent of the British rule, the Nagas lived in isolation. They practiced a religion similar to animism. The analysis of religion will be explored and discussed later in the Chapter through ecological perspectives. War affected firstly, the Naga literature leading to the silencing of oral narratives and secondly, it interfered with the Naga lives which caused destructions of Naga culture. It was at this point of time in 1872, that the American missionaries entered the territories of the Nagas. The American Christian Missionaries were the forerunners of the British administration. They dedicated their life serving the Nagas, despite knowing the fact that the Nagas were headhunters.

The first American missionary to bring the literary figure in the region was E.M Clarke, of Dutch origin. On December 22, 1872, Dr. E.M Clarke and Mrs. Mary Mead Clark with the other missionaries established a Baptist Mission Centre at Molungyimsen village in Ao Naga Hills. It was observed that the Nagas had positive feelings towards the doctrines of Christianity. Christianity and education went side by side. E. M Clarke was also the first to introduce education where he translated and printed a hymn book and “The Lord’s Prayer” for the purpose of converting the Nagas (Chasie). The Roman script was introduced to transcribe the local Naga dialect into a written form. As a result, the

missionaries introduced the written forms. The second missionaries who came forward to work were Rev. C.D. King and Mrs. King. They were the first missionary couple who established the Kohima Baptist Church, in Kohima district. They decided to work among the Angamis. Thirdly, in 1896 Rev. William Pettigrew took initiative, working among the Tangkhuls in Ukhrul. The new ways of seeing the world were felt by all the people with the spread of Christianity. The mission schools, hospitals were established by educating the primitive tribes. Presently all the Nagas are Christians. The Christian missions took an active role in bringing positive changes. By preserving their language they introduced the Roman script.

The British remarkably transformed the Naga culture, beliefs, and cultural values. Their philosophies, music, religion, were drastically changed. The folk songs were replaced by church hymns. All the techniques used by the British policy for introducing western education created alienation from the traditional and cultural practices. The most important loss was the disappearance of Morung, which Mrs. Clark clearly claimed to be as “congregating promiscuously” (140).

In spite of the tremendous loss, Christianity brought a wider world with new avenues, civilising the people. Charles Chasie states “it was also responsible in large measure for the destruction of Naga culture and traditions at its very core” (Chasie).

1.5. Impact of the Two World Wars

With the coming of Christianity and western education in Nagaland, the Nagas aimed to create a common identity. The thought of modern Naga identity promoted peace, feeling of oneness and solidarity. Regardless of all the positive changes, colonial rule turned Naga society “upside down and ushered in profound changes that would leave indelible

scars that could never be erased”. (Chasie). The British administration brought the issues regarding the Naga Political Issue. The Nagas for the first time realized that a unified homeland was needed therefore the story about the Naga movement started. In 1916-17, 2000 Nagas were enrolled as Labour Corp, by the British Government to help the Allied forces in France during World War 1. Jimomi while talking about the results of the Nagas being a part of the war, asserts that,

“The impact of the World War 1 was great. The Nagas came back with unusual experience as to how the great civilisation fought for their motherland and supremacy among the nations. Many Nagas who came back from France, brought money and purchased land properties and cattle . . . and brought many fruit seeds which enriched the horticulture in the Naga Hills” (111).

With the exchange of mutual understanding the Nagas brought a greater sense of identity and led the formation of the first Pan- Naga organisation known as the Naga Club in 1918 at Kohima. The Simon Commission visited the Naga Hills in 1929 and submitted a memorandum that demanded exclusion from proposed Reform Scheme of the Government of India. The outcome of this demand was successful. The Government of India Act excluded the Reformed Scheme in 1935 from the Naga Hills. As far as writing is concerned, Charles Chasie asserts that no writings had appeared till then except for some reports and “travelogues” by serving British officers (Chasie).

During the British rule, the Nagas saw two wars. It was during the year 1942-1944, the Second World War started. Kohima the District headquarters of Naga Hills, became the mainland of the war. It was the Battle of Kohima, where the Japanese dominated and controlled Burma and infiltrated the territory of Kohima, eventually

leading to the victory of the Allies. In South East Asia, Lord Mountbatten the supreme commander of the Allied Forces asserts that “the battle of Kohima will probably go down as one of the greatest battle in the history”. The Nagas supported the Allied Forces, with the aim to preserve their home and identity. Jimomi asserts “It was astonishing without any skilled training; the Nagas unknowingly had trained themselves. Every Naga stood by the Allied Forces and helped them in that decisive battle of Kohima” (112). The war brought total disruption, where most of the villages were bombed. The Nagas had to leave their homes as the war hindered their life.

Easterine Kire says that it was through this war that caused the “second silencing of Naga narratives” because during this time the people were anxious and worried rebuilding their lost homes because of the war (Mahanty). There were some well educated Naga writers, who could indulge in writing and educating the Nagas in different schools. During the course of the war, no one had the time to devote to writing, since people cared of surviving apart from anything else. There were few educated Naga writers, for instance, the political writing of T. Sakhrie, Joint Secretary of the NNC. Some of the educated political Naga elites during that time were Mayangnokcha first Naga graduate, Imti Aliba, the Secretary of the NNC, Khelhoshe Sumi Co-member of the Bordoloi Sub-Committee on India Reforms, Zapu Phizo Angami the President of the NNC.

After the war, the Naga National Council (NNC) was formed in 1946. The motive behind forming this (NNC) was to provide independence for the Nagas. After the British left the Nine Point Agreement was formulated and it declared freedom on the eve of independence of India for the Nagas on 14th August 1947. Kaka D. Iralu remarks that

“The message of this declaration was sent to the King of England, the Government of India and the Secretary General of the United Nations” (21). A bitter phase began after the declaration which brought conflict between the NNC and Government of India. An undeclared war waged between the Naga army and Indian army. In order to stop the war and bloodshed, Naga People’s Convention was formed. Finally, under the state of Nagaland Act 1962, the state of Nagaland was inaugurated on December 1, 1963, as the sixteenth state of the Indian Government. Even after the Indian independence, because of the political turmoil’s, the Nagas could not engage themselves in writing. Easterine Kire also says that there was another silencing of Naga narratives, and the written word began to be represented as a sign of resistance.

1.6. The Dawn of Naga Literature

The Nagas are traditionally an oral society. Earlier they did not have any script and writing was unknown to them. Naga Literature is of recent development, though surprisingly during the early ‘70s literary works were produced by three educated Nagas- Zhapazulie, Khiezhie, and Lhoulienyu, who translated John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress into Angami. Naga writers writing in English made a late appearance on the contemporary literary scene with a gradual shift from oral to the written. Written literature became prominent only towards the end of the last century. The wave of Westernization and Christianization paved a way for education system and subsequently, Naga literature.

E.M Clarke, an American missionary was the first literary figure to be present in the region as early as 1872. It was during this time that the Naga language was recorded and was written down to Roman alphabet script. Ao language being the first to evolve in

literature translated and published the Gospel of Matthew and John. It was known to be the first book published for the Nagas. Various books of St. Matthew were also published in Angami and Sema. As noted by Charles Chasie the Nagas became “more determined about their independence, which became a cause. The Violence in the world continued, throttling any potential for growth of Naga literature” (Chasie). As time passed by, the Nagas emphasised on higher educational system which engaged them in writing. From 1967 onwards, the Government decided to develop the English version of literature in the state due to diversity of languages. Nagaland Statehood an authorised institution established in 1963, provided opportunities for writing. Writings on Nagas have been limited to a few subjects, as most of the early educated writers wrote only on politics, religion and history. Charles Chasie also asserts, “Naga ability for artistic creation was there” (Chasie). However, their priorities became disoriented accordingly; they had to reconstruct their identity by reawakening themselves. In such a condition, it was not favourable for the Nagas to read and write therefore there was less promotion of growth in literature. Since the turn of the century, the publishing houses and publishers encouraged and promoted books and writings in literature. A literature committee was formed among each tribe and church circles. This committee provided opportunities for publishing books in the field of their interest. North east region belongs to small language groups, and publishing in their own tongue would not provide much readership, because of this most of the writers started writing in English. What was recognized as a drawback in the region was turned into its advantage and therefore captured the audience’s attention and made it easier for people to read it.

The periods of growth of books and literature according to Charles Chasie can be classified into four different categories: British Period, Post British Period, the 1970s to turn off Century and New Millennium. It was from the early 70's that the Nagas started writing about themselves but before that the British anthropologist, Christian missionaries wrote about the Nagas. In 1970's the Art and Culture department of Nagaland documented the first authentic document of traditional knowledge as *Folk Tales from Nagaland* and revised in 1989. Easterine Kire translated more than 200 Tenyimia oral poems into English. Though in recent years there have been works of literature which encourages and invites the audience and readers to know the Naga situations. But what has been extremely lacking as a whole is, to seek out the unique characteristics imbued with a sense of past, and owing to the fact that these are the voices that should be heard across the country. M.K Naik, notes down that in any work of Indian Literature, works by a writer of Northeast Indians never mentioned. In his recent book with Shyamala, A. Narayan entitled "Indian English Literature: 1980-2000" only two works of Northeast Indian writers in English have been mentioned. It clearly limits the corpus of writing in English reducing down the varieties of literature. Amit Chaudhuri asserts: "Had they (the critics) done to bring the marginalised voices to our notice, our view of Indian writing in English would be a more heterogeneous and unexpected one that it has been in the last 25 years" (Chaudhuri 26).

The state began to produce various literary works of art, the art which should be adjudicated on its artistic creation, but the people are ignorant about the rich and diverse literature that the state has started to produce. Easterine Kire in her interview with CNN-IBN stated, "About thirty years ago there wasn't much literary production from the

northeast in the sense that it weren't getting published, we had very little translated literature in English and whatever was available was poetry and writings by anthropologists on the region" (Kire).

Easterine Kire perceives that the Naga literature has been misinterpreted by many people that "it is still very young". She tries to find and clear the misinterpretations and says that "the Naga literature has been since the settlement of forefathers in different villages". She persuades the people and the young generation to go to the villages, interact with the elders and listen to them because "they are the living books as they have the literature in their heads" (Kire).

1.7. Chapter Plan

The dissertation is organised into five chapters. The First Chapter 'Introduction' discusses the development of literature in Nagaland. It also introduces the Naga socio-political and cultural landscape from the pre-colonial era until the departure of the imperial power. The influence of western culture, religion, and education which changed and shaped the social life of the Nagas by the British has been critically studied. It also introduces the role of writings by Nagas about themselves and the contemporary Naga literature with an amalgamation of the written and the oral.

The Second Chapter 'Eco-Consciousness in the Writings of Easterine Kire', examines the traditions and cultures of Nagas linked with the Nature. Various works on Kire's from Children's text *Dinkypu* (2012), *The Log Drummer Boy* (2013), *The Dancing Village* (2015) and short stories *Forest Songs* (2011) has been discussed critically using the ecological concerns, classifying under the Deep Ecology, examining the communities spiritual traditions and representing a quest for ecological dwellings. The study has

examined the ways the author salvages the stories from the past and rewrites them to claim an identity through the idea of mystic reterritorialization. A new aspect on Nature has been discussed and analysed critically using Easterine Kire's text, evoking the understanding that if we bring back nature we are bringing back the culture.

The Third Chapter, "Womanist Consciousness in the writings of Easterine Kire" deals with the introduction of the status of women in Angami Naga society and the drawbacks of living in a patriarchal society. The concept of gender through the reiteration of performance and how society constructs gender in Naga Society has been critically discussed and analysed. The change in the position of women with the arrival of Christianity and education has been discussed. Easterine Kire's work using Womanist Theories and the reworking of the tale by the author in creating women's liberation from patriarchy has been discussed and analysed.

The Fourth Chapter "Indigienity and Animism in the writings of Easterine Kire", examines the cultures and tradition linked with indigenous animistic religion. The Angami Naga practices, beliefs and superstitions have been discussed using the available resource which is contributed by J.H Hutton. The chapter has critically explored the text *Forest Songs* (2011) by Easterine Kire which emphasises particularly on *Tenyimia* (angami) rituals and culture. The chapter has analysed the stories that the world does not know releasing the bridge built between the Northeast Indians and its mainland.

The 'Conclusion' sums all the above chapters in a nutshell.

1.8. Aims and Objectives

This research plan is an attempt to apply theoretical and critical approaches to the study of Easterine Kire's selected text. Descriptive criticism will be based on the texts *Dinkypu*

(2012), *The Log Drummer Boy* (2013) *The Dancing Village* (2015) *Forest Song* (2011) and *Don't Run My Love* (2017). It will be analyzed or studied using Ecological and Womanist Theories independently. It will aim to evaluate the conscious sense of nature, culture and how the idea of gender is constructed in the texts. It is an inquiry which will necessarily involve library work extensively. The literature from the Northeastern part of India, particularly written in English and the translations into English have been identified and recognized by many parts of the world.

The literature written from the North East consists of different genres, which are incorporated in the syllabuses prescribed for universities in different parts of the country. The objective and task of encouraging creative writings in English in the North Eastern region have been going on through the evolution of a literary body called NEWF (North East Writers Forum). Although the Naga writers have given voice to almost all issues pertaining to the loss of nature, culture and also the other complicated issues. The state of Nagaland still is removed from its mainland India, even though the place brims with stories about life and living. Thus to gain a wider accessibility not only in its mainland but the world as a whole, one has to work on newer avenues by critically examining the literature for the young ones, for a wider audience which is new and promising. Easterine Kire a Naga author writing in English has reinforced the idea of nature with culture and the socially constructed issues. Through artistic imagination, she explores primitively structured tales as a means to create a literature in a world where patriarchy is pressurizing from within. The study is also aimed at evaluating how she reworked her tales to suit her Indian Northeastern readers.

1.9. Literature Review

Prior to the early Eighteenth century, the Nagas had a distinct culture centered on nature and believed in the existence of ancestral spirits. Any discourse on Naga Literature takes its sources from the Oral Traditions. British anthropologists, Christian missionaries wrote about the Nagas. But writing by Nagas about themselves began to appear only from the 70s. A preliminary study of useful works has been undertaken.

The first text on critical writings that emerged from Nagaland is KB Veio Pou *Literary Cultures of India's Northeast Naga Writings in English* (2015). This book provides and contributes to creative English writing in Nagaland which is worth acknowledging and essential for Naga writing in English. *Insider Perspectives: Critical Essays on Literature from Nagaland* (2017) Vizovono Elizabeth and Sentinaro Tsuren gives an overview of the insider's perspective on Naga writing by Naga writers. *Critical Essays on Naga Poets and Fiction Writers in English* (2016) by A. J S Sebastian has been referred to. These books critically analyze creative writing in English from Nagaland, but the drawback is that they lack in critically analyzing the ecocritical discourse and Womanist Theories from Easterine Kire's Children's text, short stories and novella. The core text which has been referred to for critical readings are Easterine Kire's *Dinkypu* (2012), *The Log Drummer Boy* (2013), *The Dancing Village* (2015), *Forest Song* (2011) and *Don't Run My Love* (2017) stressing on the importance of literature for young readers which is very essential in this particular age.

In addition to the above works on critical analysis a few works on the Nagas socio-cultural and political history has been critically emphasized from the works of Hokishe Sema's *Emergence of Nagaland* (1986) and *British Rule in Nagaland 1866-1947*(2013)

by Dr. V. Hokuto Jimomi. To examine the customary laws and traditional practices, *Women in Naga Society* (1998) by Lucy Zehol and *The Angami Nagas* J.H Hutton 1885-1968 has been examined.

1.10. Research Methodology

This research work is a theoretical study. It is to critically analyse and explore Easterine Kire's texts using the tools provided by ecocritical and womanist theories. For the purpose of this study, the concept of gender will be taken into account to look at the question of gender created through the reiteration of performance and how society constructs gender. The primary and secondary sources shall provide the data for investigation and interpretation. An interview of Easterine Kire has been used for understanding the forms of her writing. Various libraries across the country along with the libraries available online shall be visited and explored.

1.11. Research Gap

Many considerable literary works from the political to the social and cultural aspects have been published in Nagaland through oral tradition. However little works on children's text in the Indian context has been done. But virtually works on children's text remains a wide unexplored area in the region of Nagaland. The emphasis has been more on exploring the themes of culture through nature and issues related to women through Easterine Kire's children's text, short stories and novella which has been sorely lacked.

Chapter- II

Eco-Consciousness in the writings of Easterine Kire

2.1. Introduction

Literature has voiced ecological concerns of various kinds in various forms. This conscious effort made by humans in preserving nature is evident in the ecological concerns aforementioned. The relationship between Nature, man and God can sustain any Green Movement. Different communities hold a connection with nature, regarding it as its tradition. It interconnects and relates the five elements of the ecosystem - air, water, fire, sky, and earth. Nature ought to be appreciated owing to the fact that ecological balance functions for the survival and well-being of species. It becomes the ethical responsibility of man to preserve and respect nature as it is the centre of all physical and spiritual things. E.O Wilson asserts, “Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction” (Goodreads).

Nature carries all the cultural values encoded in folktales, traditions, beliefs, and practices through ecological perspectives. Therefore, ecological conservation becomes incumbent for the development and preservation of culture. Today in this present age, the subject of ecology performs the intellectual role with the study of the group of living things. Right from the ancient time the east believes and worships nature, and there is a sense of divinity towards nature. It is important to know the etymology and meaning of the word ecology. Ecology is derived from the Greek word ‘Oikis’ which means habitation and ‘logos’ meaning discourse. German Zoologist Ernst Haeckel described

ecology as an independent field of knowledge. In 1886 he coined the word Ecology with the ‘relation of the animal to its organic as well as its inorganic environment particularly its friendly or hostile relations to those animals or plants with which it comes in contact’ (25). In a broader sense, ecological perspectives will enclose all the cultural values with nature. The Oxford English Dictionary explains the important roles pertaining to ecology as the “science of the economy of animals and plants,” and Vinay Lal in his work, “Gandhi and the Ecological Vision of Life: Thinking beyond Deep Ecology” shares the opinion that “it implies the imperative to look animals, plants, and the environment to which they bear a relation” (17). Ecology becomes the study of the organism and the environment by humans, so it causes humans to carry out duties towards nature. Today the understanding of nature as an object has been subdued and dominated by technological advancement. These technologies tend to hinder the equilibrium between human and natural world. As a result, there is a loss of natural-cultural heritage.

