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FOREWORD

It is a great pleasure to announce the publication of MZU Journal of English and Cultural Studies (Volume no.III / Issue no. III). This Journal was floated by the Department of English as an annual Refereed Journal with ISSN, with the primary academic goal to encourage the teaching faculty and research scholars to write research papers on literary and cultural issues with critical and analytical investigation. In this direction, an awareness and understanding of contemporary critical theories seems to be significantly relevant. To ensure the standard of the Journal, the research papers submitted to the Editors undergo through a double blind review by experts in related areas.

I would like to record a change in the Editorial Board of the journal. As a standard principle of the Department, it was decided in December 2015 that the Head will act as the Editor-in-Chief for a period in sync with his/ her tenure as the Head only. The Editor and the Assistant Editor will be elected twice periodically for new volumes with new themes as being decided in consultation with the Advisory Board Members. The Editor-in-Chief will oversee the publication worthiness of papers and items submitted while stringently ensuring the standard and quality of research papers / reviews / creative writings accepted for the issue, while other editors would see responsibly to the successful edition and publication of the same. With my apologies for some delay this time in publication, I will hope that the next issue is brought out on time.

MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies

I would nevertheless heartily thank the Editor and the Assistant Editor for the good work and especially the authors of the contributed pieces published in this volume. We look forward to their cooperation in the future. The members of Editorial and Advisory Boards are sincerely thanked for exhibiting their team spirit and cooperation at every point of time and need. I wish a bright future as well as a healthy academic life to our Journal!

*Sarangadhar Baral
Editor-in-Chief
June 2016*

EDITORIAL

I feel privileged to write the editorial of the III issue of MZU Journal of Literature and Culture.

This issue covers various aspects of emergent literature under different themes viz Conflict Writing, Ethics and Conflict Studies, Verbal Expressions, Cultural Traditions ,Performance Arts, Epics, Belief Narratives , Religion, Forgiveness, Life-writing , Testimony, Photography, Music, Peace ,Conflict and Media, Identity- Based , Memory, Communication, Storytelling, Craft, Cuisine, Trauma, Witness ,Mourning as a Creative Strategy, Communities, Insurgency and Art.

Themes like Conflict Writing, Trauma, Forgiveness etc deserve special mention because of the political scenario of the North-East. The conflict that continues to prevail in this region is beginning to find expressions in various forms while culture and traditions of the region have surfaced in writings too.

The departmental project under DRS-SAP 1 on emergent literature, it is hoped will continue to serve as a forum in promoting the rich stories of this region through this journal.

Lalrindiki T. Fanai
Editor

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The Quest for Peace in the North-east with Special Reference to Mizoram

Lalrindiki T.Fanai

Associate Professor, Deptt.of English
Mizoram University

The term ‘ peace ’ denotes, in brief, a state of being, both internal and external in which there is tranquillity, freedom from disturbance or war, ease of mind or conscience. The state of ‘peaceful existence’ can apply to various situations concerning the individual, community or nation in a mental, socio-economic or political context. Though ‘peace’ is more than the absence of war, the context in which the term is used here refers to a situation where violence becomes the antagonistic term for peace, triggered off by elements of discontentment and developing into a secessionist line of thought, observed particularly in the North-Eastern region of India.

Mizoram, the 23rd State of the Indian Union of the North - Eastern region, like most of its neighbouring states in the region, was engulfed in a state of insurgency for about twenty (20) years. But it can now be claimed that it is the only state in that region which enjoys peace in the political sense of the term. This paper entitled, “ The Quest for Peace in the North - East with special reference to Mizoram, “ deals with the description and analysis of the process that brought about a peaceful solution to the insurgency problem that Mizoram had in the recent past. The path to peace is never smooth-sailing and this was true in the context of Mizoram too. There are laudable factors that are

worth high-lighting in the Mizoram context, that helped in sustaining the delicate path to peace, which ultimately resulted into a conclusive peace-settlement in the state.

It is common knowledge that the North-Eastern states, excepting Mizoram, are now going through political turmoil brought about by different types of movements which are anti-national in nature. The factors responsible for the rise of anti-national movements in each independent state of the North-Eastern regions may not be similar. But taking into consideration, the tribes that inhabit these areas, the geographical locations, the under-developed economy etc., the root of the problem that sparked off anti-national sentiments or strong regionalism that veers towards secessionism may not be too far apart. It is hoped that in describing and analysing the different factors that brought about peace in Mizoram, some useful insights might emerge for the other states of the North-East.

RISE OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

Under the Government India Act, 1935, the Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) was under the 'Excluded Areas.' It was administered by a British Officer, designated Superintendent as a representative of the Vice-roy of India with the help of the village chiefs. The administration carried out by the Superintendent in consultation with the Chiefs was viewed as biased by the Mizo people because there was an apparent social discrimination between a group of few privileged people. There were also reports of some high-handed behaviour of some chiefs. Lalchungnunga (1994) observes

“The colonial system of indirect rule had negative consequences in the chiefs-commoners relations. Under the protective authority of the Superintendent the chiefs

became irresponsible and autocratic. When their traditional powers, privileges and prestige were reduced vis - a - vis the cononial master, the chiefs tended to react regatively on their subjects and their rule became harsh “ (page 35)

At the same time political chages were taking place in the mainland India and the transfer of power from the British to the Indians was imminent. Against this background, a need was felt by the educated Mizo to check the growing menace of the chiefs as well as to resolve the destiny of the Mizo people in the event of British withdrawal from India. Consequently, the first political party named the Mizo Union was formed on April 9, 1946 having as its main objectives the abolition of chieftanship and the merger of Mizoram to the Indian mainstream. In opposition to the newly formed political party, ‘United Mizo Freedom Organisation’ (UMFO) was formed less than a year later under the leadership of Mr. L.B.Thanga and Rev.Zairema on July 5, 1947. Besides championing the cause of the chiefs, the UMFO wanted to become a part of Chin Hills of Burma. In Political and Economic Development of Mizoram written by Prasad, R.N. and Agarwal, A.K. (1991) this was seen as the beginning of a separatist movement. But the UMFO’s desire to merge with Burma (Myanmar) and not India seemed to have been a case of the choice between more familiar grounds and that which is less familiar. One of theUMFO’s objective states :-

“In looking for a country with which to identify ourselves we should seed one we admire and which can give us some benefits “ (Lalchungnunga 1994, page 79)

Burma seemed a more familiar ground in terms of geographical proximity and ethnic affinity and this observation

is confirmed by Mr. L.B.Thanga, one of the founders of the UMFO. The second President of the UMFO, Mr. Lalmawia had also served in the Burmese army during the Second World War. Later on, the UMFO merged with the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) and expressed their desire to become a part of Meghalaya.

However, it can be assumed that the Mizo leaders as well as the educated group were not totally ignorant with the idea of setting up a separate land for Mizoram. The report of the Assam Tribal and Excluded Areas, Sub Committee recorded thus :-

“It was very clear to the Committee that the British Superintendent (Macdonald) had been doing its best to set up a separate land called Mizoram” (Sarin 1982, page 206)

It must also be recalled that Nagaland was already fighting for a separate Nagaland and its leaders Mr. A.Z.Phizo visited Mizoram and invited the Mizo people to join hands with the Nagas to fight for political independence. Thanzawna, R.L. and Verghese, C.G. (1997) say that the Mizo leaders saw

“the rapid development in agriculture, communication, trade and education that were taking place in Nagaland and the Mizo leaders started comparing those developments with their down wretched plights. “ (page 6)

Besides a feeling of insecurity had taken roots not only in the minds of the Mizo people but also among the hill people of the Khasi - Jaintia and Garo Hills with respect to the safeguard of their traditional and cultural identity. There was also a growing discontentment among the Mizo, regarding the absence of any attempt to improve the economy or to develop the Mizo

Hills district. According to Lalchungnunga (1994), the British administration of the Lushai Hills had paid little heed to the improvement of the economy. Even if there were attempts on the part of the British Superintendent, they could not materialise due to lack of financial support in the absence of political commitment. After India's Independence, the Assam Government was directly responsible for the economic development of the Mizo Hills district, but no step towards improving the economy was forthcoming due to the apparent lack of interest on the part of Assam Government. This is further supported by a report on an Economic Commission in the A History of the Mizo (1994) which states thus :-

“A Commission, consisting of Sir B.N. Rau, Mr. J.J.M. Nicholas Roy and Mr. Gopinath Bordoloi visited Mizo Hills district and submitted a report about the prevailing economic conditions in the Mizo Hills giving suggestions for their ameliorations, but nothing was done, and the report was also forgotten “ (page 6)

The neglect and absence of economic programmes created differences between the Assam Government and the District Council headed by the Mizo Union leading to an administrative gap between them and resulting into the further deterioration of economy of the Mizo Hill district. When the ‘ Mautam ’ famine hit Mizoram in 1959, differences between the Assam Government and the District Council widened. In the event of the famine, a social organisation called ‘Mizo Cultural Society’ with Mr. Laldenga as its secretary changed its name to ‘ Mautam Front ’ with a view to working for relief measures.

In 1960, the organisation took on a new anglicised name called the ‘Mizo National Famine Front’ (MNFF). The Mizo

National Famine Front gained considerable popularity during the famine. While seeking and shelling out relief to the famine - stricken people, Mr. Laldenga was propagating a separatist sentiment. His slogan 'Mizoram for Mizo' became as popular as the efficient way in which he handled the relief works. It is also reported that, the then Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B.P. Chaliha patronised the MNFF to humiliate the Mizo Union and therefore their demands had more weightage in the Assam Government than that of the Mizo Union. The patronage that Mr. Laldenga enjoyed from the Assam Chief Minister, however, did not deter him from criticising the Assam Government for their indifference and negligence of the Mizo people's problems. The MNFF also blamed the Mizo Union for not taking adequate precautionary measures when the bamboo started flowering. The delay in taking relief measures by the Assam Government and the alleged laxity on the part of the ruling Mizo Union in tackling the famine became a useful leverage for the MNFF's political aspirations. For the Mizo people who had undergone the terrible onslaught of the famine the MNFF became a symbol of hope. Thus, it became the most popular organisation in the district. While the MNFF was at its height of popularity, it transformed itself from a social organisation to a political organisation named the Mizo National Front on October 22, 1961, under the leadership of Mr. Laldenga. This was followed by the demand for 'Sovereign Independence for Greater Mizoram'. The dilemma of the Mizo people in the event of British withdrawal from India, the impact of 'Mautam' famine, the Assamese Language Bill of 1960, the poor economy, cultural difference etc. had been responsible for creating a strong regional consciousness among the Mizo people, adding to the advantage of the newly formed Mizo National Front. The oratory gift of the President of the MNF, Mr.

Laldenga and the promise of a better world attracted not only the uneducated but also government employees, students and dissidents from other political parties. But armed - insurgency was not the objective of the MNF as Mr. Laldenga himself had written thus:

“The Mizo people are religious minded and peace - loving. They love peace in as much as they need it Though known as martial race, Mizo nation commits itself to a policy on non - violence, not to resort to violence for their liberation They have witnessed and clearly seen the result of violence and its futility in Kashmir and in Nagaland. They do not want such things to happen in Mizoram. Mizoram being land - locked and taking into consideration its supply routes and economic conditions, the leaders know that military victory over India is not possible and they hope that the Mizo problem will be solved through negotiations “. (Lalchungnunga 1994, page 84)

However, contrary to this statement, the MNF launched an armed - insurrection from 28th February, 1966 and government installations and security camps were attacked with a view to gaining complete control over them which was accompanied by the declaration of Mizoram Independence. Thus, for twenty long years, Mizoram was engulfed in a state of insurgency.

THE ROAD TO PEACE:

In the same year that the MNF took up armed - rebellion to fight for their political goals, efforts to end it had already started. At the initiative of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Zairema wrote to Mr. Laldenga requesting him to meet the representatives of the churches for a speedy restoration of normalcy in Mizoram.

Though a meeting took place between them, nothing conclusive came out of it. About a year later, a ‘Citizens Committee’ was also set up by the Presbyterian church in order to pacify and comfort the fear - stricken Mizo people. The Committee also sought for the speedy restoration of peace in Mizoram.

Immediately, after the outbreak of insurgency, the Government of India launched a counter - insurgency operations both by land and air. The success of this operation, the shortage of supply of ammunition for the MNF volunteers, the absence of the promised foreign support in the event of the armed - rebellion were somewhat demoralising for the MNF. (These were issues raised at the MNF General Meeting held in December, 1966). It was becoming clear to some of the MNF personnel that independence through armed - struggle might not be achieved. Meanwhile, the Presbyterian and Baptist Church Committee spoke to various political leaders and in August, 1968 a ‘Peace Mission’ was formed to persuade the MNF leaders to give up violence so that peace might be restored in Mizoram. The members of the ‘Peace Mission’ were able to convince some of the leaders of the MNF but when Laldenga was contacted he flatly refused the ‘Peace Mission’ ’s proposal of a ‘Peace Talk’. In spite of the negative response from the President of the MNF, members of the ‘Peace Mission’ continued with their efforts to bring about peace. At the initiative of some politicians, church leaders, businessmen and some leading citizens of Mizoram, a meeting was held on August 20, 1969 to consider the possibility of convening a “People’s Convention“. On October 23, in the same year, a “People’s Convention” was held at Aizawl. It was agreed that the Convention Committee would pursue the possibility of negotiation between the MNF and the Government of India