2.2. Western Concept of Ecocriticism

In the age of environmental crisis, ecocriticism deliberated upon humans to appraise and develop the relationship with the natural world. In western literary tradition, Ecocriticism began in the 1990s as a literary discipline. This discourse focuses to trace the creative and imaginative ideas about literature, to bring about consciousness regarding the environmental problems today, which can make people alert and therefore make a difference in the way people live and act towards nature. “Ecocriticism” as a term was first used by William Ruerkert in his essay on “Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Ecocriticism” published in 1998. He defines Ecocriticism as “the application of ecology and the ecological concepts to the study of literature because ecology (as a science, as a

discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world” (107). It analyses the environmental issues and the relationship that exist between literature and nature in terms of ecological concepts. Cheryll Glotfelty one of the pioneers in this field defines it, “as the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment”. Cheryll Glotfelty in her essay “The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology” explains ecocriticism as the “interconnections between nature and cultures specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman” (18, 19). Ecocriticism specifically focuses on the ecological values in literary text and leads to the discussion of the combination of literary and natural scientific discourse. Currently, the world is heading towards ecological crisis and environmental catastrophe. As a result, Ecocriticism takes as an earth-centered approach to literature.

This literary discipline attempts to find and respond to the ecological crisis and environmental issues with deep ecological implications. Based on the ontological study of ecology everything is connected to everything else; Cheryll Glotfelty argues that ecocriticism “expands the notion of ‘the world’ to include the entire ecosphere”. Ecocriticism as a broad approach is also termed with “green studies”, “ecopoetics” and “environment literary criticism” (21). This literary approach or movement began in the United States where scholars worked during the 1970s and 1980s, and explored American nature writing through ecological concerns. In 1992, an Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was formed which widened this approach to an international level opening the branches in India, Australia, Japan, and Korea. It

aims to develop more ideas and values regarding human and nonhuman relation with nature and literature. Along with this (ASLE), with its journal Inter-disciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment was also established in 1993.

2.3. Indian Concept of Ecocriticism

India is home to a variety of ecosystems which includes the great mountains, forest, rivers, plateaus, and plains. There is a decrease in its natural balance where the environmental issues adversely affect the natural ecosystem. Presently in India, there is an increase in the discourse concerning ecology, environment, and nature related to literature. Ecocriticism as a literary discipline in India was introduced during the 1980s when Nirmal Selvamony started a course titled, “Tamil Poetics” at Madras Christian College. Three booklets entitled “tinai 1, tinai 2, tinai 3” was published by Selvamony with Nirmaldasan which inspired Ecocriticism in India. Selvamony also changed the course name to “Ecoliterature” in 1996.

Subsequently, in 2004, Madras Christian College organised the “3rd World Conference and the 11th All India English Teachers”. Its motives “were to strengthen the eco literature course, identify interested persons in the area, and initiate student community into the new discipline” (Alex 1, 2). The editor of the journal ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment, Scott Slovic took initiative in establishing “an Indian chapter of ASLE: Association for the Study of Literature and Environment India” (Alex 1, 2). Likewise, the period led to the establishment of more organised groups in India such as OSLE: Organization for Studies in Literature and Environment India in Chennai and its counterpart, ASLE India in Pondicherry. From

1980s onwards, there was a systematic development in regional ecocritical concepts and ecopoetry. As a result, Ecocriticism as a discipline flourished and extended extensively. The OSLE India published book collections—one entitled “Essays in Ecocriticism” (2007) and the other “Culture and Media: Ecocritical Explorations” (2014)—and three volumes of the Indian Journal of Ecocriticism; and twelve online issues of the OSLE India Newsletter. Ecocriticism as a literary discipline in India spread widely and is encouraging Indian scholars to analyse the indigenous and cultural literary text so as to understand the ecological implications of the people to its communities.

The North-east regions of India comprising Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, and Tripura have a rich ecological system. It embraces the high hills, mountains, lush green forests with rare flora and fauna, rivers, valleys, myths, and multi-ethnic people with vibrant culture and tradition. All these eight states, share and bind with a common ecosystem which is vibrant, colourful and rich. The tribal’s connect their life with the natural environment. Nature holds an intrinsic value on their folklores, festivals, beliefs, songs, dances and myths. They “practice an animistic faith that is woven around forest ecology and co-existence with the natural world” (Dai 42). However, with the forces of urbanization and westernization these regions adversely changed the relationship they once shared with nature.

Writing in English from Northeast India is relatively a new development. North East literature has appeared to raise voices regarding various issues. It has become a ‘distinctive voice’ in Indian Writing in English. Critical attention is needed in North East Indian writing in English in India itself with the aim of achieving a remarkable position not only in India but worldwide too. In *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-*

East India: Poetry and Essays, Tilottama Misra states about the nature of writing in English from North East India as:

An intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiation with ‘other’ cultures is a recurrent feature of the seven north-eastern states. Each small community or linguistic group has responded through its oral or written communication to the encounters with the majoritarian cultures from either mainland India or from outside the borders of the country, in its own distinctive manner (Misra 3).

It is the common themes and the ecological concerns that unite the North East Indian writers. The ecological beauty that the North East region is blessed with is celebrated and glorified by the writers with zeal towards ecological and environmental awareness. The writings in English from North East India focus on the ecological concerns along with myths, rites, and rituals of the tribes. It holds a strong bond with nature and culture. This bond creates the tribe’s identity and a sense of rootedness with their cultural heritage. N. Chandra and Nigamananda Das from *Ecology Myth and Mystery: Contemporary Poetry in English from Northeast India* asserts that,

“Northeastern part of India is rich in enshrining various aspects of the ecology, of the region. It has been a fashion with the poets of the region to celebrate the ecological glory of the region and their ecological awareness. The ruthless act of deforestation and oppression upon the Mother Nature in various ways by destroying the serenity of the nature, obliterating the natural environment, killing

rare birds and animals and distorting the landscape and biodiversity, have been sharply reacted upon . . .” (Chandra and Das 35)

Major writers from North East India who write about the environment, nature and cultural concerns are Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Robin S. Ngangom and Desmond Kharmawphlang.

2.4. Naga Traditions: Ecological Settings in Nagaland

Nagaland, which is relatively an unknown region, practices its own rituals. It has a rich culture, tradition and the rich forests which constitutes its ecosystem. Their livelihood depends on the traditional agricultural system. The forest, land, and ecology form their culture. Their primary source of livelihood is agriculture. The Nagas decorate their houses with different kinds of flora and fauna found in that region. Woods and Bamboos were largely used for constructing houses. They depend and practice traditional economic activities like Jhum cultivation referred to as shifting cultivation. Most Nagas do their domestic chores as: “Jhum system of cultivation, terraced field (settled cultivation), spinning, weaving, pottery, food gathering, hunting fishing and livestock” and these activities of Nagas have been recorded by early western writers such as Hodson (1911), Hutton (1921), Furer- Haimendorf (1936). All the natural ecosystem and the village ecology relate closely to the agro: ecosystem.

Naga ecological setting is the environment that includes the land and the forest. The sense of belonging and their historical roots are closely tied with the environment, nature, and culture which become an important element. The oral tradition in the form of myths, legends, stories, folktales functions with its history, culture, beliefs, and relation

with nature. The culture and traditions are distinct and vibrant consisting of folk songs, folk dances, accentuated by traditional music. The theme of music and songs glorify and praise important events of the past. They worship nature by performing folk songs and dances. Within the setting of Naga cultural milieu, nature with its independent existence plays a vital role. It reinforces their culture, their divinity, customs and rituals, thoughts, practices, common traits, fears, affinities and the destruction that has been closely linked with the loss of respect through man. Man, nature, culture, and spirit are all inclusive and no entities dominate the one or the other and remain outside the balanced ecosystem. In *Naga Cultural Milieu: An Adaptation to Mountain Ecosystem*, V. Nienu asserts:

The mountains and rivers of their land, combined with the indigenous flora and fauna, shaped the Naga life, culture to a great extent. Consequently, for the Naga people, the mountains are more than just a habitat; rather, the mountains are a scared vicinage- a scared landscape and heritage that helped forge Naga society, beliefs and identity (Nienu 34).

On the basis of the economic, social and cultural life the religion of the Nagas is characterised as ‘animistic’. The rituals they followed were close to animism. In *Naga Village: A Sociological Study*, Kewepfuzu Lohe asserts “There is no written dogma about the idea of God and faith . . . places like thick forest, rocks mountains, springs, lakes, rivers and the other natural objects are believed to be the abodes of these spirits” (26). No attempt has been made to reproduce mental images of spirits and deities in carvings or pictures as it is a very challenging task. The primordial Nagas worshipped and believed in two types of spirits- Benevolent and Malevolent. It is said that to render favour from both the spirits, the Nagas usually offered sacrifices. Easterine Kire, states the spirits

were “not malevolent to one who has performed the rituals” (Iralu 35). The rituals and the ceremonies performed by them enriched their religious and moral life. Even though their religious and spiritual sentiments are interwoven into the secular rites and rituals, they believe in the existence of a supreme being. Holding different names in different Naga dialect, the Angami called this supreme being as *Kepenopfu*, the Sumi called it *Alhou*, Ao referred to *Lijaba* and Konyaks prays to *Guwang*. The Nagas as nature worshipper had a very unique identity. Identifying the roots of one’s culture, man has to come close to nature. The rituals practiced were conducted by the village priests and shamans. Its spiritual rituals had certain taboos or *gennas*. The taboos and performance of *gennas* was:

“To maintain proper order and right relationship with Supreme beings, spirits, Nature and fellow human beings, . . . it brings blessings, success, victory, joyful life, achievement, propriety, and long life to those who hold on to it, . . . curse, failure, sorrowful life, poverty, and short life” for those who disobeyed” (Marhu 31).

When the British entered the Naga Hills, the primordial Nagas were busy with their own course of life which was close to nature. The west changed their cultural process with a political and social movement. The coming of the west in the alienated land imbibed modernity into the lives with a cultural transformation. The old ways of life were abandoned, and the Nagas started to put on the new clothes. It was when the Nagas started to learn new ways from the white they started turning back from their own songs and stories which led them forget their own culture. The close affinity that they had with the sky, the earth, the animals, the birds, and the spirits was changed. As the world is getting globalised, the social and cultural activities of the land lose their distinctive

characteristics. Even though nature was close to the whole tradition the Nagas had to discard their cultural heritage along with their religious beliefs. Today in this present stage the Naga Christian today requires a re-examination of the cultural heritage, which has been unwittingly discarded.

In order to talk or study about the cultural history or the roots of the people, there stands a condition – a condition to naturally shift to the primordial era to have the deepest understanding about the subject of man, culture and nature which co-existed. Nature was inseparable from the traditional practices before the advent of the whites. The transformation slipped away the unique culture and identity which the society began to forget. The question lies, how the future generation will study the present age that the Nagas lived. Are the culture and traditions still treasured? The answer lies with the Children. The children are the future of the nation and society. So, the present study has focus on how the forms in Naga Children's Literature through eco-consciousness can enhance the environment and cultural literacy through nature. Using the ecological concerns classified under Deep ecology, the human engagement with the environment, it has examined the wilderness and the spiritual tradition which represented a quest for ecological dwellings. The new aspect on Nature has been discussed using the Naga Children's Pictures books evoking the understanding that if we bring back nature we are bringing back the culture.

2.5. Easterine Kire's Works on Children's Literature: Finding Green Voices

What is Children's Literature? Most of us has read stories about beautiful princesses, fairies, goblins, witches the mythical creatures. All these come under the term

“Children’s Literature”. As a category-defining Children’s Literature is something that evades fixity of meaning. The statement “everyone knows what children’s Literature is until asked to define it” captures the essence of the issues that crop up regarding the definition of the genre. Fables, adventure stories, fantasy stories, fairy tales are all meant for children as well as adults and “young adults”. Children’s Literature is read by all, without having any particular audience it is universal in nature. Marah Gubar in her essay “On Not Defining Children’s Literature” asserts Children’s Literature as a very broad term is difficult to define (209). Like any other genre of literature, Barbara F. Harrison says in her essay “why study Children’s Literature” comprises of all the issues related to other text. Presently everyone is aware of the storybooks read but hundreds of years before, when there were no publications; Oral tradition took the form of narrating and passing down the stories, poems, and songs by the elders to the younger generation. It was one of the most important ways to educate, instruct and entertain children. Many stories were lost in time because the stories were been passed on verbally.

Children’s Literature developed quite lately as the concept of childhood developed only in the eighteenth century. Together with this concept, the development of Children’s Literature as a genre emerged. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the period of ‘The Golden Age of Children’s Literature’. This period developed stories with moral and high religious messages which were meant to direct children such as *The Water Babies*, *A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* (1862) by Charles Kingsley, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), by Lewis Carroll. As a whole Children’s Literature is not only written for Children, it was for adults and later adapted for children. The German brothers also published the book *The Grimm’s Tale* in the year 1812.

Picture books for children were a source for creating a pleasure of reading. It induces curiosity, wonder and entertains the children. Maria Popova in her essay, "A Brief History of Children's Pictures Books and the Art of Visual Storytelling" says Children's Picture books goes back to one hundred and thirty years, but it became popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Popova). Children's Picture Books help the children understand many facets of their environment and society, for better association of their lives with their surroundings. *Wild Things. Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin and Kenneth B. Kidd was the first to address the field of ecocriticism and children's literature in the book. Different aspects of children's culture, ranging from literature by J. M. Barrie, Beatrix Potter and Philip Pullman to nature magazines, songs and TV-shows involved ecocriticism. Rue Ramos and Ana Margarida Ramos say that Children's Literature results in offering a wide range of value systems about natural environment (95).

Since time immemorial, India has had its storytelling tradition, thus offering a new distinctive oral as well as written genre known as the Indian Children's Literature. Indian folklore is rich and it remains imaginative. Tracing back to the Panchatantra, written in Sanskrit in 200 Bc, the Jakatas, the Puranas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata epic as well as a large number of ancient Indian Sanskrit classics. The society's traditional means of social and moral instructions are to be found in the Indian tales and fables through Children's Literature. The North East Indian region is blessed with vibrant rich cultures, and its natural beauty. It has grand stories originated from oral traditions. The introduction of Children's Literature in North East India is important, as it helps the children in developing their thoughts, attitudes and culture. In some North east states,

several regional books on children were published by North East Indian writers. Presently, the same literature in English has been written by writers like Arup Kumar Dutta, Miltra Phukan, Mamang Dai and Tara Goswami. The introduction of the new literature entered early in Arunachal, Assam, as compared to Nagaland.

2.6. Naga Children's Literature

The Naga Children's Literature is of very recent development in the field of literary tradition. It began during the new era that is twenty first century. The idea of developing books for children was initiated by only one writer Easterine Kire. She first wrote a book on Children in Norwegian in 2009 entitled as *Loven I kjoeskapet* (The Lion in the Refrigerator). But she stopped writing in Norwegian, and thought of writing in English for the Naga people so she says "I made the switch" (Kire). Writing was 'a natural part' for Kire. Being ignored by its mainland India, Kire desires to sustain a wider audience so she started writing Children's books in English. There were no books for Naga children; and the land was totally unexplored in this new literature. It is considered to be a lesser known literature in the region. Therefore, she started writing books for Naga Children based on the themes of Naga culture.

Over the ages the Nagas lived a life close to nature and realised the importance of nature towards their lives. Presently, with the advent of modernisation and urbanization, the region refused to acknowledge nature by exploiting the natural resources which changed the relationship they once shared with nature. Kire comes from a society that is deeply rooted in its tribal tradition. Her works are praised with profound regard for the rich cultural inheritance. It carries a powerful impression from the oral tradition which is

an essential part of Naga culture. Kire takes the role of a custodian and environmentalists; she takes the responsibility of preserving the oral tradition and cultural heritage, salvaging them from the invasive forces of modernisation. She is marked by an insightful ecological sensibility which makes it relevant for an eco-critical reading and analysis. One of the central goals of environmental literary criticism, or ecocriticism, is “to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” (Kerridge 5). Professor Karin Lesnik-Oberstein states that “children’s literature offers one of the most extensive sources for the study of ideas about nature, the environment, ecology and the role of humans in relation to all of these, in contemporary society” (216). There ought to be more analysis on children books.

Oral tradition plays a very great part in the history and culture among the Nagas. They rely too heavily on the stories and poems and songs to trace their history. The ancestors pass the knowledge to the coming generation through storytelling. It was one of the most important forms in Naga culture. It is a tradition for Naga children to get together around the fireplace inside house or outside the house in a public space after the evening meal. The stories are told or narrated by the elders. Stories are acquainted not just for an entertainment but to be taught. Elizabeth comments, “Stories are the storehouse of knowledge in oral tradition and storytelling is the tool of education” (83). When the grandmother or grandfather starts to narrate or tell stories the children ought to follow the taboo of not interrupting the story as ‘silence’ is the rule (Pou 74). Children love stories so children can listen to many different stories. The yearning to listen to the stories of old is once again put forward in the Naga Children’s Picture books by Kire.

The Log Drummer Boy illustrated by Canato Jimo where the two children Hekani and Vitoto begged their grandmother to tell them another story. The storyline begins with the conventional narrative opening “Once upon a time” (Kire 11). Sitting together with the children, the grandmother went on narrating a story about a little log drummer boy Nokcha, who was interested in learning the traditional art of log-drumming. The young boy was excited to know that his grandfather decided to make him a small log drum. Ever since then the boy Nokcha would practice the beating of the drum into different rhythms. The Log drum was a very important item for the people to announce war or a very big festival. Therefore, the rhythm of the beat was very important.

The people recognise the rhythm of the beats and accordingly get alert. During the time of the harvest, on a particular day, Nokcha had sprained his ankle and could not go with his grandfather to the field. Suddenly on that day, the enemy warriors were waiting to lay siege on the village. Those were the days of conflict. Startled by the impending threat and encouraged by an old woman who was his caretaker of the day, the boy managed to run and reached the spot where the log drummer was kept and started beating out a warning beat continuously with his little hands moving fast as he could. Among the Nagas it was forbidden for the children to play the drums. Nokcha despite knowing the fact played the drum to save the villagers. The sound of the drum surprised everyone even the enemies because it sounded like many men were playing the drum. The beats alerted the villagers and they ran back to the village which made the enemies run away. But there were some enemies who fell into the hands of the villagers. The villagers were pleased with the little boy Nokcha as he saved the village from being attacked. Therefore, he was made the honorary drummer.

2.7. Symbolic Significance of a Log Drum

What is Log Drum or *Sungkong*? Log drum is derived from two words in Naga tribe- Ao dialect ‘Sung’ referred to ‘wood’ and ‘kong’ meaning ‘crow’. It may also mean a wood that crows. Significantly, the cock crows giving an alarm about the dawning of the day, so keeping this fact in mind, the Ao’s use to hew big woods so that they could make a log drum and use it as an alarm for all the people in the village; it was beaten conveniently when required. The log drum is considered to be an integral part of Naga life. It has a very significant role with their socio-religious and cultural facets. The village republic considers it to be a ‘living deity’. Log Drums are beaten by men to provide special information to all the inhabitants on all occasions from birth, festivals to the death news. Most importantly, it announces the time of the elders to meet up in order to declare warnings or emergency when the enemies are seen or group attacks to fight against them. The drums are also beaten by women during the festivals and during the ‘Yimkulen’, in English referred to as ‘village worship’ ceremony.

Certain rituals are performed to bring the log drum into the village. Firstly, a Naga man has to volunteer to donate a tree from his own forest or perform certain rituals to help them choose the right tree. Then the village youth cuts down the tree. The only tool for cutting the tree is *Dao* (a metal element used for cutting trees). The tree falling process is done only after performing a ritual. Therefore, it takes seven days, for bringing the tree from forest to village. After the traditional artwork with carvings is finished, the log drum is brought to the village through an indigenous process, where rituals and

ceremonies are held. Likewise, it is a custom for all the women to bring food and drinks for the youths who toe the log. Hence it is regarded as a very big festival.

Kire's Picture text *The Log Drummer Boy*, describes the significance of Naga culture and nature through the log drum which is considered as a 'living deity'. The concept of Deep ecology has a very influential position. Deep ecology signifies the importance on the inherent values of all living forms. The term 'Deep Ecology' was coined by Anne Naess in 1972. Deep ecology maintains the well-being of human and nonhuman lives on earth which has the intrinsic value in them. There are two unified basis that supports Deep ecology strongly. The first idea holds that all *biota* have equal intrinsic value which Naess and others call "biocentric equality". Second idea is the process of "self-realization" (Naess 1973, 95; Devall and Sessions 1975, 67).

The Nagas have deep seated beliefs in rituals and deities. The unknown deities and spirits have controlled their activities persistently. The log drum was considered by the Nagas to have an intrinsic value. It was ought to be respected and not to be taken for granted. The young boy Nokcha knew the importance of the log drum which made him curious. He has many questions regarding the Log Drum? He asks his grandfather, "Why did they speak to the log drum" (19). Grandfather replied saying, "In olden days we were told that the log drum is a spirit and that it protects the village. That is why we respect it and give it an honour. We believe we should address it as an honoured member of the community" (19). Therefore, the places like the thick forest, rocks, mountains, rivers are said to be the dwelling places of the spirits. Here the values and ethics that the primitive tribes hold can be seen. To the 'primitive' man, the so-called inanimate objects of nature are parts of the great pattern of the universe, absolutely throbbing and pulsating with life

and power and potent with medicines. Thus mountains and rocks, trees and rivers and even small pebbles on the river banks are believed to be “animate” with such “power” (Ao 80). All the elements of nature had spiritual significance in the society. Describing how the log drum is made, the young boy asks his grandfather whether it’s just a piece of wood. His grandfather provided him with detailed description of how the log drum was made. He says, “Before we cut down the tree, we talk to it and we tell the tree we need it to come and be the guardian of the village” (20). This description shows the relationship between the humans and the non humans that existed. Their lives are entrenched within the lap of nature. Nature through the images of trees and wood i.e. Log drum provides and guides the whole village. This brings out the notion, that the Naga people acknowledged and requested nature spirits to guide them as a “guardian”. It shows the respect and the dignity to non-human nature. Through these deep rooted beliefs, Nature becomes not only the guiding spirit but also the protector of culture. The mutual relationship and the mutual dependence toward nature provide all the positive traits and values in it. Nature is shown as superior. It tells the difference between the self and the other.

For the Nagas, Nature is not the ‘other’ but it becomes the ‘self’ rather nature becomes part of them and they become part of nature. Thus the relationship becomes symbiotic. Through this Children’s text, Kire is bringing out the perseverance of culture through nature. Children being the future of the society play a vital role. They are presumed to have a close relationship to nature and culture without any experience or understanding. The positive feeling that they carry and the role the environment plays in developing the independence and autonomy of the children. With the naturalised

backdrop it offers the hope that, children will surely develop the environmental values to become the future stewards of the earth and the society. Children will preserve the diversity and the wonders of nature and culture. Micheal W. Apple and Linda K. Christian –Smith states how children’s books bring reflection about the culture of a society. They assert that books are cultural artefacts that are “important vehicles for ideas” (Apple and Christian). The character Nokcha self-realized the value and worth of other beings. The method of self-realization is identification. By acknowledging the intrinsic value and worth of other beings, it leads to appreciate the harmony that exists between all life forms. Devall and Sessions assert that “if we harm the rest of Nature then we are harming ourselves. There are no boundaries and everything is interrelated” (68). The richness that all life forms have, contributes to the realization of all the important values.

Nature was alive and this idea was also believed by the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth. Presently in a blind race of modernisation, Naga society today is gradually losing touch with nature; they are far away from nature, and the environment. Kellers in his essay “Gleaning Lessons from Deep Ecology”, says that the boundaries created between nature and other beings are increased. The ‘life world’ within the self is much more included. He avers “a breakdown of the ontological boundaries between the self and the other . . . is achieved through the process of self realization”. Keller quotes Fox where he comments, “It is the idea that we can make no firm ontological divide in reality between the human and the non-human realms . . . to the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness” (qtd. in Keller :143). Nature is the centre of the self, there’s no sense of dichotomy. The binaries created between the

man and nature is to do away with self and the other. Nature and man is one continuous whole for the Nagas. It upholds holism. Therefore, the sense of nature detects everything however if the Nagas start deviating nature, their cultural roots become minatory. Nature is a term, “that needs to be contested not rejected” (Couple 171). The children’s text becomes a reminder to the indigenous people about their cultural heritage and to realise one’s interest towards nature.

Kire through the Children’s text salvages the stories of the past. She demonstrates mythic reterritorializations in her works. What is Mythic reterritorialization? Donnel in his book “Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place” states that Mythic reterritorialization occurs “when the writers salvage the stories and places from the past and rewrite them in order to claim an identity and to established a sense of place concurrent with their present sense of self” (24). Mythic refers to the stories that have been taken from oral tradition that tells of the history, spiritual and cultural events in order to open up the practice and belief that they follow. The work of N. Scott Momaday entitled, “The way to Rainy Mountain” (1969), links the past forms of oral tradition and “the past with his sense of the world and his conceptualizations of his own identity” (24). Likewise, Easterine Kire also provides the readers and her audience with the past forms of oral tradition. Hogan quotes white that “a historical representation of an event has elements that are inevitable literary and imaginative in nature” (qtd. In Dreese 26). Therefore the origins of our identities are constructed within the past. It begins by tracing back through historical representations to discover how the constructions of identities have developed, which is what Momaday is doing in Rainy Mountain. (26) For Kire, it is important for non-native as well as native readers to understand the cultures of the native, to recognise and value

the literature. She outlines the history of the past and reconstructs the stories. Her narratives claims or re-establishes the Nagas cultural identity with nature so that the Nagas help ensure cultural survival. For the Nagas everything stands in nature, the communion and the bond they share is with nature. They realise the intrinsic value and associates nature with its culture. Thus, Nature becomes sacrosanct.

2.8. The Folk Dance and Songs in *The Dancing Village*

The Dancing Village by Easterine Kire illustrated by Akuo Miachieo presents the rich textual description and pictorial depiction of nature and culture. The trees and forest are illustrated in the natural world. It functions as they were in reality, thereby still teaching real ecological lessons. For instance, “there was a bountiful huge forest in the villages, with fruits and vegetables” (Kire 23). The settings of the story between the two villages were filled with rich paddy fields and dense forest. The Nagas praise and glorify nature through festivals, music, and dances. So the problem of leaving this culture and nature practices, deepens the surface of ecological lessons. Therefore, the text not only depicts the positive elements but, it addresses the departure of humans from nature and culture.

Similarly, this book also began with the two kids Vitoto and Hekali who long to hear a story and says, “Mother, will you let Grandmother tell us a story” (13). The grandmother began telling the story of a young boy named Rongsen, who lived with his parents in a little Ao Village. Kire narrative delights equally the young and old to instruct them about the rich Naga cultural folk traditions. The seven-year old Rongsen longing to dance bridges the gap between the two tribes, the Ao’s and the Zeliangs. The little boy gets an

entire Ao Naga Village dance to the rhythm of Zeliang folk dances, leading the two tribes to hold each other in the celebration of nature and the bond of friendship they have.

Rongsen village resides in an area where the background setting flourishes with the outdoor environment which has lots of trees. The people practiced jhum cultivation, showing the ecological element that existed in the village. Rongsen parent was rich with a good plot of land. For their living they practice jhum cultivation and planted different kinds of vegetables and fruits. It is acceptable for the tribal people to harvest natural resources to make it useful for their profits. As the story continues, Rongsen is very much eager to go at his mother's village which he called as "papaya eating place" because the last time he visited the village it was the season of papaya (17). Even his mother thought of going back to her village this season as the people in the village would be busy working in the field as well as there would be ample of fruits. Lungzue's wanted her son Rongsen to enjoy as much as she enjoyed during her childhood days. The story shows, the little boy is happily running around the village garden. Finally, the time had come when Rongsen reached his mother village. The next morning Rongsen woke up hearing the beats of the drum. As Rongsen hears closely he could make out the sound of the Zeliang Nagas singing a folk song and performing folk dance which they were practising for their festivals.

What are Folk songs and folk dances? The word 'folk' means relating to the traditional art or culture of a community (Oxford dictionary). So folk dances include a particular dance which is considered as a part of people's particular tradition of that particular area. Folk songs are traditional songs, which are passed down by an oral tradition from one singer or generation to the upcoming generation. The richness of

tradition and culture are seen through the celebration of different festivals. The festivals are regarded extremely important which becomes part of their culture. The Nagas celebrate different kinds of festivals. It varies from one village to the other village. Above all they celebrate festivals during the harvest season therefore glorifying nature for blessing their crops. Jain et al, in “The Naga’s Saturnalia: Festivals and Celebrations of India asserts:

The richness of Naga heritage and tradition is revealed through majestic dances, songs, and games in the festivals. It transmits a vibrant message to the world on the uniqueness of the Naga people and their culture and the need to revive and protect the same as to gain due recognition in the world (Jain et al. 304).

The Naga folk songs are described to be romantic and historical. The songs narrate the stories of some famous legends or ancestor. The seasonal songs evoke the activities done in a particular agricultural cycle. The folk songs were associated with a spirit worship i.e. nature, war and immortality. It was originated largely from its traditions and laws according to the tribe they belong. The tone and meaning of the songs vary among the tribes. The folk songs are sung to seek blessings from God. Mostly Nagas celebrate festivals during harvest season. Apart from folk song, the folk dances and music are also extremely essential element to any Naga festival. The folk dances are performed in a group both by men and women in a synchronised fashion during festivals and religious occasions. They perform war dances and dances for hunting. The war dances are mostly performed by men. While performing the folk dances and songs, men and women wears different kinds of customs and ornaments. Through this songs and dances they thank and

worship the nature. Traditional musical instruments are also used while performing songs and dances. For songs they use *Tati* derived from Angami word which is a single string instrument. Bamboo Flute, Bamboo Trumpets, Bamboo mouth organ and log drums are also used. But with the advent of the whites, the Christian missionaries opposed the practises as they regarded to be associated with spirit worship and immorality. Therefore, translated versions of western hymns were the ones that led to the departure of the indigenous music partially from the Naga Hills.

Kire delights this text with the character of a little boy who was very excited to learn the Zeliang folk dance and the song. He discovered and learns the song and the dance. It was very easy to keep the rhythm of the dance. Every folk dance has different meanings associated with the symbols. The Zeliang folk dances symbolise the imitations of the movements of different birds, animals, and insects. This dance is known to be the hornbill dance. The deeper meaning of the Zeliang dance is about a young boy who changes into a hornbill bird for the reason that his stepmother treated him very badly. Rongsen mother had explained him about the importance or the meaning of the Zeliang dance.

It was the time for Rongsen and his mother Lungzeu to depart from that village and go back to their own Ao village. When Rongsen woke up early morning he was expecting to hear the sounds of drums, but he hears the birds singing melodiously. Nature as a beauty and wonder to all humans hold all the incredible secrets. It could be experienced and appreciated by all human beings. Rongsen's grandmother Temjenwala did not like it when Rongsen had explained how he had learned the Zeliang dance. They represented the Ao community which was totally different from the Zeliang. Grandfather Lipok said

“It is not right to teach your son the ways of another tribe. We are not zeliangs, we are Aos”. Your son is an Ao. He should learn to play the log drum, not dance the zeliang dance” (39). This incident shows the ideology prevalent within the society. This further created a conflict in the intercultural relationship within the family.

Rongsen was invited by his mother to catch some fishes in the riverside. He yelled saying “Oh look, the fish is doing a dance!” (41). The eagerness that the little boy had could be seen. Lungzeu realised that they had made mistake forbidding him of dancing. She also realised that her mother and father were the best dancers in their village. Therefore both the grandfather and grandmother realised that it would not be a bad thing for all to teach the youngsters the Zeliang dance. The people in the village were very keen to learn the dance and Lungzeu along with his son Rongsen came forward and began to sing and dance together. With the rhythm of the drum beats everyone in the village started learning the steps and grandfather Lipok carried another small log drum along with his friends. By playing the drums they altogether performed the festival for a long session. The little boy brought the two cultures together and embraced the celebration of friendship warmth with nature and culture. The effort to teach about the intrinsic value of nature through culture is shown in this text. The cultural and environmental presentation in the text is a call to return to nature as bringing back nature, brings back the culture.

Kire as a custodian wants the youngsters to fill the gap that the Naga culture has placed between the Nagas culture and nature. The idea of being spiritual with nature is reflected in the children’s text to reconnect the cultural heritage. It evokes the fundamental of Naga culture in order to bring a voice. The mythic stories relating to

spirituality takes us back to the past. The folk music and dances that her Children's picture text show connects the environment and landscapes that were during the time of their ancestors. The Children's text portrays how culture is respectfully portrayed. Likewise in "Original Memory," Harjo asserts the "importance of music for her people as an element that helps define and clarify events. Through music, the gaps that existed between past and present due to the linear Western concept of time can be filled as the music evokes recollection of events from the past" (42).

The folk music and dance that Kire has narrated through Children's text helps us to connect the past and the present. Easterine Kire fills up the gaps through her narrative that the people have left it. The folk music and dance could reshape the linear time into a cycle where the space between the past and the present folds and provides access to events and ancestors from another time. By introducing the folk dances and folk songs, Kire evoke recollecting the deep rooted customs of Naga culture. The folk dances and songs in the form of music becomes a symbol to recollect the cultural values which will allow people to hold to it. In the text, Kire through the songs and dance brought the children, young and old into contact with their cultural heritage by evoking memories of the time that were an integral part of the events and traditions of her ancestry. Time has come to revalue nature. The influence of environment on the pre-historic life and culture questions the importance how culture is depicted here in Kire Children's text with the present culture, and what are the ecological and technological trends today, by examining the trends what do one predict about what the future will be in Naga society. The sense of nature detects everything in Naga culture. They have a deep consciousness towards culture strongly rooted in nature which for them is sacred. Therefore, cultural shift from

nature raise issues on ecological concerns. This holistic awareness is propagated through representation of history and culture in her literary works.

Children's Literature, aims to teach and promote better ideas while providing the pleasure of reading. It becomes a tool for teaching children about cultural values and environment. Mary Mapes Dodge felt and encourages that it is essentially important to provide children with a sense of power that will change the future. By knowing their abilities and collecting information about the society or the world they could improve the need (qtd. in Little: 152). Children are inclined to be closer towards nature and they treat animals and birds as part of their world. The presentation of animal fables in Children's Literature question the human relationship. Children understand the importance of the environment through trees and nature and their consciousness is basically bio-centric element. They accept animals as part of their own world and provide and share moral concepts of fairness. O'Donnell states the importance of animals in Children's Literature by quoting Bettelheim. He asserts that, "there is so much animal symbolism in children's literature because children identify more closely with animals than with adults" (qtd. in O's Donnell: 220).

2.9. The Anthropomorphism and Symbolism of the Animal in the Picture Text *Dinkypu*

A weird animal is presented and portrayed in the Naga Children's Picture book *Dinkypu*. It depicts the background with a natural setting. The entire story outdoors and indoors takes place with illustrations done in beautiful pictures depicting trees, grass, fruits, butterflies, flowers, and the deep blue ocean. Kire has introduced the text with an

unfamiliar animal such as 'Dinkypu'. The presentation of the animal in this modern picture book is anthropomorphic for allegorical reasons which convey a moral lesson and ethical values for the children.

Kire has based this story with a shadow of Norwegian culture and the natural settings. It includes the mountains, landscapes etc. Norway is located on the western part of the Scandinavian Peninsula which shares in the midst of its eastern neighbor, Sweden. The region practices farming and fishing which has constantly been the main occupation. There is less geographic mobility, as a result, some folks tend to live in the same region over a number of generations and identify with the local area. This attachment is as well apparent in people's connection with the natural world. Half the nation's families reside or have access to nearby sky huts, cabins, boats. Most of the Norwegians engage in outdoor pursuits such as hiking and boating. They are very particular in preserving their natural landscape rather than transforming. Their artistic customs are preserved through creating various folk museums and other specialised heritage organisation. The Norwegian culture has very typical food habits, where there is a huge difference between, food consumed in daily life and food consumed on ceremonial occasions.

A young girl named Malley was surprised to see a very different creature in her house. The animal was unquestionably so unusual. In spite of having a problem in recognizing the little animal, Malley's parents accepted him and kept it with them as a pet animal. Malley's parents lived on a little Autumn Island with a flourishing environment. This is also presented textually, "the forest was thicker and the climate warmer than on Summer Island. And on the other side was the bigger Summer Island. There was also more wildlife on Autumn Island" (11). Kire presents the setting with Norwegian

landscape. As the story progresses, the book depicts a very good portion of the outdoors with oceans, garden with flowers and pears trees. This book uses an animal to teach a lesson about the discrimination based on physical attributes. Dinkypu is anthropomorphised wombats like animals with pouches in the stomach and objectified to teach or convey a lesson. The anthropomorphosis in this picture text is real in illustration of human or society relationship. The text is very honest about the message in conveying. Juliet Kellog in her essay, “Why Anthromorphism in Children’s Literature” defines “Anthromorphism is the ascribing of human attributes to non-human attributes” (460). It is said that plays started to develop in the children’s book. The books delighted the children with a sense of conveying and practicing lessons. It also provided pleasure which was seen as an ‘enticement’. So, to emphasize the ‘enticement’, animals started to appear in Children books with human qualities (Burke and Copenhaver 208).