and would also request the Government to adopt favourable attitude towards peaceful solution of the Mizo problem. Again, in 1974 leaders of different churches from different denominations, social and political organisations, youth organisations and the Human Rights Committee jointly held a meeting at Aizawl Club under the chairmanship of the then Chief Minister, Mr. Ch.Chhunga and formed a 'Mizoram Peace Advisory Board'. The Committee resolved to do everything possible to bring about peace and security in Mizoram. It also urged both the Indian Security Forces and the MNF to give up violent confrontations and abstain from atrocious acts in which the innocent civilians invariably were the victims. The institution of the 'Mizoram Peace Advisory Board' coincided with the declaration of a state of Emergency in India and the Committee became defunct. The success of counter - insurgency operations by the security forces, squabbles and differences in the inner - circle of the MNF party, lack of foreign support etc. were probably the few among many reasons for Mr. Laldenga to initiate talk with the Government of India. Though a serious of meeting had taken place between the representatives of the MNF and Government of India, it was on August 20, 1975 that Mr. Laldenga wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi expressing his willingness to negotiate peace within the frame-work of the Indian Constitution. The content of the letter indicated that Mr. Laldenga had initiated this negotiation without the knowledge of his colleagues. However, in pursuance of the letter, Mr. Laldenga and his top officials met at Cologne with the assistance of the Indian Embassy. And in 1976, a 'National Emergency Convention' of the MNF was held at Calcutta from 24th March to 1st April. The Convention in principle agreed to have a settlement of the MNF demands within the frame - work of the Indian Constitution, though some

members who attended the Convention were not without reservations. After a series of talks and discussion, a ' Peace Accord ' was signed between the Government of India and the President of the MNF, Mr. Laldenga on July 1st, 1976 at New Delhi, reproduced below :-

- “ 1. A delegation of the underground Mizo National Front Party led by Shri Laldenga and comprising of Sarvashri Tlangchhuaka, Chawngzawla, Biakchhunga, Biakvela, Zoramthanga and Rualchhina had a series of discussions with Shri S.L. Khurana, Home Secretary, Shri S.K. Chibber, Lt. Governor of Mizoram and Shri M.L. Kampani, Joint Secretary (North - East) representing the Government of India.
2. The MNF delegation acknowledge that Mizoram is an integral part of India and conveyed to the Government of India their resolve to accept a settlement of all problems in Mizoram within the framework of the Constitution of India.
3. In order to bring about a climate of understanding and an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in Mizoram at the earliest, the delegation agreed to abjure violence and suspend all activities. In furtherance of the above objectives, the underground delegation agreed to collect all underground personnel, with their arms and ammunition inside mutually agreed camps within one month after their establishment and also agreed to hand over arms and ammunition to the Government of India.
4. The Government of India also decided to suspend all operations, thereafter by the security forces. Such suspension, however would not apply to operations against

the underground personnel attempting to cross the international border and to maintenance of law and order.

5. It was agreed to continue the talks further”.

While a mood of jubilation and optimism prevailed in Mizoram, the MNF hard - liners could not accept the terms of the ‘Peace Accord’. In the midst of allegations against Mr. Laldenga for his failure to implement the terms of the ‘Peace Accord’ and counter - allegations made by Mr. Laldenga against the Government of India, the then Home Minister, Shri. Charan Singh in his statement in the Parliament on March 20, 1978 expressed the futility of continuing talks with Mr. Laldenga and called off the Peace - Talk.

When the Congress (I) came into power at the Centre in 1980, it showed its keenness to solve the problems in Mizoram by withdrawing all the pending cases against Mr. Laldenga. And in June 1980, a ‘Steering Committee’ of the MLA’s formed by the five opposition political parties in Mizoram submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister and pleaded for the dissolution of the 33 member Mizoram Assembly, in order to create a conducive atmosphere for the resumption of peace - talks. Talks with Mr. Laldenga was resumed in early 1980 and after a series of meeting between him and the representatives of the Government of India, a cease - fire was declared. Collection of donations and recruitment of new volunteers by the MNF, open confrontation between the ruling party of the Union Territory and the MNF, Student’s agitation, the Government of India’s inability to concede with some of the demands of Mr. Laldenga within the frame - works of the Constitution led to a dead - lock in the ‘Peace Talk’ and Mr. Laldenga left India in 1982. On May 31st, 1983, at the

initiative of the church leaders, four political parties signed a joint appeal, requesting the Government of India and the MNF to resume peace - talk. While the date for the resumption of peace - talk was tentatively set, Smt. Indira Gandhi was assassinated. In 1984, the Congress came into power in the Union Territory. The Chief Minister, Mr. Lal Thanhawla tried to bring back Mr. Laldenga to Delhi so that peace - talk might be resumed. He also offered to resign from chiefministership if that would help in solving the problem. When Shri Rajiv Ganshi took over the Primeministership of India, talks with Mr. Laldenga was resumed. After three spells of political dialogues, an Agreement was finally signed between the Government of India and Mr. Laldenga on June 30, 1986. Two significant land - marks were made simultaneously in the history of the Mizo both by the end of the armed- struggle and a political sacrifice. Fulfilling one of the conditions of the 'Peace Accord ', and true to the pledge that he had made to the people of Mizoram, the Congress (I) Ministry headed by Mr. Lal Thanhawla was dissolved and Mr. Laldenga became the Chief Minister of an interim Government. A part of the text of the Memorandum of Settlement is reproduced below:-

**Memorandum of Settlement, 1986
(The Mizo Accord)**

LEGAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER STEPS

- 4.1 With a view to satisfy the desires and aspirations of all selections of the people of Mizoram, the Government will initiate measure to confer Statehood on the Union Territory of Mizoram, subject to the other stipulations contained in the Memorandum of Settlement.

- 4.2 To give effect to the above, the necessary legislative and administrative measures will be undertaken, including those for the enactment of Bills for the amendment of the Constitution and other laws for the Conferment of Statehood as aforesaid, to come into effect on a date to be notified by the Central Government.
- 4.3 The amendments aforesaid shall provide, among other things, for the following :-
- I. The territory of Mizoram shall consist of the territory specified in Section 6 of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.
 - II. Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of
 - a. religious or social practices of the Mizos
 - b. Mizo customary law or procedure,
 - c. administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law,
 - d. ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the state of Mizoram unless the legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides :

Provided that nothing in this clause shall apply to any Central Act in force in Mizoram immediately before that appointed day.
 - III. Article 170, clause (1) shall, in relation to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, have effect as if for the word ‘sixty’ the word ‘forty’ has been substituted.

5. Soon after the Bill for conferment of statehood becomes law, and when the President is satisfied that normalcy has returned and that conditions conducive to the holding of free and fair elections exist, the process of holding elections to the Legislative Assembly will be initiated.
6. a) The Centre will transfer resources to the new Government keeping in view the change in status from a Union Territory to a state and this will include resources to cover the revenue gap for the year.
b) Central assistance for Plan will be fixed taking note of any residuary gap in the case of special category states.
7. Border trade in locally produced or grown agricultural commodities could be allowed under the scheme to be formulated by the Central Government, subject to international arrangements with neighbouring countries.
8. The inner line Regulations, as now in force in Mizoram, will not be amended or repeated without consulting the State Government.