Malley’s friend Rob was scared to see the unusual animal. Malley exclaimed “Don’t be scared, Rob, this is my new friend Dinkypy and he is harmless and the sweetest thing I have ever known” (27). The text depicts textually and pictorially the children and the animal playing outside enjoying the beauty of the nature. They stretch out on the grass in Malley’s garden. A kid named Per steals some pear fruits from Malley’s dad garden. Luckily, Dinkypy caught the kid Per stealing the fruit. The little boy started throwing stones at Dinkypu. He manipulated his parents by saying that Dinkpu had frightened him. Dinkypu was in danger. The island considered the animal to be something different which caused him to stay inside the house. The underlying message is about the Indians categorising the northeast Indians like the animal Dinkypu. It is because of its physical attribute the kids and the people ill treated him, except for

Malley's family. The text depicts the animal in interior setting like watching TV, eating breakfast and sleeping. On a particular day Malley dreamt of Dinkypu where she converses with Dinkypu's parents. Dinkypu's pet name happens to be in fact Doo-doo. On trying to keep in mind the weird and wonderful dream, the three boys were playing too close to water. Suddenly Fredrick slipped into the water, and Dinkypu could notice that the little boy could not swim which made Dinkypu help the little boy. Kire through this narrative throws light about the positive values and morals that should be taught at a very young age. The three kids could feel and learn the ethics with positive environment which made Per confess. In the end it is the calm image of nature, with a circle on the water. All the children "were standing on the edge of the water. The circle out at sea grew blindly bright" (92). It conveys Dinkypu going back to its own planet which draws him closer to his parents. Kire presents the importance of one's own identity.

The anthropomorphised in the text produces the message that the story is more than the animal Dinkypu. It is a relationship between humans which is actually being depicted. Human relation is tracked through the animal and human co-existence in the island. So through relationship between that animal with rest of the people in India, it talks about the identity of the north-easterners. The text also presents sufficient natural setting despite the fact of depicting human problem. The slightly personal element that Kire has put is that the animal is not from the same planet but from another planet. The longer he stays, the more he will forget its own identity, which might lead him to forget his own identity completely.

Symbolism is an organized literary and artistic movement which began through a collection of French poets in the late 19th century. It widens to painting and the theatre,

influencing the European and American literatures of the twentieth century to various degrees. Symbolist artists using the symbolized language sought to convey person's emotional experience. They attempted to evoke the deep insights and sense impressions of man's inner life. Therefore, through a free and highly personal use of metaphors, allegory and images it hints the reality. In literature "Symbolism" is used as a technique which could be an object, person, and situations having a deeper meaning. The writer's views or mind of the world could be the vision or sight. Through the figures of speech the writers visualized the world, where the situation encloses different meaning than its literal meaning and is much more significant. Easterine Kire's picture text "Dinkypu" is allegorical. The term allegory comes from the Greek roots *allos* meaning "other" and *agoreuein* meaning "public speaking" or "to speak in the marketplace" (Fletcher 2). Augus also defines a later meaning, *allegoria* or "invention", meaning "one thing in words but another in meaning" (2). In the 1960 edition of *A Handbook to Literature* William Flint Thrall et al defines as;

A form of extended metaphor in which objects and persons in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative voice itself; allegory represents one thing in the guise of another- an abstraction in that of a concrete image... Allegory attempts to evoke a dual interest –one in the events, characters. And settings presented, and the other in the idea they intended to convey (7-8).

Allegory is a form of figures of speech which has conceptual ideas and ideologies expressed in terms of characters, and events. It is employed in prose, poetry to tell a story with a purpose of teaching an idea or explaining an idea. Its central idea is to explain variety of moral lessons. The stories and characters are made multidimensional

having different aspects and facets. Allegory allows writers to put forward moral, religious and political views. Easterine Kire coupled with illustrations talks about a story of a very weird animal Dinkypu. The story is about a weird animal Dinkypu which comes from different planet and starts living with the humans in the Autumn Island. The animal was very weird with its unique features which was unrecognized, and scary which provoked and was therefore ill treated. This book could be interpreted with regard to the minority groups, particularly the North east Indians and the main land India. This could be read as a picture text or story, used as an allegory for discrimination. Kire through the character of an animal personifies the idea of 'racism', 'other', 'unique' or 'outsiders' by the majority against the minority states. Indeed Dinkypu has been invoked as an allegory for other circumstances, such as its features, and the importance of its identity within the country itself.

Dinkypu became a "problem" because he was different and distinctive. No one could recognize what kind of animal he was as "his head was round and fuzzy brown. The brown fur covered a face from which the two bright eyes peeped out . . . the rest of his body was fur covered" and his feet were webbed, a very different creature (Kire 8). One of the major struggles in the United States is the relationship between the whites and the Blacks. Similarly in India, the image of the Northeast in its mainland is strongly marginalized. Race as a social category is the product of practices. They are labeled and the individuals encountering those labels from childhood may internalize characteristics associated with those labels. The children may learn to adapt to the socially constructed racial order. A Manipuri journalist wrote in a national daily that, "Physically the people

of the North-east are closer to Southeast Asia and China.” However, “this racial divide,” he said, is not appreciated “in a sensitive manner” (qtd. in Barauh).

Kire’s has a very strong motive towards the future generation. The northeast regions have been ignored, and have been tagged with stereotypes through various cultural images. Schudson 1989 agrees and avers, “Children’s Picture books are potent cultural objects-have rhetorical force, resonate with children and adults and are retained in institutions” (qtd. in Conly: 15). Kire’s Children’s picture text helps in portraying the idea of the other, race and in leasing the children to be aware of these negative values which could impact their life and in fact, learn to ignore the negative traits.

“Dinkypu” as a weird animal was accepted after Malley’s dad somehow could recognize half of his identity which was a like a wombat. As the story progresses “Dinkypu” was not treated well by a particular boy Per. He was thrown stones at because they considered him to be unusual. It was not safe for “Dinkypu” to be in that planet. Kire’s allegorizes the animal as being “the Other”. Throughout the years, “the other” has been described as the quintessence of an individual who was different from the inner self. The act of “othering”, is when an individual starts establishing and describing as a part of a group of inhabitants’ joint in a “we”. The other people are constructed as fundamentally different, united in a “they”, which powerfully serve to delegitimize others. And too often, these distinctions are drawn along the classic axes of discrimination and power differences, like ethnicity, race, and so on. The “Other” by definition lacks identity, propriety, purity, literality. In this sense it could be depicted as the alien: the individual, who does not belong to a group, does not speak a given language does not have the same customs; he is the unfamiliar, uncanny, unauthorized, inappropriate, and the improper.

Postcolonial theory is constructed through a large part around the notion of Otherness. Postcolonial as a theory was termed during the 1950s. It originates to deal with the interpretation and writing of literatures written in previously or presently colonized countries. Whether from the standpoint of the colonizer or the colonized, post-colonization is regarding people and their personal experiences: the sense of disempowerment and dislocation. This structure of the Other is a process which in itself expresses the “ambivalence at the very heart of authority” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 3). Post-colonialism is persistently explained as a term with the purpose of portraying not a “we” talking about “them”, but a “them” talking back to an “us”. This implies that the post-colonial literature in one way or another is regarding labeling or categorizing the center and margin. Frantz Fanon in his text *Black Skin White Mask* argues about colonial racism. It exposes the structure of colonialism, the relations between the centre and the colonial margin. It thus reveals how the relations and practices of the past are replicated currently and how facts are shaped and influenced. The blacks in spite of being educated and loyal towards the Europeans idea were totally different towards the whites. They differentiated the whites to be an inferior.

Here in this Children Picture text, “Dinkypu” is represented as different and unique which is related to the Northeast Indians. It is the construction of the race which forms “the other”. Northeasterners as being seen as different and encountering racial labels within its mainland India being the minority were subjected to many racist comments “Chapta” (flat nose) and word “chinki” and a Naga student becoming half Naga and a half Indian. The use of the word “chinki” is to define “an unclassified populace” in order to label the citizens who do share common history and cultural values.

It is used as a “verbal-act” to “otherwise” and categorized in public and private spaces (Thounaojam 11).

Thounajam in his essay “A Preface to Racial Discourse in India Northeast and Mainland” quotes from Barzum 1937 and says “The mental and moral behaviour of the north-east have been related to their physical structure” (qtd inThounoajam: 10). The emergence of a racial label to include all ‘indigenous’ Northeasterners fits adequately with the group of ‘the Northeast’ that since 1971, in the words of a retired senior civil servant who played a key role in designing this political order, “emerged as a significant administrative concept . . . replacing the hitherto more familiar unit of public imagination, Assam” (Singh 8). The complex power dynamics that characterized the procedure of looking, perceiving, and evaluating in an unfavorable manner, and thus creating the image of an “Other”, is pertinently articulated throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*. The animal “Dinkypu” is unique. The uniqueness is the identity that an individual has. For the outsiders this uniqueness is labeled as “other”. Easterine Kire’s rightly claims that “the racist attitude that we do look at from another race and were like oh... that’s like that following the stereotypes and then it just destroys any hope of relationship or any hope of friendships” (Kire). For Fanon, black versus white is not a normal division which is interconnected to the colour of the skin but it is to a certain extent a cultural and political structure. It established at the intersection of black and white society which results in an imaginary “Other”. Therefore, Fanon implies that the process of “othering” is being done by means of race. Thounajam in his essay “A Preface to Racial Discourse in India Northeast and Mainland” quotes from Barzum 1937 and says “The mental and moral behaviour of the north-east have been related to their physical structure”

(Thounoajam 10). Through the symbolism of an animal character Kire draws the positive values removing the idea of “other” or outsiders and focusing more on the inside. The unique identities that the Northeastern people have could be seen for its own sake. This rareness does not derive in them the sense of identity for the mainland like the animal in the text. They are unique in their own way. To the main land they will be other but to them it’s their identities that carry their uniqueness. Thus, the uniqueness becomes the individual being. At the end of the story, the animal “Dinkypu” lives the planet as his parents comes back to take him. This brings us to an understanding of going to one’s own home with the identity that one holds as an individual. The longer “Dinkypu” stays in another planet, the easier he could forget his identity.

Kire personifies this picture text with allegories and presents this text for the current Naga children with the notions of individuality, self-acceptance and being positive, kind and generous. She has also used slightly personal elements where she says that “the animal is not from here” (Kire). As an author of children’s text, Kire wants the children to know about it so that they do not think or consider someone as stereotypical, or do the same thing like the other. She definitely wants to educate the present generation at a very early stage so they imbed all the positive values in life. Her stories are planned in such a way where she says “I feel that every young child they need lessons on tolerance, kindness, so from the young age I wanted to influence children to think openly” (Kire) She has also has mixed her Children’s picture books with the Norwegian cultures as children could learn about other cultures and the different activities that the other cultures have. She has also included the “Dinkypu” song on the last page. The song is about “Dinkypu”, the significance of the song is that she wanted to let the children

know the song and the story. She says, “it seem easier for the children to connect the two and my hope was that they would feel closer to the story by getting the song” (Kire).

Nature was regarded as the provider, the guiding spirit and deeply engrained in Nagas culture and consciousness. It was more of a “living deity” but after deviating from the belief system with the advent of Christianity the Nagas do not hold nature as sacred but it considered as a means for survival giving a very new twist towards nature. Therefore, Nature and humanity are seen as a part of each other. The relationship between culture and nature must be rethought because nature and culture are hybrids and it should not be sharply separated. The entire earth and natural phenomena are directly affected by human civilisation, and any society that produces materialism causes environmental degradation and natural catastrophe. So one can remain or retain to its tradition because it should be preserved but at the same time, one has to move forward for the betterment of the society.

Thus, society’s heritage has its purposes, stands and is preserve. The bond shared with nature and culture holds a very strong standpoint on eco-cultural consciousness also known as Cultural Ecology. The dictionary defines, “Ecological Culture - a set of norms, beliefs, and attitudes that characterize the attitude of the society, its public groups, and individuals to nature” (Oxford). Cultural Ecology as a school of philosophy was founded during the twentieth century by American neo evolutionists L.White and J. Steward. It directs to create the existing relationship between society and environment being an integral part of human culture, which process for the development of ecological education and public awareness. Ecological ethics is important in Naga society, as the measures of ecological culture is the ecological ethics. For future development, the Naga

society could bring ecological awareness through education, developmental knowledge about ecological issues and understanding the relationship between man-society-nature. The society should start forming the fundamentals of ecological culture right from childhood with ideological orientation programs, creating a positive attitude towards nature. Some strong ecological strands are found in Easterine Kire's other works such as "Don't Run My Love" and short stories "Forest Song" but my main focus is on the Children's stories.

Chapter-III

Womanist Consciousness in the Writings of Easterine Kire

3.1 Introduction

What is Gender? Gender refers to behavioural differences between male and female that are culturally biased and socially learned (Appelbaum and Chambliss 218). It is the society which determines and constructs gender culturally and socially. Gender becomes very familiar in our daily life, of how women and men are assumed to act. Ann Oakley asserts that gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the societal classification into “masculine” and “feminine” (18). It is an identity derived from sex of individual existing from customs and traditions. Each society classifies and differentiates people as girl and boy child after they are born. Women and men observe and create similar traits among them and are assigned with different roles and responsibilities according to their sex.

Gendering is processed and is legitimated by religion, science and society's set of values and norms. It is set through “discursive routes to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker” (Butler 145). It becomes a norm within the family to interact and organize in the workplace, organizations, and institutions. For Beauvoir, Gender is constructed through a personified system of patriarchy or phallogocentric language that sets the subject itself (335). The notion of gender falls under identity, gender inequalities, and the social stratified system. Gender as per the stratified system ranks women lower and men above, of the same race and class. Therefore in a stratified society, men are more valued than women in every activity. Talking about the social status of men and women, the status of women in terms of

behavior and role allocations, is held in lesser esteem than the status of man where the existence of inequality prevails. Gender becomes the element of structured inequality, anywhere the devalued gender is being emphasized on. When talked about gender, the social status of women becomes an important point.

The Indian concept of gender becomes a kind of pattern for gendered discrimination. It forges oppressive practices and brings a lower position into the status of women. In Indian society the status of women is subjected to many great changes that took over the past. The patriarchal norms imposed the position of woman as being secondary. What is suitable for a woman and what is not suitable is decided and constrained by the society. In India, the notion of gender showed the features of the old centuries. Only in the second part of the twentieth century, new political and social movements gave hope. The women's voices came to be recognized in terms of social and professional status and justice and rights. Tharu and Niranjana talked about the India who realised "the new visibility of women" in 1970's, with all subjects from the politicians to the caste based movements and literary campaigns (qtd. in John: 75). Nevertheless, many of the movement did not restrain women's problem and gender issues. Gender issues are discussed under the purview of the varied cultural and ethnic groups within a society.

In the Northeast region of India, the discourse of gender in the context of Naga culture can be observed through gender socialization, social stratification, and the relationship existing between man and woman. The need and process of obtaining specific roles and behaviors are procured. Traditionally in the Naga society, girls are preferred for helping with domestic chores. The birth of a boy child is preferred and favoured as it lineages the clan and family which is under the customary and traditional

laws. There are traditional and customary laws that a woman has to follow, which hold them from men. The fact that Naga society is patriarchal as well as patrilineal implies beyond any doubt that women are not equal to men in certain aspects of life. Lucy Zehol points out the subjugation done by the patriarchal system and asserts, “The patriarchal Naga society is reflected by notions such as the birth of a male child being auspicious, man as the bread winner and the protector of the society, and women being subordinate to their house- holds” (Zehol 2).

Women down the ages have been considered as the second sex. Customarily, the Naga society is patriarchal and even in this present scenario it continues to remain so. In most traditions, ‘Warrior’, ‘provider’ and ‘superior’ are terms projected historically mostly to men whereas women are considered as ‘domestic’, ‘maternal’ and ‘inferior’ (Pou 160). With regard to the place of women in the Naga society, they have better benefits. It predominantly assigns a higher status for women as compared to the women in Indian society. The Naga culture does not impose women to perform such practices as to wear a purdah, pay dowry or perform Sati. Haimendorf appreciates the status the Naga women enjoy and assets, “many women in more civilized parts of India may well envy the women of the Naga Hills, their high status and their free and happy life . . .” (16).

Being rooted in a traditional patriarchal society, the Nagas regard men as biologically superior to women. The forms of gender relations, gender inequality, and the different roles assigned to different sexes are being questioned in terms of education, traditional law of inheritance and empowerment. The concept of gender prevails through the ways of behaving and performing certain roles taught and moulded by the members of the community. Gender as a social construct is being questioned. Each Naga tribe has

different responsibilities and norms consigned to women and men. The analysis will subsist on the position of Naga women with particular emphasis on Angami Naga women.

3.2 Discussion on the Position of Angami Naga Women

Thenumia is the word that refers to women in *Tenyidie*, a dialect of the Angami people. In Angami Naga society, the facets and status of women appear to be lower in spite of her competency and abilities. When we move back to the bygone generations, women were restricted to the four walls of the house without any space. With the passage of time, women have been given more liberty in different domains apart from the household chores such as cooking, cleaning etc. With the coming of modernisation and the social changes taking place in society, women are given special rights and privileges. But even in this present scenario women still remain ‘fettered’ with the traditional do’s and don’ts .

The traditional circle of a woman curtailed to wife, daughter, sister, and mother is always inferior to men. Educating a girl is now encouraged as compared to the olden times. A daughter or a girl was totally prohibited to attend school because educating was seen as a manner for girls to move away from the household chores. Regarding social matters such as marriages, it is the families who arrange it. The status of a man becomes higher when he has many mistresses and has extra illicit affairs. In the case of a married woman, she has to go through numerous physical punishments which could even let her cut the tip of her nose, or her hair would be cut off and heel would be sliced. Above all, a woman has to face all the socially exposed shaming in the society in regard to this matter.

This structured form has taken a change in the modern society, with the advent of western norms of equalities, where the attitude of society towards woman has changed.

However, it is the customary law that prevents them from their rights. The customary laws practised among the tribal constructs gender inequality in the region. In Naga society the customary laws are executed strongly and are prevalent till date. The constitution continues to legitimise it through Article 371A. Customary law can be perceived as:

an established system of immemorial rules which evolved from the way of life . . . the general context of which was a common knowledge, coupled with precedents applying to special cases, which were retained in the memories of the chief and his counsellors, their sons and their son's son, until forgotten, or until they became part of the immemorial rules (Bekker 11).

The Customary laws are completely part of Naga tradition and customs which influences all the laws. The tribes are considered to be “intrinsic to their identity and culture” (Fernandes and Gita 95). It functions as a powerful tool to describe the roles of men and women. The laws imposed relating to property and marriage are highly oppressive to women. According to the Customary law, women have no right to land, property or inheritance. The right to property and inheritance of property still remain rigid, which also become an important point affecting women's empowerment. The status of Angami women gets affected because women cannot inherit any ancestral property or land. ‘Property’ is locally known as *siephro*. *Siephro* can be owned or inherited only by a male

child. If a woman is the only child, the ancestral property will be given to her father's immediate male relatives. J.H. Hutton in his book, "The Angami Nagas" quoted Mr David who said that Naga women "become mere house grudges" (qtd. in Hutton: 167).

This social system is still prevalent in the tribal region in spite of many social changes. Critical evaluation has come through gender stereotyping. With the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's, "Vindication of the Rights of Women" in the year 1792, women's emancipation movement is said to have begun in the later part of the eighteenth century. For the betterment of woman, the Feminist Movement known as the Women's Liberation Movement emerged. It is a series of Political Movement for reforming on the issues regarding domestic violence, reproductive rights, maternity leave, equal pay, woman's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary, "Feminism refers to the advocacy of the rights of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes" (Oxford). It relates to the issues of gender differences, gender concerns and the campaign for women's rights and interest. The leaders and the theories from this movement were mostly white-women from America. Great literary works such as Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1971), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971), Nancy Friday's *My Mother My Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity* (1977), emerged in order to empower the women. The western society concerns were raising consciousness about sexism and patriarchy, gender-based violence, domestic abuse, marital rape, inequality in the workplace, legalizing abortion, birth control and sexual liberation of women. Feminism outlooks that male dominates all the institutions. The values, norms, and beliefs become male-oriented, which further has become universal in any society.

However, right from the beginning the feminist movement has been observed of being a white-oriented movement. But, during the nineteenth century, it started being perceived that there were two separate movements, the Whites and the Blacks. Ward and Herndle are of the opinion that feminism is “markedly white, middle-class, Western, and heterosexual” (Ward and Herndl 259). The denial of basic rights to black women has been written and talked about by many slave women such as Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Wilson. Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* (2006) explores the ways that weakened the position of women in terms of economic, political and social ways (85). She claims that the males become the authority of every traditional patriarchal society. Tyson criticises feminism and points out that feminism has many weaknesses and the movement is not sufficient for many people with color. Spivak and Allen also criticized the white feminism which consisted of white women’s norms, in the forms of elitism and cultural imperialism. The white feminist critics largely ignored the works of colored women. The decision of the colored women and the values of the colored women were taken and incorporated by the womanist movement. So, Alice Walker prompted to create the Womanist movement. Womanism had not only set apart from feminism but it also extended itself to be stronger. Womanism thus widened providing empowerment to the colored women and women all over the world. It focuses on all the issues without separating women’s issues from male’s issues. Womanism holds that both the gender should be considered as equivalent. Alice Walker uses the term Womanism to reflect everyone- female, male, white and black. Therefore, womanism becomes more comprehensive than Feminism.

“Womanist” is a term used by Alice Walker in her work *In Search of Our Mother’s Garden*. She describes the black feminism or feminism of color. She defines a womanist as someone who loves other women sexually or non-sexually, appreciates and prefers women’s culture, emotional flexibility and women’s strength. The issues related to race, gender, ethnicities are worked upon by womanism. Hudson-Weems put forward that Feminism and Womanism are different:

The African woman did not see the man as her primary enemy as does the white feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as white men have had to oppress white women (Hudson-Weems 25-28).

The space that is left by feminism is exposed by womanism. Walker in her works protests against sexism and patriarchal structure; apart from these issues, she incorporates racial, cultural, national, and political issues. Alice Walker asserts in *New York Times Magazine*:

“Feminism (all colours) definitely teaches women they are capable, one reason for its universal appeal. In addition to this, womanist (i.e. black feminist) tradition assumes, because of our experiences during slavery, that black women already “are” capable . . . I choose womanism because it is “better” than feminism. . . Since Womanism means black feminism, . . . I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of it: because I cherished the spirit of women the word call to mind . . . offering society a new word when the word it is using fails to

describes behavior and change that only a new word can help it more fully sees” (94).

The ignorance of racial struggles in the first and second wave feminism, led to the emergence of womanism from the Black Feminist recognition due to certain factors like neglecting racism and perpetuating of the White women’s agenda. Womanism claims in framing gendered struggles. Women across the world have been the worst sufferers from patriarchal and matriarchal dominance because of the tolerance, humanity, sincerity and strong devotion towards the family and the society. Walker protests the rights of each woman and does not destroy the relationship with the men. In order to show the distress, agony, misery, and hardships that the women from different cultures and races undergo, she uses womanism. Walker is not worried about political or civil rights, but is more concerned about the cultural, ethical rights and female sensibilities. Womanism proposes a new outlook which questions the traditional ways of gender, race, culture, and nationality be it men and women. It emphasizes the importance of bringing unity, connecting the gap between different races and cultures because womanism offers more humanist perspectives.

Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back* makes a distinction between colonialism and post-colonialism. Colonialism refers to a “period before independence” and post-colonial is used to “cover all the culture affected by imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). Post-colonialism indicates the end of colonialism. Many post-colonial writers started writing books based on the problems and issues of marginalized countries. Ashcroft’s *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak mention distinctively about the

repression of the Third world women. According to Spivak, there exist variations among women with regard to class, color, and creed.

Thus in the North-eastern state of Nagaland, it was only during the second part of the twentieth-century that the movement gave new hope and a new interpretation. With regard to the position of women in the Naga societies, Lucy Zehol asserts that “primitive” society women were no better than a mere sex object or second sex of an inferior sex” (1). The status of women is affected because women are assigned with the patrilineal and patriarchal system. Humstoe asserts that those women in Naga society “face discrimination from her own family, clans-folk, and villagers” (qtd in Pou: 165). Even though there were no feminist groups, the well educated Naga women gathered supports to fight structured bias in their society that oppress them. They began to voice out the injustice not with physical strength but with the might of pen through writing.

Over the years women’s involvement in the public awareness has been seen as an outstanding appreciation of international movement for women’s rights. Bodies like Naga Mothers Association (NMA), Naga Women Union of Manipur (NWUM), Watsu Mungdang (WM), Angami Public Organization (AWPO), Sumi Totimi Hoho (STH), Naga Women Hoho (NWH) and Lotha Eloeh Hoho (LEH) functions for the self esteem of Naga women which has been apparently promoted. Despite westernisation in urban areas, Nagas still procure its identity and lifestyle from the village. It holds the old customary laws which are firmly rooted in the strict patriarchal ethos. It still proceeds to form the gender roles. It is very important to critically understand the construction of gender in the traditional patriarchal Naga society which still continues to remain within a transitional situation. Naga women writers like Easterine Kire, Nini Lungalang, Temsula Ao and

Monalisa Changkija with their different literary works demands a space for expressing the identity of Naga women. Through their creative works, Naga women writers have aimed to remodel the Naga Feminist Ideology. The Naga woman writer, Easterine Kire, has come up with the work that questions the old age customs and also questions the curbing of women's status after and before marriage. This study examines womanist concerns in Easterine Kire's work taking its theoretical cue also from the concept of gender as a social construct. This study seeks to explore Kire's *Don't Run My Love* through Womanist perspectives.

3.3 Gender in Easterine Kire's *Don't Run My Love*

Easterine Kire took the Mizo Folktale and ensconced it with a simple tale of Naga rural life. This text is a cautionary tale of love and transgression. Kire brings a love story that defines the social norms under the patriarchal system. The story is about the life of a mother-daughter duo Visenuo and Atuonuo, who met a young and handsome man named Kevi and unexpectedly their lives are quite shaken. Visenuo is a young widow, who can remarry, but she does not wish to and Visenuo's only child, Atuonuo is of an age considered suitable for marriage. Kevi naturally falls in love with Atuonuo. The young man leaving gifts of meat shows the customs of the proposal of marriage among the patriarchal Angami Naga tribes. The idea of the property rights and reputation of a woman which are constructed are being questioned here. The two women Visenuo and Atuonuo are not considered accurate by the society and their relatives, as it was considered wrong for a widow women and a young unmarried girl to freely associate with a man.

This novella talks about the position of women which is socially and culturally constructed by the society and talks about how a man who at first seems to portray a very good quality eventually has an aggressive nature at the end of the story. The storyline is structured in such a way that it twists and turns the events. Kire presents the pastoral scenes with such lines from the text as, “the heat brought out the scent of new paddy. It was a sweet and strong smell—like sunshine trapped between husk and grain” (6). Nature aids the story with thunder and lightning. She shows the transgression of tradition; this transgression affects both the lives of the women. Both the women are in the course of the emotional storm. The true folklore style is brought in the novel where the two women find a solution. The ways of folk wisdom bring peace into their lives through the help of the seers. She focuses and addresses the tensions that trouble the lives of its women before and after meeting a man. Kire mentions about the legends of were-tigers through the folk tales. She moves towards another level by taking it out from the ordinary and presenting the idea of fairy tales as well. This novella also resembles the famous fairytale Red Riding Hood.

Easterine Kire’s *Don’t Run My Love* is a kind of provocation to the Feminist Ideology whereby the question of gender-based structure has been attached in the novella. The Feminist Movement has engaged in many different forms. The rights and identity of the women are being challenged, centered on the inequality of sexes. The qualities that a woman should have are culturally constructed. The two women, Atuonuo and Visenuo, are expected to live and perform in certain ways within the society. It shows how gender is constructed. The role of the women, as well as men, is been centered. Kire describes how women are expected to live following certain rules and

norms, and unwittingly women support traditional status of male superiority. The idea of inheritance of property is also shown in the beginning of the novella. The ancestral property which is known as *Seiphro*, is only owned by the male child. But for a widowed woman, she can and has the right to use her deceased husband's property, like Visenuo who works along with her young daughter. Land which is community owned or inherited cannot be passed on to the women. At the event of the demise of the head of the family, which is the father, the land is inherited by the nearest male relative. She has to work hard and live without inheriting the land. The Naga women's social and economic status still prolongs to be affected by customary laws.

Regarding the customary laws, it is still biased among Angami society where women are supposed to be determined through social institutions, social norms, taboos, and beliefs. The customary law are basically conceived by men from a male point of view which exclude women. For women it becomes difficult, something which does not allow emancipating or rather constrains. Thus, the structure being male dominated. Kevi, a young handsome man helped them carry their sacks and in return Visenuo and Atuonuo insisted him to have a meal. It was the traditional way to thank someone who had given help. Any woman of any village belonging to Angami is expected to perform common roles and duties. The household works such as cooking, looking after the children, and agricultural works were only performed by *thenumia*. An uneducated woman always works in the field and carries their baskets and babies in the front. The women's position is always restricted to home and field which is seen in the text. Atuonuo is asked to bring wood by her mother. They are required to work in the field daily. The daughters were assigned to do all the domestic works. They were not allowed to go to school, as well as

expected to look and run the house after marriage. Kire states, “At eighteen, Atuonuo was almost as strong as her mother. She had reached the age of marriage. In fact, her grand-aunt thought she was in danger of being passed over because girls younger than her were already married and had borne children” (5). It illustrates how women can be the chief advocates of traditional status and construct gender culturally. The women were confined to their houses and seldom moved outside them and their lives were restricted. The society greatly appreciated girls who knew and performed all the household works. Thus, the women who devoted and worked were asked for marriage and this idea is reflected in the text, where Atuonuo at the age of eighteen is asked by a young man for marriage but she refuses. It was the custom amongst the Angamis for a young man proposes girl after girl and marry the one who says yes. The girl has the right to choose or refuse the suitor. A girl was allowed freedom of choice, parents never resorted to force, and cases of girls who married against their wishes were rare. (Hutton 168) Vitso quoting the role of women from Judith Butler asserts that a woman’s duty is “to fetch the firewood, draw the water, cook the food, and brew the liquor besides working in the fields and weaving clothes at home” (82).

The two women had to return back home carrying the heavy loaded bags in their *kephou* (a sturdy woven basket). Kire adds to the story a detailed description of nature; she narrates the skies that were clearing. Though there were a few rain clouds in the distance, they decided to take each loaded bags. As they moved forward they found “the grass was still wet, but the sun was shining fiercely” (10, 11). A deeper analysis of the real situation is made by Kire. She focuses on an ordinary understanding of the position of widowed women. Widowed women did not have many choices; they could only work

hard in the fields or sell herbs, vegetables, and home-brewed wine. In the case of Visenuo, she wanted to work hard along with her daughter in their field rather than living the life selling vegetables and home brewed wine.

Judith Butler talks about gender in her famous book *Gender Trouble*. The idea of viewing gender as being masculine and feminine is being opposed by Judith Butler. The justice between the two genders can be created by changing or recreating the way people think about gender. Instead, people can break the restrictions about gender roles by bringing equality and justice. Gender is performative; this provides an idea of how gender as an identity is formed through the performances of certain acts. Butler says, “Gender proves to be performative - that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre exist the deed” (35).

Visenuo as a widowed woman is certainly observed by society because she does not have her husband. The Naga society is so ingrained with patriarchal norms; when a male member is absent in a family, the society restricts or warns that family with certain taboos and norms. Mary E John in her essay “Sex and Gender” talks from Rubin’s theory that “biological differences between men and women form a kind of backdrop for the gender system” (qtd. in John: 23). In the text, the widow and her daughter are asked by a man Vilhu to help both of them carry their heavy bags. Visenuo politely withholds because Visenuo did not want to take a chance risking her life, dismaying Vilhu’s wife. Visenuo was once barbed that Vilhu was more concerned to help the widow ignoring his own share of work. At the entrance of the village, a number of young mother’s with their babies tied on their back would be standing at the *Dhou* (a circular setting place). Kire

describes that these men and women would return home and inform their families how late or early the harvesters had come home (26). This proves to be the typical norm followed by the people in the society. As the story progresses, Kire centres on the idea of the customs, taboos, and rituals followed by the patriarchal Angami society in the case of a marriage. Here in the text, the following day when Atuonuo and Visenuo had reached their hut, Atuonuo exclaimed “ ‘AZUO! Someone has left us a meat again!’ ” (27) Atuonuo was very conscious and wondered who could have kept a very big portion of meat. Visenuo, her mother, knew it was the work of a suitor wanting to marry the eighteenth year old girl. This is the custom among the Angami Nagas. If a young man starts liking a girl and would like to marry, he brings gifts on a regular basis and then asks her for marriage. The Naga Angamis strictly follow the two forms of marriage- the ceremonial and informal marriages. The ceremonial marriages are celebrated with ceremony and formality, and in informal marriage a girl is taken into a man's house. It is the woman who plays a very important role in marriages among the Angami tribes. The *liethomia* (the go-between/matchmaker) is always a woman. When a girl attains the age of eighteen and is able to perform all the activities in the house, she is considered of a marriageable age. These chauvinistic laws are so ingrained within the society that tends to decide and dominate the life of the women thereby depicting the gender-stereotypical roles.

The idea of performativity is reflected through Visenuo and Atuonuo who took turns making food whenever they came in the field. Atuonuo also realised that her mother was kindly reminding her to get started on the food. Atuonuo “cajoled the fire back to life. She got down on her knees and blew at the little embers until the bamboo crackled

into life” (35). This was a routine work for her. The Naga mother or a woman in a family has daily routine of works. She starts the day collecting firewood, fetching water, cooking, and respectively goes in the field.

Kevi joins them for food and also decides to help them carry the heavy bags. He carried the *kephuo* which Visenuo and Atuonuo lifted on his back. It was already evening when they reached and arrived in the *Kija* (village). When the women and the men saw the widowed woman and her eighteen year old daughter coming with a stranger, they were very curious. They started questioning:

“Who was the stranger? Was he a relative of Visenuo’s? He didn’t look like one of their young men. Everyone was curious about the stranger helping the widow bring back her harvest, but no one had the answer to the question uppermost in their minds: Was this a suitor for Atuonuo?”
(41).

A young handsome man coming and helping the two women made the village all abuzz. If Visenuo’s husband would be alive, there would be no way for the villagers to interfere into their personal matters. When a young man visits a woman’s house without any male member, the society considers it to be a very big issue regarding the position and reputation of the woman and the family. The status of women in traditional Angami society could be identified by examining the roles performed by women. Kire draws the tension that afflicts the lives of its women, especially those who are without legitimate male relatives. On hearing about the handsome young man Kevi, two of Visenuo’s

paternal relatives Abau and Khonuo, visits Visenuo in order to find out about the stranger. Abau says:

The whole village is asking about the young man who carried our paddy home. We could not sit at home any longer and keep saying we know nothing about this business. Abau sounded upset and disappointed. She was in her seventies and considered it her right to know all that was going on in the lives of her children, her grandchildren, and her nephews and nieces and their children, especially when it pertained to the female members (42).

The text highlights the ways of controlling the activities of women, by the family and society. It shows how culture is also gendered. Gender has manifested itself in the Naga culture. A woman's reputation is very important, especially when a man visits a widow. This matter becomes very interesting for the villagers. Kathy, et al. quotes Grimshaw's importance on the power of binaries. He says, "The binary division between men and women, a divide that itself had a long cultural history in primordial times has been the basis on which women's oppression by men was justified" (Kathy et al.74). This text views women as being the consumers of culture. Women's lives were viewed through culture. The traits and properties of women are derived and designed specifically distinct from that of men. Judith Bulter asserts that it is the society that constructs what is considered acceptable in society; and how the interactive process can impact the development and functioning of marginalised female youths and beyond. The individual has no real function of choice because the concept of gender has already been constituted by the culture. The individual only has the choice of how to perform assigned gender roles that already exists in the society. Two of Visenuo's paternal aunt's were more

concerned for the young widow and her daughter who is of a marriageable age. They warn them by saying that there are girls of her age in the village who are married, and now they have become the wives and mother, so if there is any conversation going on between the two of them with a man; it would not be a good sign for Atunuo's marriage. Women's lives were controlled by the society. She makes a very strong statement in the text through the character of Abau. She says, "You live in a community. You must heed the rules of the community or risk being talked about by the members of society" (43). Woman has to abide by the rules and regulation based on the taboos and the laws. Millet says that gender has a "cultural character" (29). Naga women are being categorized inside the traditional setting. The society dictates that woman's role in the house should be of a good woman who are supposed to stay at home, learn the household works and maintain their status as a woman. Visenuo's paternal relatives perpetuate gender inequality by suppressing the females in a male dominated society. They manipulate the two women to hold the community ethos. Kire highlights the ways gender inequality prevails within the same gender. Atunuo's aunt's become the victim of patriarchy that bind the Angami society so strictly. Gender is performed differently in different spaces, whether it may be in a small society or a big country. Kire also draws the importance about the respectability and the reputation that each community holds especially in the case of women. Atunuo's aunt Khonuo asserts that, "Nnia just wants to make sure your reputation is safe" (42). This throws light on the strict or rigid respect towards tradition. Despite the influence of westernization and changes within the traditional structure of the Naga people, the traditional thoughts, values and norms still creates problems. Modernity did not change any such problems for women. Traditionally, what matters in a

community is the status and reputation. In the Naga society, it is the cultural values and the traditional beliefs that affect the position of women. Gender, thus is the state of being a male or a female to make a social and cultural difference.