OTHER MATTERS:

9. The rights and privileges of the minorities in Mizoram as envisaged in the Constitution, shall continue to be preserved and protected and their social and economic advancement will be ensured.
10. Steps will be taken by the Government of Mizoram at the earliest to review and modify the existing customs, practices, laws or other usages relating to (a) to (d) of para 4.3. (II) of the Memorandum keeping in view that any

individual Mizo may prefer to be governed by Acts of Parliament dealing with such matters and which are of general application.

11. The question of the unification of Mizo inhabited areas of other states to form one administrative unit was raised by the MNF delegation. It was pointed out to them on behalf of the Government of India that Article 3 of the Constitution of India prescribes the procedure in this regard but that the Government cannot make any commitment in this respect.
12. It was also pointed out on behalf of the Government that as soon as Mizoram becomes a state ;

(i) the provisions of Part XVII of the Constitution will apply and the state will be at liberty to adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State as the language to be used for all or any of the official purposes of the State.

(ii) it is open to the State to move for the establishment of a separate University in the State in accordance with the prescribed procedure : in the light of the Prime Minister's statement at the Joint Conference of the Chief Justices, Chief Ministers and law Ministers held at New Delhi on 31st August, 1985. Mizoram will be entitled to have a High Court of its own if it so wishes".

THE ROAD TO PEACE: A REFLECTION :

Though details of the peace negotiations and concomitant activities that surrounded them cannot be dealt with here, it is evident that ' the road to peace ' for Mizoram was as precarious as walking a tight - rope. Had it not been for the genuine desire

and efforts for peace on the part of the people, over - ground social, religious and political organisations, Mizoram might not enjoy the fruits of peace today. It can be argued here that observations obtained from the change of the MNF perspectives brought about by several constraints in pursuing their goal play a more dominant role in bringing peace to Mizoram. While this is true to an extent, the support of the people and different over - ground organisations both social and political is equally crucial. Every effort small or big helped in bridging the often broken gaps in the peace negotiations.

The Church and the tenets of Christianity that are deep - rooted in the minds of the people play significant roles in restoring peace in Mizoram. As briefly mentioned before, soon after the outbreak of insurgency, the Presbyterian church was already engaged in a furtive effort to restore normalcy. It set up a ‘ Peace Committee ’ which functioned as a mediator between the representatives of the Government of India and the MNF. The members of the ‘ Peace Committee ’ met the underground leaders at Sabual in 1966 and appealed to them to give up violence. In 1967, they met the Home Minister of the MNF and the Home Minister of India Shri Y.B. Chavan who told them the condition for negotiation. This message was conveyed to the MNF. In 1969, they tried to arrange a meeting between the then Chief Minister of Assam B.P. Chaliha and the MNF through the Commissioner of Silchar. Though no concrete step was achieved by the ‘ Peace Committee in actually bringing the Government of India and the MNF to a negotiating table, the series of discussions that they had particularly with the MNF did not go without yielding results. Besides establishing the foundation for ‘ Peace - Talk ’, they succeeded to a great extent in disseminating the idea

of ‘ Independence ’ at least among the intellectual group of the MNF. Moreover, condemnation of violence and restoration of peace in Mizoram were recurring themes in sermons in the church.

Christianity had to some extent changed the characteristic of a Mizo personality and mentality. From a ‘ head - hunter ’ it had transformed him to a passive peace - loving individual, restoring to violence only when other options fail. The advent of christianity in Mizoram was also accompanied by the introduction of Western hymns. The influence of music through hymns had a far reaching effect on the Mizo people especially on the younger generation. When music became the only avenue for self - expression in the heat of insurgency, the feelings of suppressions and frustrations that were felt under the onslaught of curfews and cross - fires were ventilated through it. There were songs about curfews, experiences of prison - life, villages that were no longer there etc. These frustrations could have been channelized negatively (if not for the love of music) adding to the dilemma that Mizoram was already going through.

The progress and dead - locks observed during the ‘ Peace - Talk ’ also reflected in part the importance of maintaining a positive attitude by the over - ground political parties. In the Mizoram context, ideological differences were put aside and the over - ground political parties made concerted efforts to bring about peace in Mizoram. However, a perceivable snag developed when there was an open confrontation between the ruling party and the MNF around the early 1980s. On resumption of the ‘ Peace - Talk ’ in 1984, the positive attitude of the new ruling party in the Union Territory and their willingness to make a political sacrifice rarely known in the

history of democracy, undoubtedly facilitated the final conclusion of the ‘ Peace - Talk ’.

When the ‘ Peace - Accord ’ of July 1, 1976 broke down, a very touching plea was made by a group of top academicians and journalists to solve the Mizo problem through a peaceful political settlement. The letter of appeal which appeared in the ‘ Times of India ’ dated 17.11.1979 is reproduced below :-

TROUBLED MIZO

“Sir - We express our deep concern on the unnecessary continuation of violence in Mizoram for the last four months. In view of the approaching harvest season we urge upon all parties to give up hostilities and restore peace.

We believe that the solution of the Mizo problem can come not through military operations but through force, frank and friendly discussions.

We therefore appeal to the Union Government to withdraw the charges of treason against the Mizo leader, Mr. Laldenga. We also call upon the Mizo National Front leaders to desist from hostile activities and seek a political solution within the frame - work of the Constitution. As a prelude to a dialogue, we urge the government to release the political prisoners in Mizoram and allow Mr. Laldenga to return to his people.

We further call the Union government to constitute a Mizo peace committee, in the consultation with MNF leaders, to supervise the restoration of peace in the state and to work out a political solution. We reiterate the urgent need for immediate cessation of all hostilities in the region, particularly in view of the impending harvest season.

ANDRE BETEILLE
NIKHUL CHAKRAVARTY
MRINAL DATTA CHAUDHURI
RAJNI KOTHARI
SARVESHWAR DAVAL SAXENA
DHIRENDRE SHARMA
RADHAKRISHNAN
V.M. TARKUNDE
ROMILA THAPAR
B.G. VERGHESE

The ‘ North - East ’ dated June 20, 1979 carried an article entitled ‘ Violence and After ’ deploring the fresh spate of violence in Mizoram after the break - down of talks and concluded thus :-

“Above all these New Delhi, which had been behaving with exemplary patience in Mizoram, always hoping and trying to bring the insurgents at a peaceful settlement must bring about concrete settlement of the insurgency problem once and for all so that innocent citizens may not be the victims of the insurgents”.

The power of the press is an universally accepted fact. The significance of positive gestures in the press such as the above cannot be marginalised.

The pertinent question that needs to be asked now is, to what extent can the Mizoram example act as a mirror to the rest of the North - Eastern states ? While it is wrong to collapse the problems of the different states of the North - East as an identical entity, the concerted efforts to find solution to the Mizo

problem of armed - insurrection illustrated in the Mizo example may not be without relevance for the rest of the North - East region. On the other hand, the slow process in the implementation of the conditions of the Peace agreement in the Mizoram context could be detrimental to the image of peace.