Easterine Kire also draws the significance of gender as a social construct in one of her short stories entitled “Forest Songs”. A young girl named Zeno happens to be a victim who is spirited away. The author tries to present the spiriting incident, by adding the attention that is needed in the society. She tries to present the issues of women who are suppressed or kept hidden, the issue of silence ingrained within the society. A young girl in the story is being molested and abused by old men. Pulie is the character who takes advantage of all the young girls, the idea of claiming the body by anybody. In the Angami society, it is almost a social taboo of not speaking about the issues. This shows the limitations of a woman inside the society. The society does not raise voice about these issues, because these issues have much to do with the concept of “shame or *menga*” (Elizabeth 46). This emphasizes how gender is constructing role. The little girl, Zeno had the fear of the man which led her to the forest which trespassed into spirit turf. The little girl was conscious about the social taboo which let her deeper into the forest, so that she could protect herself from the man. In fact she was once a victim where this lecherous man tried to grab her legs. Kire draws the attention about the social evils that is still prevailing in the Naga society. Urvashi Butalia makes a vivid point saying that when women narrate the nation they do so rather different than men. In women’s narrative, the “concerns of family” and “contain the violence” of any sexual abuse are highlighted, which are frequently or in many times “unheard and unsaid things” (111).

The Angami community essentially place 'man' at the top, being the head of the family. The occupation between men and women are totally different in Naga society. Men are considered to be physically stronger, than women. Men took the role of outdoor activities and women were restricted inside the space within the house. During the olden days, the Naga women and children were not free or safe outside the house because of the warfare. Therefore, men were the protectors. A man was considered as hero according to the enemy heads he hunted. M. M Clark remarks, "A casual observer would never imagine the ambition for fame and glory that lurks even to this day in the Naga breast. He is ready to sacrifice to the utmost that his praises may be sung and his name perpetuated" (46). Each and every family wanted a male child in order to bring pride within their community. The families that did not have male were regarded as barren. The families celebrated the birth of a male child. If a boy takes part in warfare, he is considered a full grown man. Though woman played a good role on their part, there is no credit given and hardly any celebration for what they might have done. Pou asserts, "All the while she has only been told that her husband's or her son's achievement is hers too" (168). Therefore, with such attitude, the division between men and women can be seen.

The women in Naga society have presented themselves in making and progressing much lately. Their identities are consistently derived from a particular village to which they belong. Regardless of all the differences that the people have, they share a common heritage with customary law bordering with the critical concerns of inheritance and laws. This customary law still continues to target the gender roles very effectively. Humtsoe asserts that "the Nagas have not been able to do away with the cultural forces where it concerns the emancipation of women from cultural chains, which are embodied

in customary laws and sexiest attitude” (qtd. in Pou: 165). They have been progressing academically but when it comes to leadership roles, the patriarchal mores are strictly imposed, where women are constrained from leadership roles. In this present scenario, women are still not empowered, for the reason that women are still tied with the cultural and traditional reasons. Despite modernity and education, the traditional attitudes and values still fail to hold the changes taking place in the society. The Naga society has to still go a long way to embrace gender equality completely.

3.4. Womanist Voice: Easterine Kire’s *Don’t Run My Love*

For a better understanding of Naga tribes, there is a need to understand and examine women from traditional to a modern context. With new ideologies, liberty and equality could be achieved in order to remove the outcast state of life. Kire writes on the experiences she has lived through it, not only expressing them through her writing but in order to speak for the common people. Kire’s *Don’t Run My Love* is based on the story told by her mother. She narrates the love story of a handsome young man and a woman who are looking for true love but eventually a certain tradition is followed called the Tiger-man. It is under the tradition itself where some man becomes powerful by having the dual soul with the tiger. Kire writes for the women and men in general. Like Alice Walker, the Naga women writers too wanted to revitalise the history and tradition. A Womanist voice is reflected in the text *Don’t Run My Love*.

Gender stereotypes, gender equality, and feminine concerns are the voices that have been defined as a womanist. Gender equality cannot be achieved easily, as there are men who still think that the tradition is described the best on the position of men. Surprisingly, it is also a woman who upholds the male superiority. Kire, in the text

illustrates the hardships that women encounter in many societies. She shows the oppression that the female gender is put through by patriarchal society. The greatly regarded notion about gender as being a male and female is specific to Naga cultures as well.

At the beginning of the novel, Easterine Kire portrays a masculine character through the character Kevi. She asserts, "Anyone who sets an eye on him, Man or woman, young or old had to admit that he was a beautiful creature indeed" (5). Kire presents a young man who is beautiful and has power. She provides a warning through this character that one should not just look at the outward beauty or appearances. The opening of the novella also shows how the two women struggle with a heavy load of threshed paddy. It opens with the stereotypical gender roles and shows how people follow it without any opposition. Feminism believes that men are very strong and one of the reasons is the financial status they provide to women. Women are being considered as consumers and men as producers within the family. The novella *Don't Run My Love* shows how women without the male member work hard and become self-centered. The two women knew that being a woman one should be devoted with all the traditional gender roles, which the Naga society is greatly built on. By taking the readers into the life of the two women, the novella shows the patriarchal norms that are followed within the society which affects the lives of the young eighteen year old girl who is denied education in the society. This way, Kire tries to expand norms and laws of the Naga society. Naga women positions are constructed through the norms and laws which has become a barrier to move forward. She tries to show today in the present generation, that solving the gendered problems will not better the conditions of women in Naga society because women still are not

empowered. Her works try to signify how women's creativity has been fixed by society and patriarchal norms. They have a certain belief that women cannot be educated and cannot rise to the status of men. The two female characters in the novella are seen to challenge their gender roles and norms. An instance is the widow woman Visenuo and her daughter Atuonuo who brings a young handsome man Kevi to their home as he helps them carry their huge heavy paddy. The community believes that the people must abide by the rules, and the taboos. By bringing a young man inside their house, the widowed woman and the young daughter caught the attention of the villagers. The villagers considered it as an immoral act as Atuonuo is of a marriageable age. This issue makes it clear that the female gender is considered inferior. This incident makes it difficult for the women to live. The kind of problem showed in the text is inherited since generations, therefore, the two women Azou and Khonuo visit Visenuo's place in order to get an explanation of the matter.

Visenuo does not think that bringing a male member in the house is false, but since the patriarchal society wants to take care of the reputation of a female member, it requires them to do so. Visenuo at the beginning did not care about the opinion from the villagers. Within the Naga society, such an act is considered to be a great step taken by the two women. Visenuo defines the possibilities for women as she changes the notion of a girl marrying at the age of eighteen; she voices that a girl could marry at whatever age she preferred. She asserts, "in our day, people got married much earlier, but time is changing with today's young people" (44). Visenuo stands for a new order for the modern society. She as a strong woman understands the dynamics of tradition, as well as represents the hallmark of change. She replaces the old ways of early marriage. She challenges the

gender norms which are socially constructed. This shows that the undermining of female gender should be passed out and there should be women who stand for their beliefs. Time has changed where there are more logical reasons in lives than the illogicality of customs and rituals which have distinct names using patriarchal structure.

These customary rules are being challenged now due to the phase of time, so this shows that the idea of women's emancipation is also getting into the Naga society despite being a patriarchal one. It has created small movements of emancipation which shows that the power structure has variations. This contingent movement shows the way in which women emancipation is a matter which is recognisable. The lives of the women or individuals should not be detected by the society but rather it should be an individual choice. Kire as a Naga author believes in the notion of gender equality. Kevi, was a young handsome hunter who had no parents. After meeting Atunuo several times, he expresses his feelings to her. Atunuo lately realises that she too loves him.

Gender roles are defined in the beginning but as the novel moves forward, the role of talking about feelings and emotions connected between Atunuo and Kevi also develop. On getting the idea of being in love, Atunuo didn't want to regret later for not expressing the feelings to Kevi. She took a very big step; she lied to her mother and ran all the way to the field to see Kevi inside the hut. Atunuo turns into a much matured young woman. The ability to move away from home despite living in a very constructed society is a proof of maturity. Without anyone's help, she faces all the challenges. This new changes and developments make a different situation in the way feminism is treated. Kire as a Naga woman writer shows the feminine and masculine traits in the Naga

society. She is not only concerned about the female characters but she talks about the notion of masculinity.

Don't Run My Love is not against the male society. The two women challenge the gender roles assigned to them by the tradition. Alice Walker fights back against the patriarchal society, which alienates and oppresses woman. It makes the women feel insecure not only in the black society but also within different societies. Womanism emphasises the idea of a woman holding and aspiring on each other's side so that it could prevent the power which restricts them. Kire's novella details the plight of a mother and her daughter who tried to keep away from the society which restricted them as they were women. In this novella, Atuonuo, a young girl decides to meet her lover Kevi. On reaching the hut, she meets Kevi. He is annoyed because of Atuonuo's ignorance, so he starts hurting her on her arm. There is blood that comes from the arms and she faints. On waking up, Kevi asks Atuonuo to promise him that no matter what anyone else says, she should be with him. Atuonuo is worried for her mother and the villagers as she is getting late. Kevi asserts, "We are getting married, and you are with your future husband. How can anyone talk about you when they know the facts?" (71). Atuonuo and Kevi decide to hold back that night. It is a very big thing for Atuonuo as she at a very young age takes a very strong step. Visenuo on knowing that her daughter had lied to her says that if they had decided that they would marry, she would not be angry and would avoid scolding her. After some time Atuonuo comes out "bursting" with her clothes all bloodstained. Atuonuo tells about the were-tigers coming at the hut when they stayed there. Kevi turns out to be *tekhumevimia* which means the "were-tiger". The man Kevi is the body and the tiger is the soul. Kevi hauls with other tigers and Atuonuo runs from the hut. Atuonuo's

guts to run away from the hut define her identity. Women are not just domestic objects; they should fight among their community and the patriarchal society. The mother and the daughter were in danger, so they decided to go and visit the old seers. Through the traditional knowledge they knew that the woodcutter would help them. This scene was so sudden that a young woman was attacked by a tiger and the other woman was fighting back “with her bare hands” (116). And ultimately, the tiger’s head was cut in half by the woodcutter which rolled on the ground. Without Visenuo, Atuonuo would not have been able to fight back alone. Women should encourage each other to fight. Not only does the mother take care of her daughter, but she takes her alone into different villages. Both the woman tries to find out the ways to fight back the were-tiger. The black women help each other in the novel *The Color Purple*, likewise in Easterine Kire’s novella, Visenuo and Atuonuo take care of each other even without the legitimate male relatives. They both alienated themselves from a man within the society. Whenever they face any kind of problems they solve it among themselves.

As a womanist, education is the main focus. Initially, Atuonuo lacks education because among the Angami Nagas education was not regarded as more important than the domestic roles. The education problem is not only in one particular society, rather most of the societies suffer from this problem. Walker also states that the African society or the blacks whether in America or other places suffers from a similar problem. She believes the idea of love and change, so as Easterine Kire. The love or bond shared among the women and men would create a better society.

Easterine Kire ends the novella, with a great twist. She opens the novel with a very young good looking man and ends the novella with a very surprising character. The

female characters reconcile and also see themselves as self-worth. The women in the novel reconstructed the norms and values. This novella *Dont Run My Love* could be read and understood as a Womanist text. First, “Womanist” is from the southern folk expression “womanish” (Walker: xi). It usually refers to outrageous, audacious and courageous. It is interested in grown-up doings, acting grown up. These aspects could be seen in the character Atuonuo, who thinks and acts very strongly. Visenuo, a widow is portrayed as courageous. The two women successfully worked in the field without depending on anyone. They struggle and succeed at the end which makes a very womanish behaviour. Based on their “womanish” attitudes, Easterine Kire presents a female and male defined community in the novella. Easterine Kire does not only talk about the female character, she also talks about the masculine power through the character Kevi. Easterine Kire believes in the equality of all human being whether it may be a male or a female. Kire takes the myths and folktales to bring out the idea of the were-tiger.

Tekhumevimia is an Angami Naga term. Its literal meaning is “tiger grown into shape of” (Henesi 102). *Tekhu* means tiger and *mevi* means turning into something. The humans and non-humans or animals exchange in one form or other form. The primordial Nagas is said to be associated with ‘lycanthropy’, lycos meaning ‘wolf’ and more commonly any wild animal. Micheal asserts the “Angami beliefs about the *tekhumiavi* straddle two worlds – the world of human, waking reality, and a very different, seemingly mythological one – a vast universe of spirits, signs and omens (99). It is said that the existence of tiger-man among the Naga tribes has been reduced largely with the advent of Christianity. The existence of the were-tigers is not considered as something very new in

the Naga society. Hutton's monograph states, "Lycanthropy is believed in but not practiced by the Angamis, though their neighbours and perhaps near relatives the Semas are inveterate lycanthropists" (Hutton 243). This becomes very important because Kire's writings on the Naga *tekhumiavi* the 'tiger-man' or 'were-tiger' is explained in a very simple Angami context. It is also said that the were-tigers are believed to come out in the villages during the foggy season. The were-tigers changed into a human form and lure the little children and take them away. It is assumed that when a person shares the liver or heart of a chicken with the were-tiger, then the person also becomes one of them. There is also a process to become a were-tiger. Firstly, the person will be transformed into a very small animal, and then as the person grows older he changes into a larger animal. The life of the person and the were-tiger is closely associated. Here in the text, the *tekhumiavi* which is Kevi as a mythic figure with heroic qualities ends with tragic element. It is also believed the person who changes into a were-tiger likes to stay in the forest, attacks wild animals like the character Kevi. He is used as a metaphor for the society to be careful about the warnings that could come up in anyone's life. This character warns about being deceived by first impression. It alerts the readers about the need to be wise to the real nature of such men.

The character, Kevi, is portrayed beautifully in the beginning of the novella. He is a young man who is perfect with good qualities and is well-mannered. He had the qualities of talking and pleasing the elders. He pleases Atuonuo's mother. Then, there is a presentation of his dark side; the dark story of the were-tiger. Kevi crosses all the boundaries that do not allow him to return. He crosses the physical boundaries and engages himself with the dark power. The story suggests that there is no way to return to

normal if you cross the boundary willingly. Kevi might have done it to gain power, but once he falls in love with Atuonuo, he wants to live a normal life as a man and raise a family with the woman he loves. But that is not his lot as he has made his choice before finding love. The character Kevi is to be pitied because he has no choice. The story takes another direction away from today's world about the need for an abusive man to be pitied. Easterine Kire asserts:

Many of my female students they use to pass out when I was teaching. Beautiful girls get into relationships mostly. They get married to somebody they love. And then more than fifty percent of them they are abused by their husband. After sometime they find me in face book and then they share that their husband abuses them after having children. So that was one reason why I wrote this book "Don't Run My Love" (Kire).

On analyzing this idea, Easterine Kire is trying to explain how a man can turn vicious no matter who they are and how women are never really safe no matter where they are, be it in a city or a small village. Easterine Kire through her retelling of the Mizo folktale tries to define or reflect how women are defined by men.

Alice Walker talks about the new age for women with the life of change, peace, respect and the freedom of choice and liberty. Alice Walker and Easterine Kire shares a common vision of bringing change within the society, remove gender equality and end any discrimination. They advocate about a life full of independence and empowerment in the entire sphere. Talking about the equality of Naga woman in political, social, economic empowerment, the Naga women still yearn and struggle. Easterine Kire also says that the

Naga women are still not empowered completely. Talking from womanist angle, Easterine Kire has been looked upon as a Feminist, but she claims to be a Womanist . Her statement says it all:

All the african writers call Alice Walker a womanist and not a feminist, although she has written so many books about woman. She is different from feminist writers. Feminist writers call for something which is very political, so I don't support it and I don't believe it and for the Nagas its anti- biblical. So I don't find politics/feminism attractive. I don't like my books to be looked from a feminist point of view. I am more concerned for human rights of each person, be it a man or a woman. All the Naga woman work hard, they earn their own living, they are independent. (Kire)

Chapter -1V

Indigeneity and Animism in the Writings of Easterine Kire

4.1. Introduction

Merriam-Webster defines religion as “an organised systems or beliefs, ceremonies and rituals use to worship God or groups of gods; the belief in the controlling power outside oneself; an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group” (Merriam-Webster). The religious beliefs are attributed towards life, souls and spirits. To understand the religion of Nagas during the primordial times is a very difficult task because the Nagas vary of distinct tribes, languages, culture and belief system. Each tribe has different customs, taboos, laws, and beliefs. Jimomi quotes Kanito V.C Sema, who comments on the religion of the Nagas that it “is not founded by any prophet. It is only the honest treasure, the embryo and the relic of the pro-logic state of imagination and the ideas upon which much of the organized religions have depended for their spiritual quest” (qtd. In Jimomi: 10). The rituals that the primordial Nagas followed were popularly the characteristics of “animism” dominating all the social, cultural, and political life. Animism comes from the word “anima” which meant ‘hrench’, ‘life force’ or ‘soul’ (Sema 35). It is the belief based on the experiences of human visions and dreams in spiritual being.

The Naga’s indigenously believed “that there is an invisible, benevolent creator of the earth and the dispenser of all events, generally known as God who created all living beings and the entire universe” (Jimomi 10). The idea of one Supreme Being is what they believed. The rites, ceremonies, and rituals that the Nagas practiced, intends to enrich

their religious and moral life. The Nagas were nature worshippers and the whole tradition centres on nature, which describes them as practitioners of the religion that was close to animism. According to Ingold in “Rethinking Animism”, animism is not a belief in something that is away from the people, it is a belief of being that is alive around them which continually build relationships (qtd in Insoll: 1005). The Naga belief lies within their culture, where there is no difference between religion and culture. The indigenous Nagas practice their beliefs from the oral tradition. The ancestors had their wisdom, memory of spiritual performances which was not in a written script like the present generation.

4.2 The Angami Nagas

J. H Hutton in his work *The Angami Nagas* chapter IV has dealt with the religious beliefs and worship of cults practiced by the Angami Nagas. Hutton asserts “the Angami regards the supernatural in general from a point of view that is sublimely vague. So vague is his idea of deities and spiritual being” (178). The Angami people believe in the supernatural power, in the form of spirits. The forms of spirits are known to control everything. Their lives were mostly influenced by the supernatural forces. They believe in supernatural spirits i.e., the souls of the dead and living. They feared the *terhoma* which is known as deities. The deities and the spirits have controlled their lives. Certain functions were performed for the *deities*. They also had ingrained the idea of having spirits in the forest, stones, and rivers, believing Nature as a spiritual entity. The spirits can be either good or bad. An evil spirit which dwells in the cliffs, forests, and streams are regarded harmful to people. They appeased them and offer chickens, eggs etc. An instance is shown in Hutton’s book where Captain Butler records the case of an Angami chief in the village

who had lost his son when he went for hunting and on hearing about the accidents of his son started challenging the spirits who had caused his son's death (Hutton 178).