The insurgency that prevail in the North - East perpetrated by the economic factor also has a wider dimension pertaining to the ethnicity of the people who inhabited these areas. The fear for the loss of cultural identity or integrity through various agencies of assimilation, psychological alienation brought about by geographical alienation and the reality of being a different ethnic group, the need for a forum for self - assertion or self - determination, constraints in the development of individual or group potentialities etc. are recurring issues that continually assail the people of the North - East. The need to be heard over these issues often develops into an obsession that results in the employment of an extreme resort of violence. The reality of this observation could be seen in a remark made by one of the participants in a Seminar on ‘ Crisis in North - East India ’ organised by the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute :-

“Our experience is that the only way you can get the Central Government to pay any attention to us is to shoot them”.

Finding peaceful solutions to the North - East problems demands not the colonial system of ‘ divide and rule ’ policy which indirectly nurtures the emergence of an economically elitist - group but a wise and unceasing effort accompanied by a spirit of accommodation, understanding the ethos of the North - East people, diplomacy and the dynamic of negotiations.

It may be recalled that when India fought for its independence from Britain, it was, in a nutshell, British colonialism versus Indian Nationalism. For the unity and integrity of the Indian Union the North - East regionalism must not be allowed to compete with Indian Nationalism. It must be to understand that North - East regionalism is a crucial and an integral part of Indian Nationalism. Peace in historical reality is a work of continual therapy whose health by its nature is very frail. It cannot suffer indifference or negligence. North – East regionalism if it is not handled carefully might reduce ‘ Peace ’ into a mere truce because ‘ Peace ’ expresses itself only in ‘Peace ’.

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**Warfare or Welfare: Women in the shadows of Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 and unsolved massacres
(Special focus on North East State Manipur)**

Dr. Nunglekpam Premi Devi

Research Associate, School of Women's Studies
Faculty Council of Interdisciplinary Studies, Law and Management,
Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Introduction:

The primary objective of this paper is to situate the issue of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 (AFSPA), in relation to disparities and distributive injustice in the issues of India's law and order situations that granting special powers to the Indian Army/armed forces an un restricted and unaccounted power to carry out their operations once an area is declared disturbed concerns about human rights violations in the regions of its enforcement, where arbitrary killings, torture, cruel, inhuman, rape and degrading treatment and enforced disappearances have happened. It is relevant to begin the discussion by offering some conceptual clarification regarding the concepts of "The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958" (AFSPA), its origin, its provisions, how and why the territorial scope of Act expanded to the five states of the North-East, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura and to the Union Territories Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in terms of their interconnections to 'combat' armed insurgents and to perpetrate abuses with impunity in the name of counter-insurgency operations, it's amending Acts, contributed to the rise of more and more insurgent outfits in the region for five

decades leading to the public anger and disillusionment with the Indian state. While parliamentary democracy requires the army to be kept away from the tasks of internal policing and administration, introducing military rule in a democratic garb where the armed forces enjoy special powers and the people are thus forced to live permanently at the mercy of the army in a supposedly free and democratic country, witnessed a series of massacres and ‘disappearances’ rape, molestation and torture of women and children, arbitrary detention and executions, housebreaking and looting have become a part of everyday life in the state. “The Armed Forces (special Powers) Act, 1958(AFSPA), (in the words of Constitution of India) was passed on September 11, 1958, by the Parliament of India containing only 6 section. It is a law that granting special powers to the Indian Army/ armed forces an un restricted and unaccounted power to carry out their operations once an area is declared disturbed. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) is based on a 1942 British ordinance intended to contain the Indian independence movement (quit India) during the Second World War. On 22 MAY 1958, a mere 12 days after the Budget Session of Parliament was over, the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance was passed. Several members of Parliament opposed the Act on the ground that it would lead to violations of Fundamental Rights. The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance 1958 was promulgated by the President Dr. Rajendra Prasad on the 22nd May, 1958. Section 3 of the Ordinance empowers the Governor of Assam and the Chief Commissioner of Manipur to declare the whole or any part of Assam or the Union territory of Manipur (Manipur was a Union Territory at the time and later in became a state in 1972) as to be a “disturbed area”. In the Official Gazette, any

Commissioned Officer, Warrant Officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces may exercise, in the disturbed area, the powers conferred by section 4 and 5 of the Ordinance. It was replaced by Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) special Powers Act, 1958 on September 11, 1958. Initially the AFSPA was promulgated in order to deal with the continued unrest situation of armed rebellion by Naga militants (the Naga rebellion and the rebel Naga Nationalist Council (NNC) forming a parallel government “The Federal Government of Nagaland” on March 22, 1956. The *Nagas* were the first among all the ethnic groups and tribes living in the Northeast to raise the banner of revolt against the Indian government, on August 14, 1947, under the aegis of the Naga National Council (NNC) led by *Angami Zapu Phizo*. The NNC publicly resolved to establish a sovereign Naga state and had a ‘referendum’ that 99% of the Naga people supported independence for Nagaland In May 1951. In 1952 the NNC boycotted the general elections and launched a violent secessionist movement, with *Naga* insurgents raiding several villages and police outposts. On March 22, 1956, *Phizo* created an underground government called the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and a Naga Federal Army (NFA).

The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958 was empowered by the Governors of the States and the Administrators of the Union Territories to declare areas in the concerned State of Union Territory as ‘disturbed’. The territorial scope of Act also expanded to the five states of the North-East, - Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura and to the Union Territories Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. In addition, the words, “The Armed

Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958” were substituted by “Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958”, getting the acronym of AFSPA, 1958. The Act has been at the heart of concerns about human rights violations in the regions of its enforcement, where arbitrary killings, torture, cruel, inhuman, rape and degrading treatment and enforced disappearances have happened.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958 and the North East State Manipur:

The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** is an Act of the parliament of India which was passed on 11 September 1958. The Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance of 1942¹ was promulgated by the British on 15 August 1942 to suppress the quit India Movement.² British rule in the Indian subcontinent between 1858 and 1947 was the *period* of dominion.³ India during the British Raj was referring to the regions under the rule of the British East India Company in India from 1600 to 1858 covering the two types of territory: *British India* and the *Native States* or princely states. There were officially 565 princely states in India at the time of independence in 1947, but the great majority had contracted with the Viceroy

¹ “(THE) ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ORDINANCE, 1942”. Retrieved 29 July 2013.

² The Quit India Movement, *Bhârat Chhodo Ândolan*, or the India August Movement (*August Kranti*), was a civil disobedience movement launched in India in August 1942 in response to *Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's* call for *satyagraha*. The All-India Committee proclaimed a mass protest demanding what Gandhiji called “an orderly British withdrawal” from India. It was for the determined, which appears in his call to *Do or Die*, issued on 8 August at the Gowalior Tank Maidan in Mumbai in 1942.

³ Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd edition (June 2008), on-line edition (September 2011): “spec. In full *British Raj*. Direct rule in India by the British (1858–1947); this period of dominion.”

of India to provide public services and tax collection.⁴ In general the term “British India” “had been used (and is still used) to refer to the regions under the rule of the East India Company in India from 1774 to 1858. The term has also been used to refer to the “British in India”. The British Raj extended over almost all present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In addition, at various times, it included Aden (from 1858 to 1937),⁵ Lower Burma (from 1858 to 1937), Upper Burma (from 1886 to 1937), British Somaliland (briefly from 1884 to 1898), and Singapore (briefly from 1858 to 1867). Burma was separated from India and directly administered by the British Crown from 1937 until its independence in 1948. The kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan, having fought wars with the British, subsequently signed treaties with them and were recognised by the British as independent states.⁶ The Kingdom of Sikkim was established as a princely state after the Anglo-Sikkimese Treaty of 1861; however, the issue of sovereignty was left undefined.

The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** has been invoked for more than five decades throughout the northeast states particularly in Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur enacted as a short-term measure to allow deployment of the army against armed separatist movements in India’s northeastern Naga Hills. In modern times, insurgency covers a full spectrum of conflicts ranging from subversion, to guerilla warfare and the convergence of guerilla bands into regular units to fight in a conventional manner. The spread of insurgency has been more predominant in the developing and

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princely_state

⁵ Marshall (2001), p. 384

⁶ “Nepal” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008, “Bhutan” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008.

underdeveloped countries. Differences in language, religion and ethnicity often act as motivating factors for the insurgents. The strategic and geographically crucial location of the Northeast ensured that this region had a special place in the plan of the British. Nagaland was the first to take up the path of violence which was soon followed by Manipur, Mizoram and finally by the whole Northeastern region. The *Nagas*, the *Mizos* and the *Manipuris* began to advocate for independent states, others asked for greater autonomy. There arose a strong reaction against the people (labeled as foreigners) who had entered the region from erstwhile East Pakistan and later Bangladesh as well as from other parts of India, claimed that these “foreigners” were interfering in their life-style and were a potent danger to their culture and existence. This gave birth to a demand that the outsiders i.e. foreigners must quit their land. Meanwhile, the insurgents in Nagaland grew in strength and formed an underground Federal Government and Federal Army to fight for their cause. This was the beginning of the anti-national activities on the national map.⁷

The Naga National Council (N.N.C) turned down the offer of autonomy envisaged in the sixth Schedule of the Constituent Assembly. It was this dilemma in Naga perception about their own future and India’s geo-political interest in the Naga Hills that led to the Hydari Agreement in 1947, Clause IX of which up till now has been a major bone of contention for its ambiguity.⁸ There was a great misunderstanding about ‘clause nine’ of the agreement between the N.N.C. and the Government of India on account of ambiguity in wording and interpretation

⁷ **The Naga Insurgency: The Past And The Future**, Dinesh Kotwal, Research Fellow, IDSA, <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-jul-700.html>.

⁸ M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, (New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1988), p. 253.

of the clause. During this period on July 1947, a Naga delegation headed by *Angami Zapu Phizo* met Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi for pressing their demand for independence.⁹ The Indian government viewed the Naga problem seriously, and declared the N.N.C., Federal Government of Nagaland and its army “unlawful associations” under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 on August 31, 1972. At the same time, the Government of India was exerting extreme pressure on the N.N.C. leaders and ultimately leading to the signing of “Shillong Accord” on November 11, 1975, with a section of the N.N.C. leaders, without consulting *Phizo*, the N.N.C. president, and other senior leaders like *Isak Chishi Swu* and then General Secretary *Thuingaleng Muivah* who at the time were camping in the eastern Naga Hills, in upper Myanmar. *Phizo* refused to lend support, several underground Naga members led by *Isak Chishi Swu* and *Thuingaleng Muivah* who had strongly opposed the Shillong accord ultimately formed the “National Socialist Council Of Nagaland” (NSCN) on January 31, 1980.¹⁰ The NSCN has been carrying on an armed struggle to bring an end to Indian suzerainty over the Naga people and to establish a People’s Republic of Nagaland based on Mao’s ideology, based on the principle of socialism for economic solution and a spiritual outlook—“Nagaland for Christ”¹¹. With a large array of sophisticated weapons procured through robberies, *Kachen Independent Army* (KIA), and international markets, the NSCN, soon developed and turned out to be the most powerful

⁹ V.I.K. Sarim, *India’s North-East In Flames*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1980), p.97-98

¹⁰ M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, (New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1988), n. 16, p. 243.

¹¹ Horam n. 16, pp. 306-331.

underground organisations in the Northeastern region. In spite of the intermittent attacks on their camps by Naga activists belonging to the Federal Government of Nagaland, the NSCN emerged as a “powerful and well-knit” insurgent organisation having close ties with the *Myanmarese* insurgent organisation, *Kachen* Independent Army (KIA). Armed NSCN insurgents spread their network to Manipur and in different parts of Nagaland. Several *Kiloners* (ministers) were appointed and areas divided into different regions with a senior underground member in charge of each regional unit.¹² On May 22 1958, a mere 12 days after the Budget session of Parliament was over, the Armed Forces (Assam- Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance was passed.

The Governments of India’s primary interest of applying Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to the northeast territories of Assam and Manipur was at containing an armed rebellion by Naga militants. In 1972 amendment, the AFSPA was extended to each of the seven new states created in the region: Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The powers that the AFSPA extends to the armed forces come into force over the past 50 years, subject to the area declared “disturbed” by the central or state government.

The AFSPA has led to judicial killings, torture, rape and disappearances, human rights violations which allow members of the armed forces to perpetrate abuses with impunity in the name of counter-insurgency operations. This has fed public anger and disillusionment with the Indian state. People in the

¹² The Naga Insurgency: The Past And The Future, *Dinesh Kotwal*, Research Fellow, IDSA, <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-jul-700.html>.

North-Eastern India especially women, have been protesting against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 (AFSPA) which has been invoked for five decades. The state of Manipur is the one most affected and most violence in all of India. Manipur is witnessing an unprecedented mass upsurge. Manipur is fighting for freedom, freedom from the draconian military rule that the Indian state has imposed on this state for the last five decades. Manipur is one of those Indian provinces where the armed forces enjoy special powers and the people are thus forced to live permanently at the mercy of the army in a supposedly free and democratic country. The AFSPA is the mother of all black laws in India. Manipur alone has witnessed a series of massacres and ‘disappearances’.