The Angami Nagas also believed in *terhoma*, which is known as the speaking and invisible spirit. A child becomes particularly targeted to be attacked, so a woman with an infant in arm protects the child by holding a reaping hook. During the month of November 1918, the Angami villages were littered with lots of eggs and chickens. Hutton says, "Chicken freed and driven away in the jungle to serve . . . as an offering for the spirits of the jungle" (170)

The Angamis worshipped the deities and it was considered to be very important for the community heads and officials to be present during the worship. Animism as a religion consist of a society of people who are closely related to nature, with unmarked poles functions respectively as the universal dimensions of each mode. Animism and naturalism are hierarchal and metonymical structures. The spirit *Kepenopfu* was considered to be the creator of all living beings. *Kepenopfu* refers to the "birth spirit" or "birth mother", it is regarded as the ancestress of all the spirits and the larger cats. The affixation of the word *kepeno* means birth and *pfu* is referred to be feminine, and so many Angamis accepts *Kepenopfu* to be a female being or birth mother. They regard it to be a beneficent spirit. The sky is regarded to be the dwelling place of *Kepenopfu*. It is believed that the souls of the dead people who have lived a good life go to the sky with *Kepenopfu* and reside with her. There are varieties of spirits that the indigenous Angami tribe believed; *Rutzeh* was considered to be the evil one. For instance, if a man dies suddenly or unexpectedly without any illness, his death is attributed to *Rutzeh*. Secondly, the Angamis regard *Maweno* as the goddesses of fruitfulness. It was the small mischievous

spirits. The pebbles and paddy are kept in her bag. She provided the man with only one gift, a pebble, a grain or a paddy. It is said that when a person sees this spirit she grants anything asked to her. *Telepfu* was another being who considered being mischievous. Hutton says, she carries away children, men and women. She hides them but does not harm or kill them. On finding the people she makes them senseless. *Tsukho* and *Dzurawu* were the two spirits. *Tsukho* was the husband spirit and *Dzurawu* was the female spirit. They were represented as dwarfs who guide and rule all the animals. They were not dangerous for humans. *Tekhu-rho* was another spirit regarded as being responsible for the disappearance of man in the forest or jungle. The villagers, at the moment of disappearance will declare a *genna* (prohibition) to appease the deity. Hutton writes it that *Tekhu-rho* is also “believed to avenge the death of tigers and the leopards”. This could be performed at the distance from the village. By opening the mouth of a dead tiger with a piece of wood and placing the head of the tiger into a running stream, it is believed that the tiger tells the “*Tekhu-rho* who had killed him and all that the spirit can hear is a meaningless gurgle in the water” (182).

Hutton says that *Ayepi* was another fairy spirit that dwells in men’s houses. This spirit brings wealth to a few men who see her. Luckily, sometimes little human footprints of the spirit are seen in the paddy or on the dusty floor (182). *Kechi-ke-rho* was the spirits of species inhabiting stones. The Angamis believed that there were certain stones that brought them wealth. These stones were kept in big barn baskets as they are believed to bless the harvest. *Terhuomia* refers to Satan. Every village had varieties of *terhuomia* that a neighbouring village may not be common. The Nagas myths, folktales,

legends and songs are uncountable and vary within its community. *Terhumia* is believed to dwell in mountains, forests, trees, rivers and stones.

The Angamis also believed that they should not burn the wood called *hetho*. Hutton records about a man who was lost and could not be found. So in order to perform the dead ceremonies, they consulted the old woman who was the dreaming woman of the village. A spirit advised her to make use of the thorny tree, to make a wooden image of a dead man. The thorny tree was used so that in future everyone will be afraid to touch it. Since then the “hetho” has never been burned. It was also believed that when a man dies far away from his home, his relatives brought the death person’s piece of hair and made a figure with the *hetho* wood and joined the hair and perform the ceremonies (191).

The *genna* also played a very important part in the spiritual belief among the Angami Nagas. The spiritual beliefs consisted of a large number of ‘genna’ or ‘ceremonies’ for appeasing the spirits. The lives of the Nagas, were full of fear, superstitions and they were nature worshipper with different rituals, traditions, customs, and beliefs. The Angami Nagas have so many rituals, beliefs, superstitions which were engrained in its oral tradition in the form of folklore. But with the advent of Christianity all these rituals, ceremonies, and beliefs connected to the spirits and nature, were lost. The Nagas gave up all the old practices. As they accepted Christianity and western culture, there was a sudden transformation in all the fields. However, the Naga culture is not outdated, still, the indigenous songs are sung, and dances are performed on special occasions. In order to trace the history of Nagas, the oral traditions in the forms of folklores play a very important role in rewriting the history and redefining identities. In the primitive or non-literate societies, the cultural values, the beliefs, and rituals were

usually transmitted orally to the present generation. But now in this present scenario, the past is been recorded and recovered through writing. Elizabeth says, “Therefore folklore, culture and literature are intrinsically linked” (72).

The twentieth century opened up with new ideas influencing the literary theories with folklore, culture and literature studies. A wave started in the Northeast regions known as the NEWF (North East Writers Forum). It is first literary body which was established in the year 1996. It includes the writers from all the seven states of Northeast. It encourages promoting literature from the seven north east regions through creative writings. The literary writing in English began especially for the indigenous writers which than began to be recognised. Elleke Boehmer states “writing is an integral part of self- definition” with its “emphasis on historical reconstruction and the ethical imperative of reconciliation with the past (221). Naga writing in English is still in its developing period. And with the introduction of a new genre of writing, the Naga literature could develop with its distinct and unique indigenous characteristics. The unrecorded history of the past, its cultures, and traditions can be viewed in terms of living literature, enduring its people through folklore.

4.3 The Concept of Folklore

“Folklores” as a term was coined by William Thoms in his letter to “The Athenaeum” (1846). It was also known through other terms such as ‘Popular Antiquities’ or ‘Popular Literature’. Thoms preferred the word folklore because it was more a “Lore” which included all the words such as s beliefs, customs, songs and proverbs. Since then many new definitions started to emerge. Alan Dundes’ essay “Who are the folk?” describes the

meaning of folk which can be referred to any group of people who have common characteristics, common occupation, language, and religion and a sense of common identity (6). Alan rejects the notion that folk belongs only to rural folk or peasants. He asserts that a group sharing the common customs, beliefs, ideologies, mannerisms, and rituals are the components of folklore. Folklore has been formed through culture and it is a link between literature and history. Barre Toelken's *The Dynamics of Folklore* (1979) classifies the elements of folklore into four categories which are 'folk literature', 'folk practices', 'folk arts', and 'folk science'. 'Folk literature' consists of important elements namely folktales in the forms of myths, legends, fairy tales, short stories, proverbs, songs, rhymes and poetry etc. The next is the 'Folk Practices' which includes folk beliefs, superstitions, customs, rites and ritual, folk games, animal sports, and the also the practices of folk festivals. Folk theatre, folk dances and artistic painting, sculpture, weaving, archery and costumes designing comes under 'folk arts'. The fourth and the last consist of 'folk science and technology'. The 'folk science' includes folk medicines and treatment, procedures of agriculture and technology. 'Folk technology' consists of folk architecture such as making of tools, pottery, and ornaments. (8) Folklores refer to the oral transmission of ideas and facts from cultures and traditions. It always includes the aspects of culture, and culture becomes the part of folklore. Folklores provide an understanding of the cultural knowledge. Edward B Taylor defined the word 'culture' in 1871, as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1) The rich culture of each tribe bespeaks the folklore, which is passed down from one generation to the other. Folklores become the source of illustrating the unrecorded history

of the past. The history of the people is said to be incomplete without the knowledge of cultural roots. Therefore folklore, culture, and literature are closely linked and related. Russian philologists and folklorist Vladimir Propp, broadens the scope of folklore in his book *Theory and History of Folklore* (1984). He asserts folklore as being the product of “verbal art” as literature also forms the “verbal art” (6). Literature and folklore can be both classified by genres. The study of folklore cannot be completed without knowing the history. Historical studies could reveal the unrecovered histories of the past, therefore Propp asserts that “the study of folklore cannot be limited to the investigation origins and that not everything in folklore goes back to a primitive state or is explained by it. . . . Folklore is a historical phenomenon” (11). The primitive or indigenous societies cannot identify themselves without their old historical elements. The historical study should know how to show the old folklore, with the new changes and formations. The “old” and “new” could prevail, by not ignoring the old but by accepting the old with the new. It could bring the “hybrid formations”. Propp asserts Folklore and religious ideas are full of such hybrids formations” (12). The old or unresolved folklore could be interpreted, changed with new ideas. One of the most creative processes in folklore is creating the old into new. In his “Theory and History of Folklore”, Vladimir Propp upholds the idea that “folktale especially the tale of everyday life is an ancestor of written realistic literature” (20). The originality cannot be removed from folklore. Lenin says, “In every folktale, there are elements of reality” (19). Without the presentation of reality, folklore cannot be attractive and interesting. The elements included in the stories and events are so interesting that it could never be considered as real or usual or making it where the events never happened or appeared. For Propp the unusual occurrences makes the folklores

more attractive, which enchants the people and offers “special delights”(19).The narrator does not perform the aesthetic functions but acquires artistic qualities such as narrates real stories from someone’s life, the events experienced or eye witnessed etc. Folklores are considered to be a realistic written form of literature, for instance in Renaissance Europe Propps says “when the hold of the church over men’s minds began to loosen and secular narrative literature in prose appeared, it drew its plots from folklore” (20). The event connects everyday life and transforms the stories into true and actual occurrences.

According to Vladimir Propp, the relation of folklore to reality can be categorised into three ways:

1. Folklore, like any other art, derives from reality. Even the most fantastic images are based on reality.
2. Independent of the intentions of its creators and performers, folklore reflects real life. The forms and content of this reflection differ according to the period and the genre.
3. A folk artist sets the goal of representing reality. Such a purpose characterizes the historical song and workers’ folklore. (38)

4.4. Easterine Kire’s People Stories

In the marginalised areas, the indigenous writers’ main concerns were regarding the loss and recovery of its histories and culture. The Northeast writers, using the medium of fiction deal with politics, culture and history, the ones that were written and most importantly the unwritten ones. Through folklore forms, the discourse on the contemporary Naga writing could be widened. Kire as a poet and novelist is very much

ardent in recording and collecting as many stories and tales. She sources her materials from Naga people's past and maintains the oral tradition. In her article "War and the Silencing of Naga Narratives", she marks about the wars which caused the Naga narratives to be silenced. It also interrupted the setting which was absolutely important for the continuation of folktales which led to the early death of their carriers. The oral narratives were silenced for a very long period after the military operations started in 1956 following the Naga war with India. (Kire) Emphasizing on the importance to share one's stories, Kire says that the significance of narrating a story is not basically an "artistic action", but it is more of a "spiritual exercise" which becomes a vital element for healing "people's psychological wounds" (Kire) If the stories are repressed the wounds of a nation might not receive a cure. Sanjoy Hazarika and Preeti Gill assert the importance of documenting the histories of the marginalised people from Northeast-east states like Nagaland and Assam. They states:

These are stories that the world does not know of, has not cared to know, contributing to the silencing of voices on the margins. We believe that the telling of these stories can work as a form of catharsis as well as positive intervention and empowerment, building bridges between communities and helping to open up a little-known region and alienated people (qtd in Elizabeth: 43).

For the Nagas, because of conflict, wars, and violence, their identity was in conflict which displaced their ways of life. Kire upholds that besides the loss of folktales, another oral narrative which was silenced was the countless and various stories of the Naga people. These stories are not fabulous or legendary tales but it is the description of

normal folks and their lives. Kire believes that people need to tell these stories and they deserve the opportunity to share their stories.

Easterine Kire started the Barkweaver project, with the aim of recording this living literature. She attempts to tell the stories of the folk. The book “Forest Song” is a collection of seven short stories which was published in 2011. It was also translated in German. Easterine Kire opened the narratives in a very different style. It is a typical Tenyimia tale- Angami, mysterious phenomenon of people being spirited away. Examining the rituals they followed the Nagas followed the religion close to Animism. The Naga spiritual cosmology “Gods, spirits, humans and nature: everything had its part in keeping the balance intended within all of creation” (Lotha 149). Kire people stories or stories of the people are the epitomes of the Naga realities. Therefore Kire calls it “people stories”. Kire still continues the tradition of storytelling by using the format of fiction and writes them in a new form. The telling of the stories supposes to be notable when looked from historical and cultural context. Stories play a very important role and through her short narrative, the lives and experiences of the common people and the importance of literature in Nagaland are understood. Elizabeth also asserts “storytellers have an influential role to play in creating an impact on the Naga psyche through writing” (45). This chapter attempts to study the new ways and styles in which folklore organises the idea of Naga writing and how Kire’s short stories are placed into the new genre of folklore which is written form of realistic literature emphasising particularly on Tenyimia rituals and culture.

The first story entitled “Forest Song,” is a tale where people are being spirited away. People go missing from their own villages. They are found only after three or four

days later but they are not the same as they were before. The Angamis believed in the existence of spirits within the forest. So, it is believed that the spirits lure people away with incredibly sweet music, melodious songs which could be heard from the forest far away from its villages. The forest songs become irresistible for the people, and the songs led the people to follow the songs into the forest. Zeno, who is a young girl in the story becomes the victim and is spirited away. Kire began the story emphasising the importance of storytelling; a young girl named Bano narrates about different stories about spiriting incidents to Zeno. Easterine Kire asserts that she has written this story with fictionalised characters. She has heard so many stories from oral narrators who return from spiriting encounters. She says that Zeno the protagonist is “many girls in one girl” (Kire)

In the story, Zeno is seen asking what forest songs are; her friend Bano explains it to her saying that it is “A spirit of the forest. They sometimes sing in groups and sounds like an age-group returning home from the fields and court on the way” (Kire 11). A person who goes into the forest is also seen carrying bitter wormwood because they believed that the spirits cannot follow the bitter wormwood. The protagonist Zeno coincidentally becomes the victim. Zeno was asked by her mother to take her father’s food in the forest. She was quite frightened to go alone but her mother denied saying she is about to give birth after some time. Zeno packed her basket with freshly cooked food and a rice brew. Like an old lady, she could walk crossing all those bamboo groves, in the half-dark night. Zeno’s mother always threw bits of bitter wormwood in the baskets whenever she goes to the forest, but on that particular day her mother forgot to throw bits of wormwood. The Nagas were superstitious and they thought that sticking bitter wormwood behind their

ears would be helpful in abiding the spirits away. As she moves ahead in the forest, she sees Pulie, a “lecherous man” who always had evil thoughts towards girls. She had been caught once by the man. Zeno feared the man Pulie which led her into running deeper into the forest. To her relief, she sees an old woman who was carrying a basket with firewood; she called her “Atsa! Atsa!”(17). She was scared, but the woman replied saying, “There, there, my child, no one dare come near you when I am with you”. (17) Zeno is relieved when she meets the old woman but unluckily the old woman is not a human. It was already the fifth day and Zeno never returned home as she had been hypnotized by the song and was spirited away.

Easterine Kire takes the story to another level. She mixes the spiring incident and the issues of woman regarding sexual abuse by men in the society. It is because of the man that Zeno’s fear led her deeper into the forest. Within the Angami society, it becomes important for a woman to not speak about the issues related to women. It is a social taboo. Through this folklore, Kire mentions the circumstances faced within the Naga culture. It becomes very important to address the issues which are evil. Kire talks about the issues which are kept back and hidden. At the end of the story, the description of the significance of the names in Tenyimia culture (Angami) is shown. The full name of Zeno is Zevino, which literally means “the one who is good to be with”, apart from that when the name is shortened and people call her by Zeno, Zeno means “take her” or “the one who can be taken” (47). This reminds the use of names, which is believed to have an impact on the destiny of the person. The name itself described she could be claimed by anybody. Therefore, Zeno was claimed by the spirits. Towards the end of the story, Zeno’s mother sits with her son, without being observed by anyone, she spits saliva on to

her finger, touched the forehead of her son and says “He is mine, hear me Spirits, have staked my claim” (19). In the Naga villages, the people being spirited away are quite common and it frequently happens. Vladimir Propp in his “Theory and History of Folklore” is of the opinion that “the folktale and especially the tale of everyday life, is an ancestor of written realistic literature” (20). Kire’s short stories move from folklores to written realistic literature. The stories are based on true incidents and occurrences which are not common. It is the stories which people could not believe. Easterine Kire takes the old forms of folklores and presents it in a very new way. The originality and reality cannot be removed from folklores which Easterine Kire, through this story presents.

“The Man Who Lost His Spirit” is a story of the spirit which is quite different. The tale conveys, how strongly deep-rooted Naga sacrosanct is. The Nagas believed in the existence of spirits that lived or existed within the trees. What is astonishing regarding this tale is the man who had mislaid his spirit to a huge tree goes back to claim it all by himself. The Angamis animistic theory of nature could be seen through the illustrations of the spirits of the tree and grove. The tree is being regarded as a ‘conscious personal being’ which is extremely present in the thought of individuals. It received adoration and sacrifices. In the tale, the man Pesuohie had gone into a huge forest and had climbed the great tree and lost his spirit when he returned back. He started falling ill for no reason. Through the guidance of the fortune-teller, his three relatives left for the forest to call his spirit back. On reaching the foot of the tree, the first man called out his name “Pesuohie, come on we are going home” (58).

The spirit sounded so light and followed the three men. On reaching the house he was allowed to go in first, where Pesuohie was lying in the bed. After three more days, he

opened his eyes. However, his behaviour began to transform in a couple of weeks. He acted strangely and would always be filled with fear and anger. On being warned by his wife of his changes, he decided to go and bring his spirit back from the tree. Leaving the spirits in the forest wasn't rare for the folks. The spirits could be called back through the help of the clansmen. But then a man trying to get his spirit back was never heard of or was usual. The intrinsic spirit and personified spirit are a modification of the same deep-lying animistic thought. In Nagaland, people being spirited away are very common especially in the villages and the search parties have to be plan and organise to retrieve the missing person. At the same time, since it involves spirit activity, the seers are also engaged in guiding the search parties. The seers give instructions on where to find the missing person and how to bring them back. Like the Angami Nagas, the Mintira of the Malay Peninsula believes in *hantu Kayu* referring to the 'tree spirits or tree demons' which can affect men with diseases. Few trees are also distinguished for being harmful with their evil spirit. The Angami Nagas assumed that certain trees ought not to be cut down like the Dayaks of Borneo, for the reason that it possessed spirits. Cutting down those trees may cause loss. It was also believed among the Angamis that there was also a tree that grows upside down. It was assumed to be the walking stick of *Sopfunuo* but this tree was destroyed in the forest fire.