Rape, molestation and torture of women and children, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and executions, housebreaking and looting have become a part of everyday life in the state. Protective laws do exist and ordinary people are not aware of their provisions. India had enacted the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (PHRA) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) established to inquire into complaints of human rights violations. According to the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993, there should be human rights commission for every state of union of India. But in north east India, only Assam and Manipur has human rights commissions at present. The functioning of these bodies are unsatisfactory due to lack of adequate funds and infrastructure. The Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) came into existence in November 2006, but it is ineffective due to lack of office infrastructure and adequate funds. In Manipur, everyday newspapers carry report of either suspected militants are being killed in encounters or cross firing or civilians killed

by unknown youths, by either state actors or non-state actors. Society is heavily militarised and the gun is seen as a solution to all problems. Mostly, the killings of suspected militants are never investigated to know about the circumstances leading to their deaths. There are allegations the youths are kidnapped by the state forces and later on killed in encounters. Such deaths bring immense suffering on women. Women are indirectly victimised due to the loss of an earning member of the family. It was estimated that in the year 2009, most of the suspected militants killed in Manipur was in the age group 20 - 35 years, having families and one or two children. Today, Manipur is witnessing an emerging high percentage of female headed household with widows of suspected militants as the head of the family. Most of these widows were dependent on their husband's income for themselves and their children needs but now their shattered lives are nothing but a nightmare.

AFSPA and Unsolved massacres in Manipur:

In the period of 1980s to May 30th May 2007, 2,675 civilians and 1,314 militants were killed, while 2,061 civilians were injured and only 865 militants surrendered to the Govt. authorities (Hanjabam). The figures of death and casualties appears in official state, Govt. and Security Force releases do not give a complete and accurate picture of the extend of violence. Many abuses are not even reported (especially beating and sexual assault) either, because of intimidation, lack of understanding of the procedure, or simply because the victims have no confidences upon the police. There has been a number of Combing Operations as part of the counter insurgency operation in Manipur. Worth mentioning operations are – Operation Blue Bird (1987), Operation All Clear (2004), Operation Tornado (2005), Operation Dragnet

(2006). These operations were remembered by the most of the people and Human Rights bodies because of the rampant human rights violations-especially using villagers as “Human Shields” to prevent possible ambushes from the militia groups (Hanjabam,). Physical abuses and Human Right violation such as beating, torture, detention without trial, death in the custody, rape and sexual harassment, and random shooting has been a part of life in northeast India in general and Manipur in particular. Civilian people have developed the fear psychosis of picking up by Armed Forces some day or the other.

The state of Manipur has been groaning under the heels of this repressive law for far too long now where the dreaded legislation has brought with it takes untold sufferings-midnight knocks, arbitrary searches, forced captures, innumerable incidents of torture, un-notified detentions, sudden disappearances and rapes –more often just on the basis of mere suspicion and ostensibly to maintain public order. Many women have fallen prey in the hands of the Indian Armies. There are many undocumented cases of assaults, tortures, rapes and killing of innocent Manipuri women. Some of the few documented cases, unsolved massacres Atrocities, murders and other unconstitutional acts of Indian military against the people of Manipur are-

1. Mass rape committed by the Indian troops against women residents of *Cheswezy* village on 9 December 1970, where 18 girls and 9 married women were raped and 53 women molested.
2. The animal passion of the Indian army personnel that fell upon the female population of *Mao Songsong* town and

Shajaoba village women on 24 July 1971 left with several women raped and molested.

3. Miss Rose, a Naga girl, was born on March 4, 1974. She was a *Tangkhul* girl of *Ngapurum Khullen* village in *Ukhrul* district. Rose a 19 year old girl, was gang raped by the Indian armies of 95 Border Security Force (BSF) officers namely, Dy. Comdt. Pundir and Asst. Comdt. Negi for hours in the house of Mr. R. *Khasung* in the night of 4 March 1974, in front of the helpless village elders who were kept at bay at gun point. She committed suicide on 6 March 1974, left behind a suicide note in *Tangkhul* language to her boyfriend. That suicide note was translated into Manipuri, and it was published at a publication of the Pan Manipur Youth League in 1993.
4. Miss *Angai*, a 24 year old girl from *Grihang* village, had been tortured and gang-raped for three continuous days from 3-5 March 1974 by an armed group of the 95 Bn. Border Security Force personnel under the command of Dy. Comdt. *Prakash*. On the third day she was dragged to the school building where the other villagers had been rounded up. She was dragged by her hair to the classroom, kicked, beaten and stripped. Sticks were forced into her private parts causing profuse bleeding. The villagers brought Miss. *Angai*, in a near-dying condition.
5. Again on the evening of 6 March 1974 at about 18:00 hrs, Mrs. *APao* and Ms. *AShin* of *Grihang* village were taken away by two Indian soldiers under the order of Dy. Comdt. *Dharam Prakash*. They were taken a mile away from the village. One soldier took Mrs. *APao* into a jungle from the main road, forcibly removed all her garments at

gun point, pulled her hair and, after beating severely, raped her. The other soldier took Ms. *AShin* and repeated the same beastly acts.

6. ***Heirangoithong*** incidence of March 14th, 1984 where, 13 people including 2 children were killed and over 30 injured by indiscriminate firing of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel (Parrat,).
7. Operation Blue Bird at ***Oinam*** in 10th July 1987 where 15 civilian deaths while many became the victim of physical and mental torture, rape and illegal detention (ibid).
8. ***Tera Bazar*** incidence of 25th March 1993 where, 5 civilians were killed and many others received bullet injuries. However, no enquiry has been instituted to date (MRF, EQ Vol. 3 Issue I).
9. **Regional Medical College** (now RIMS) incidence of 7th January 1995 where, the CRPF personnel shot dead nine innocent persons in retaliation to attacks on them by the members of an armed opposition group (Begum, 2010).
10. ***Malom*** incidence of November 2nd, 2000 where, 10 civilians including a 63 years old women and a boy who was a National Bravery Awardees shot dead on the spot by Assam Rifles convoy in retaliation of the insurgent attack. A brutal combing operation was followed by. A young lady, *Irom Sharmila Chanu* (born March 14, 1972), was shocked at the anarchical act of the state agencies, decided to begin a fast unto death demanding the repeal of the Act responsible for such brutality on the part of the state – the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958. she has been on hunger strike to demand that the Indian

government repeal the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA), which she blames for violence in Manipur and other parts of India's northeast having refused food and water for more than 600 weeks, she has been called "the world's longest hunger striker". Her fast completed 14 years this year. Since November 2, 2000, *Sharmila* has been arrested under section 309 of IPC which punishes attempted suicide by a one-year imprisonment

11. **Leplen** Mass Torture of 2002
12. **Pangei Bazar** incidence of April 9th, 2002 where, Ms. Robita Chanu, 18 years, student of Naorem Bihari College and Mr. Khundrakpam Ashem Romajit Singh of Brighter Academy were allegedly killed in CRPF shooting following an ambush on the CRPF (MRF, EQ vol. 3 Issue 1).
13. Fake encounter in Imphal city on July 23rd 2009 where, Rabina Devi a five month pregnant woman walking with her two year old son, and, 22years old Sanjit were gunned down by City police commandos, leaving the crowded city in chaos (Tehelka 2009).
14. Fake encounter of **Andro** in November 1st 2009 where, 7 youth has been gunned down by 28th Assam Rifles troops in suspicion of militants (The *Hueiyen* New Service- 31st January 2011).