When the man had reached the tree, he was reminded by the sneer to stay for at least fifteen minutes as it was a matter of life and death. His spirit had forgotten him; he sprinkled the powder that the seer had given him. Kire presents the symbolism of the metal *dao* which is a metal object, used by the Angami Nagas. It is an object to prevent the influence of evil spirits. With the *dao*, he marked the boundary around his spirit. With

his spirit on his back, he struck the trunk of the tree with his *dao* and pronounced, “Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, I believe in Kepenuofu” (Kire 63). At the end of the story, the man brought his own spirit back talking, singing the folk songs where the two figures seemed locked in a deep spiritual battle. It discusses the ‘faith’ and ‘trust’ that the man and the spirit had and how they were dependent on each other. The spirits’ activities become very conscious among the Nagas. There is a wide range of animistic notion, associated with the tree and forest worship among the Angami Nagas. It may be said that the animistic doctrines followed by the Angami Nagas, may be assumed as the values created between man and nature. Tylor claims it as a notion of ecstasy or pain, profit or loss displeasing the person and his folks. Thus, the story points out the fact, about the existence of the spiritual and the physical on the same plane which is very unusual. Kire also asserts “In the late 1990s the sweeper in our department was spirited away, and her village people searched for her in the forest for three days” (Kire). Thus, accepting the existence of both the physical and the spiritual world is a very beautiful part of the Naga psyche which should be appreciated as it affects the lives of the people.

“New Road” is another story which details the different kinds of spirits that follow people. Kire narrates the story in a way that serves as a tale to educate the culture, beliefs, traditions and folklore. In this story, Nino is requested by her mother-in-law to not allow her brothers to come from the new road as the spirits follow them if they come very late. She explained her how they troubled her the very first night when they returned home very late. The Angamis believed different kind of spirits; some were considered dangerous, harmful, and some harmless. But the ones that followed them the last night were the spirits who were mean and harmful. The indigenous Angami tribe believed in

the existence of the spirit *Rutzeh* which is harmful to people and causes death. Here, in the story a village man thought that it is the cat that knocks above the water pitcher every night and so he beats the cat ruthlessly; unexpectedly in the morning he was found dead near the village gate. The villagers could not bury him inside the village because this death was thought as terrible. The dead man was buried outside the village. It may be interpreted that the belief system holds a major reason to exist or to live in the village. The Angamis belief in the spirit called *Rutzeh*, which is considered an evil-spirit, may be reflected in this story. Kire furthermore discusses about the river spirits. Nino's mother-in-law continues to tell about the river spirits. The river spirits are regarded to be the most dangerous. Nino's mother-in-law could feel and see a very beautiful woman when she felt the "cold breath" which woke her up. She could feel the room which was "moist" as if someone had "splash river water". She could smell the "river mud" and the "river spirits" (23). She had the gift that could see and communicate spirits. It is believed that there are some Naga women and men who could see and feel the existence of spirits. Easterine Kire's spiring stories are unusual. These stories are difficult to occur in real life but she takes it out from the typical Tenyimia culture, and rituals making it into a fiction which is so realistic in nature. Through artistic qualities, Easterine Kire presents the originality of the text reflecting real life stories.

The fourth short story is entitled as "River and Earth Story", Kire presents the parallel story of Tenyimia culture and the Igbos of Nigeria. The story shows the similarities of folk beliefs shared by Igbo Africans and Nagas. The story is coupled with two narratives, one in Logos, Nigeria and the other in Nagaland. Both the narratives are about young men who come across beautiful women which were the river spirits. The

river spirits appeared in the form of beautiful women in Lagos, and Nagaland. The Ibos of Nigeria and the Nagas have a strong notion about the reality of spirits. Kire presents the occurrences which are remarkable in both the cultures. Both in Nigeria and Nagaland, the river spirits are an extremely attractive woman that might not be imagined if it's for real.

In the context of the Nagaland, the Tenyimia tribe (angami), believes in the spirit which they called it as *Ayepi*, a type of fairy which intends to live inside men's houses as recorded by Hutton in his book "The Angami Nagas". This spirit brings prosperity and wealth. Not all gentlemen see this spirit merely, only some men notice her.

The Igbos of Nigeria shares a common religion and tradition with the Nagas. The Igbos believes in the existence of one Supreme Being (Chuwka), and life after death. Their folktales and myths are understood with the belief in the being of one supreme deity. They took the form of natural occurrence with the belief in the wide range of spirits symbols which comprise of the spirits of the rivers, streams, lakes, rain, hills, the earth, strength, fertility, and witchcraft. River, streams, lakes, and rain are associated with life-sustaining qualities, symbolising purity, cleanliness, coolness, freshness, fertility etc. The spirits of water were measured as extremely vital deities. They believed that this water spirit washed every bit of evil and impurity. So, they complete these rituals in the rivers and streams. The spirit of fire (*oku*) and thunder (*amadioha* and *akpala*) were also worshiped (Nwoye 313). Any object could be turned into an object of devotion if it is considered as sacred.

Mammy Wotta is the river or water spirit which was respected by the Africans, long before they came into contact with the west. In the Ethiopian Coptic language, the word ‘mama’ was used as an explanation of truth and wisdom, and the term ‘*utat-ur*’ was supposed to be ocean water. The definition of the name is traced to the early Sundanese society where the word ‘*wata*’ refers to a female. In Pidgin English the spirits are widely known as *mammy wata*, *mami wata* or *Mami wota* (Kanu 139). She embraces an eternal spirit that presents beauty and danger, natural force and healing, wealth and destruction, and inability to follow good and evil. She is awfully powerful with her attractiveness with pleasant, sexual and may perhaps devastate anything that is on her path. She is portrayed as a long-haired attractive mermaid, half human and half fish. She presents the wealth which symbolizes the wealth and beauty, a man could achieve.

Kire also exhibits the ‘people stories’ to express the similarities the two cultures embrace upon. Josephus, a young and smart man suddenly started doing very good in his work after he met a *mammy-wota*, at his party office. Josephus could not remember what his boss had told him after seeing the beautiful woman. He was rich enough; meanwhile, he disassociates himself from the parties and social gathering. He started to be the talk of the town. Meanwhile a man sees *mammy wota* at his place. The man avers:

“Like any other *mammy-wota*, beautiful in an unearthly way that words fail to describe such beauty . . . she was a *mammy wota* mother of river, she’ll give Joseph great wealth. No man who marries a *mammy-wota* dies old. They like them young” (Kire 29).

A further week later, Joseph was found dead in an apartment. He was found death alone. In the meantime, Kire changes her narrative and moves the story to Nagaland. Balie, a young man invited by a young man Selhu to stay at his home. But he lived overnight in the hotel that was constructed atop the river bed. Suddenly, Selhu perceive sounds, Balie screaming outside the door. Balie in a state of panic says there were two women who were astonishingly beautiful. These women invited him to go for a party. He, all of a sudden, realised that they didn't have a waist and they laughed like an old woman and giggled which made him run back to his house. Selhu comments saying it's a river spirit. The hotel was constructed near the river which annoyed the spirits.

Folklore is not purely and does not become a historical object of the past. It is exciting and lively throughout the verbal art. It is the spirit which aims to unveil the folk beliefs and practices notifying the consciousness of the communities. The purposes of the traditional herbal practices are also significant in the two cultures. The incident about Beneme's father who was in his sick bed arouses curiosity. They were the Igbos of Nigeria who trusted more on the witch doctor than the medical doctors. The witch doctor cut the skin of his father and inside that hole, an object was found which he took out and smashed. The object was like a snail. At the end of the story, his father was fit and fine. Thus, less significant society ideals are tinted through indigenous facts and customs by the author.

Among the indigenous Naga tribes, the Angami tribe also holds a strong belief in herbalists. The traditional herbalist posses some remedies which can cure illness that amazed current medical practitioners. This is illustrated in one of the chapters from Kire's short stories "Love Potion". Certain medicines are prescribed as specifics in

certain diseases. The plants ‘*Chipfu*’ and ‘*pupu-u*’ are used for headaches, and for stomach ache the roots grass (*zoga*) and raspberry (*romvu*) are used. Rheumatism is treated with the leaf or root of the *mezi* tree, and the antidote for toxin is to pluck out the eyes of a living dog and consume them. (Hutton 99,100) It is also said that the Angamis have a little sense of knowledge of poisons. The soothing is said to be famous through tobacco. The herbal medicines are thought to be healing medicines in the Naga culture. These medicines are thought to be spiritual because they are considered to have the healing properties in them. The stories in the text acquaints with particular characteristics of superstitions. It throws light concerning the use of herbal potions used as an aphrodisiac which affects the body of the victim slowly killing him. Here, folklore is not a simply historical object of the ancient times but is bright and alive through verbal art.

Pusa, a young man of twenty years narrates his story to his friend Touza. This story is based on the true incident, where the protagonist is supposed to be Easterine Kire’s friend. (Kire) It was the new paan shop in the colony, where Pusa went and tried the paan. It was sold by a girl who was overweight, had oily hair and big teeth. This girl always gets gracious and obsequious with him. After eating that paan, Pusa could not sleep properly. He couldn’t get the girl out of his mind and started falling for her, where her voice was the sweetest. He became impatient without seeing and meeting the girl for two days. After some days, he began to urinate blood. He goes to see a doctor and narrates him about his wants to eat paan alone. The doctor then tells him to go and get the paan from the same shop. He becomes suspicious after observing the paan. He then calls the herbal experts to recognize and find out what it was. The herbal man avers, “It was the same plant out of which love potion was made” (50).

At the end, it was the herbal medicines that cured him which was given by the herbal man. Only the practitioners could make out how to arrange a solution for such poisoning cases. Events like this makes the Nagas believe in the existence of the spirit world. Kire also says that people, who have had spirit encounters, strengthen the faith of their listeners in the existence of the spirit world (Kire). This narrative brings together the old and the new functioning method in modern society and also the explanation of the spiritual power in the herb that the Nagas believed in. The values of original knowledge systems within the indigenous cultures are been highlighted which are considered as marginalised by the larger culture in the society. Kire by conveying the old folklore, takes out the new aspect of mixing the old and the new which Propp calls “hybrid formations”. The tale serves as an idea of the old folklore changing into new, thus educating about the cultural values.

Kire’s closing narrative is “Cherry Blossoms in April”. Apart from all the short stories, this tale is different. It is set during the Japanese invasion of India in 1994. She transformed her narratives, not centering on spirits but “to put it and give a different view from this story” (Kire). The story is about a woman Sanuo, of Rusoma village who falls in love with a Japanese soldier. This narrative centers on the account of a common Japanese man giving a sight of the great effort that the citizens of Angami rural community had to go throughout the war period. It provides a voice to the land that became a theatre of conflict between world powers, and also to those villagers whose lives were affected. The villagers were disguised ‘as helpless victims. They were allotted to carry arms and ammunition and do labour work as well. On the other hand the women faced terror because of the sexual abuses done by the Japanese soldiers. The Japanese

forced the Nagas to work as coolies and made them carry heavy loads for long distance. Asoso Yonuo comments, “The Nagas, who were suspected to be British spies were killed with utmost brutality against the norms of war as set down in the international law” (146). The Nagas were people who were not openly part of the war but sandwiched among the two powerful armed forces of the British and Japanese armies. There were even cases of rape, murder and maltreatment. Kire through this story shows the events that happened in the war which is well-known as the Battle of Kohima.

Kire’s narrative is based on the true incident. The Japanese officials are seen as a human being not cruel by nature but responded to the call of duty. In this emotional love tale, the spirit of humanity is exemplified. Elizabeth quotes Kire where she comments that, “the paradoxical element in the story” was when she was reminded by “that people can find love in the midst of war. It shows life is unpredictable” (qtd. In Elizabeth: 49). The protagonist Sanuo, on seeing the Japanese officer Kuniyuki, was full of thoughts even though she rested in bed, hearing all the sound of gunfire coming from Kohima to her village. The fight was not with the Nagas but was with the British, which created a bond between the Nagas and the Japanese soldiers. The Nagas also provided the Japanese soldiers with food and shelter. Kuniyuki and Sanuo were deeply in love, despite their language barrier. She went to the *Gaonbura’s* house (a village head) and said “We are man and wife now, the young and I. . . . For as long as destiny will allow us” (77). The Japanese officer establishes that not all militaries were cruel and cold-blooded. The human side of the soldier gives the individual part to the description of war. It also destroys the stereotypical picture of a cruel warrior. The story is surrounded with the description of humanity and the violence of war. The situation is local, but the story has a

common appeal as it deals with human emotions. Kuniyuki was just another Japanese officer, who had to perform his duty. He sacrifices his life for the cause, which made him to leave. The couple were separated. In the end, Sanuo hears that he died in the battle. This story is a witness of how individuals create relations despite the fact that the nations are fighting for dominance over one another.

The significance of the flower 'Cherry Blossom' drawn by the Japanese soldier with a woman seated below can be highlighted at the end of the story. The Japanese culture for cherry blossom, *sakura*, is a special flower which is the embodiment of beauty and mortality. It is said that the warriors of feudal Japan had strict morale code of respect and discipline. Their duty in life was to appreciate the death without fearing the battle and protect the qualities in life. A fallen cherry blossom is supposed to be the end of lives. During the Second World War, it is assumed that the Japanese pilots painted their planes with flower imagery. The story, therefore, could be interpreted that the Japanese soldier drawing the tree is believed to have a strong influence that life is beautiful but is also tragically short. It also conveys a message about life and death. The reader is also reminded of the war which happened during the month of April, which is indicated by the blooming of the flower. Furthermore, it shows us that love rise above culture and linguistic barriers and can flourish like a crimson plant "cherry tree" still from the battlefield.

These short stories present the internal outlook of the Naga folklore. Kire removes the outward definition of Nagas as 'other' and presents the native as subject and not the object of discourse. The Nagas were recognized as ignorant and barbaric. It presented a picture which was labelled or further stereotyped by the postcolonial Indian media

associating only with violence and conflict. Her people stories, belongs to a genre which focuses on the folk themes, which is missing in the narratives of war and conflict. She brings alive a vibrant ethnicity preserving its tradition. These stories were silenced because of war and were buried, which up till now have been preserved only in the memories of the ancestors. The land is being projected by the national media only as a land of political disturbances keeping aside the important stories of the people. Conflict shouldn't be the only theme in all the Naga narratives. Kire avers that "there is much more to me and my people than just another political conflict" (Kire). The ordinary stories or unheard stories create a greater part of histories. The realities of life which has not received any explanation are very important for certain cultures. These realities form the culture and identity. It is the basic aspects of life which are denied and ignored by the people. Kire gives a real narrative because there are certain aspects of life which cannot be explained with logics and reasons. Kire's storytelling skills aptly demonstrate how the art of writing can safeguard, recreate and revive cultural traditions through folklore which moves toward written realistic literature.

Chapter-V

Findings and Conclusion

The power of literature is inherent in expressing and writing about the ordinary lives of individuals. Kire discloses another panorama of the Naga life by including the less talked about everyday lives. It has also led to an understanding that the emerging new genres progressively reflect the modern thoughts and values of a society for the future. Her narrative revives the past forms of old traditions and amalgamates them with the past and present structure. It has endeavoured in producing new literary genres, such as Naga Children's Literature and the new genre of folklore which is Written Realistic Literature. Her children's text demonstrates the need to be rooted in one's culture and to be positive at an early age. With a real narrative, Kire's short stories acquire a new dimension of folklore which proceeds into written realistic literature. Her narratives demonstrate the existence of both the spiritual and the physical world on the same plane which depicts the reality of the people. The writer expresses giving hope to the youngsters in this phase of modernity and sophistication. Naga Children's literature can be valuable in providing an opportunity to respond to cultural knowledge, social and personality development, creativity, and literary history to children across generations. As discussed in the earlier chapters, her works on women issues and the Naga society in general represents the hallmark of changes from old ways of early marriage and warns all the women to be aware about being deceived by first impressions and being unwise to the real nature of men. Through folklore narratives, she gives a voice that has been silent by wars and

decenters the outsider's definition of Nagas as 'Other' and presents the native as the subject and not the object of discourse.

The stories salvage the histories which are culture specific. She claims to re-establish the past through nature leading to an understanding about ensuring cultural survival. The Naga traditions are found to have many facets of culture and nature in relation to the spiritual world until it was displaced by the changing tides of Christianization proliferated into Western culture. As a result, the indigenous cultural values was disregarded and replaced. So to preserve the tradition, Easterine Kire immensely contributed a wide range of writings for the younger generation through the Naga Children's Picture text of other people. Ecological ethics has become important for future generation in Naga Society.

At present time, the Nagas have ignored the cultural values and traditions. There was a time when the Nagas considered the honorary Log-Drum as an integral part of their lives. It was played in all the villages for different occasions. But now with the influence of modernity and changes in the society they regard it as out dated. Presently an individual will find the Log- Drums played sometimes only on special occasions. Most of the younger generations are ignorant when asked about the Log-Drums, or their folk songs and dances. However, the Naga cultures are not extinct. Still, the indigenous songs are sung, and dances are performed on special occasions in order to encourage, and preserve its heritage.

The increasing growth of the number of creative writings among the Nagas directs our attention towards the flair which has contributed to the making of this literature. Any

creative Naga writings, closely studied will therefore be able to disclose the beautifully captured life of the older times. Simultaneously one would be able to perceive writings about the contemporary author like Easterine Kire who has based her writings on the experiences of the world she has lived through and continues to live today. Kire is not only the voice for the people but rises to don the intellectual of ordinary Naga folks. This idea points towards an understanding that she has become the storyteller of the olden days and exhorts the audience to explore the old knowledge from the elders in the villages as “they are the living books and they have literature in their heads (“Naga Literature”). Kire reconstructs the long forgotten folklore of the Angami Nagas built on their culture and spiritual knowledge. Kire, through her folktales presents the Angami context of *tekhumiavi* or the were-tigers. Were-tigers are believed to be very common in Nagaland. But at present time, it has been reduced greatly because of Christianity. According to the most recent information, it has been found that almost “hundreds of tiger-men and tiger-women possessing different supernatural powers” exist in the society. (Jamir and Lanunungsang 302).

Generating greater interest among the reading public or audience, Kire talks about the art which should be adjudicated on its artistic merits. This art should not be ignored by the folks of Northeast region but it should be proudly honoured and appreciated. Easterine Kire declares that she deliberately writes for the Northeast audience because she says, “I know that the Northeast audience will pick up and he or she will understand what I am trying to say” (Kire). The author reverse the notion of the prevalent “minority”, or “marginalized” status of North Eastern literature in the contemporary Indian literary scene and strongly in the people’s consciousness both by progressing the

native literature tremendously as well as changing the literary centre as she adds, “we just get assimilated and we lost what we have and what we have is so beautiful and I don’t want northeast to lose its uniqueness. Let’s be here let’s change the centre, this is our centre let people come to us we don’t need to run after them” (Kire).

The creative luminary Easterine Kire through different genres conveys the Nagas, especially the youngsters to start a life with a hopeful and positive future, she says, “Be kind. If you want others to be nice to you, start by being nice to them. Respect others that don’t think the same way as you do. Try to cultivate a reading habit. Lose yourself in the world of books; it’s a wonderful place to be” (Kire).

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