In addition to the above incidences- **Oinam Leikai** incidence on November 21st 1980, **Ukhrul** incidence on May 9th 1995, Miss Rose, the young teenage girl from Ukhrul district in Manipur who committed suicide after being raped by an Indian Army officer, **Bashikhong** incidence on February 19th 1995, **Churachandpur** incidence on July 21, 1999,

Nungleiban incidence on October 15, 1997, **Tabokpikhong** incidence on August 12, 1997, and **Tonsen Lamkhai** incidence on October 4, 1998 are worth mentioning (Begum, 2010).

Manipur epitomises a tragic case of “crime against humanity” exposed by the *Public-Interest Litigation* (PIL) on extra-judicial killings or fake encounter which include any of the following acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: (i) murder; (ii) extermination; (iii) enslavement; (iv) deportation or forcible transfer of population; (v) imprisonment; (vi) torture; (vii) rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; (ix) persecution against an identifiable group on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious or gender grounds; (x) enforced disappearance of persons; (xi) the crime of apartheid; (xii) other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious bodily or mental injury. People in the North-Eastern India especially women suffers a lot and Manipur can be identified with the cases of (i) murder or extra judicial Killing or fake encounter, (v) imprisonment (vi) torture (ix) Racial discrimination and (x) Enforced disappearance, human rights or civil society leaders and “suspects” are often arbitrarily arrested in the name of national security through National security Act. Torture is very common in Manipur. Women are mostly raped during crackdowns where men of the villages or towns are gathered outside their homes and women are forced to stay indoors. A very touching “crime against humanity” which happened in Manipur was the rape and custodial killing of the **Thangjam Manorama** alias **Henthoi** was brutally tortured and allegedly executed by personnel of

the paramilitary force 17 Assam Rifles stationed in Manipur, a 32-years-old woman at midnight on the night of July 10 and 11, 2004.

Thangjam Manorama was sleeping in her room when the security personnel found her. They dragged her out from her bed and beat up the family members when they tried to stop them. Then they locked the house door from outside and brutally assaulted *Manorama* after blind folding her and tying her hand and feet. At around 3:30 a.m. of July 11, the security personnel took *Manorama* along with them issuing a memo of arrest to the family, signed in by Havildar, General Duty of the Assam Rifles Suresh Kumar (Army no. 173355) and Riflemen T. Lotha (Army no. 173916) and Ajit Singh (Army no. 173491) as authority and witnesses. According to the memo of arrest, no incriminating documents or articles were found with *Manorama* at the time of her arrest. The army personnel also forced the family to sign on some papers that they do not know about and told the family members that *Manorama* would be handed over to the *Irilbung* police in the morning. Her family reports a filed at the *Irilbung* Police Station in the early morning of 11 July 2004 mentioning that *Manorama* was taken by the Assam Rifles personnel. However, the bullet ridden body of *Manorama* was found at around 5:00 p.m. on 11 July 2004 by the villagers at *Keirao Wangkhem* Road near *Ngariyan Maring* Village, about four kilometers from the family's house. When it was found, the body wore no proper clothes. The body reportedly bore finger-scratch marks were found all over the body and a gashing wound probably made by knife was found on her right thigh, too. Several fatal bullet wounds were seen on her back, the upper buttock and the genitalia.

The alleged rape and killing of ***Thangjam Manorama*** by Assam Rifles personnel sparks protests against the security forces and the demand for the withdrawal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 by the mothers of Manipur (*Meira Paibis*), at the headquarters of Assam Rifles at the historic *Kangla* Fort in Imphal on July 15 morning, staging a demonstration near the fort suddenly decided to do away with their clothes, holding up banners with the slogans “Indian Army, rape us overtly” and “Rape us the way you did Manorama”

Following this on 15 August 2004, *Pebam Chittaranjan*, who was the advisor of the Manipur Student’s Federation, *Bishnupur* district unit, self-immolated himself as a human torch to protest continuous imposition of the controversial Armed Forces’ special Powers Act 1958

Manipur is burning the people, long agitated by the dehumanizing impact of this draconian Act, shouting for justice, embarked on the path of peaceful, non-violent democratic means of protests – *dharnns*, hunger strikes, public meetings, civil disobedience – and were cornered and pushed to the wall by the State apparatus bent on crushing the voices of dissent and protest in the most brutal fashion. Instead of making efforts to address the issue and redress the long-standing grievances of the people, Using its massive coercive machineries the State has brutally assaulted the people with *lathis*, rifle butts, live and rubber bullets, smoke bombs etc. The streets of Manipur have literally turned into battlefields as the people have taken up the task of defending themselves against the wave of terror unleashed by the State. It is an unequal battle where the people are using catapults or slingshots and stones to defend themselves against the rubber and live bullets, tear gas shells and smoke bombs of the State. The presence of the armed forces is a part

of everyday life, violence has affected almost every family, the trauma goes beyond the realm of physical maiming and the loss of life and the onslaught leaves the survivors scared both in mind and soul. AFSPA must comply with international human rights and humanitarian law.

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Juxtaposition of Freedom in Mizo Traditional and Christian belief

Dr. K Vanlalmawia
Associate Professor & Principal,
Govt. Johnson College, Aizawl.

Abstract

*The goal in the life of traditional Mizo is to attain **Thangchhuah** title as the **Thangchhuah** was regarded a free man enjoy the highest status in the olden Mizo society. The **Thangchhuah** enjoys free and luxurious life and has all the rights and privileges not only in his life time but also in the spirit world. Freedom in the traditional belief system was one's achievement which depended on one's ability.*

*With the inception of Christianity, the conception of **Pialral** and **Mitthi khua** were replaced by new conceptions of Christian **Vanram** (Heaven) and **Meidil**, (Hell) respectively. The christianised Mizo concept of freedom is the conversion of the soul from the bondage of evil spirits to the divine law of God is freedom. All the sins of a person who believes in Jesus will be taken away by the spirit of God, only those who believe in Him have this freedom. Hence, a man's spirit is free from Hell and enjoy perpetual bliss.*

Keywords : *Thangchhuah, Pialral, Freedom, Vanram, Jesus Christ, God, Salvation*

A free man in the Mizo traditional belief structure was a man who got the **Thangchhuah** title, as the Thangchhuah was

regarded to attain the ultimate goal in the after life as well as enjoy the highest status in the Mizo society. The **Thangchhuah** enjoys not only free and luxurious life in this world but also in the next world or **Pialral**. **Pialral** is the Mizo traditional Heaven which is a place of bliss, where the spirit perpetually enjoys a life free from all suffering of sickness, thirst, worry and grief. In sharp contrast to this world is another world known as **Mitthi Khua** where life is full of hardship, misery and distress. All the spirits except that of the **Thangchhuah** would go to **Mitthi Khua**.

LB Thanga states that the goal in the life of a Mizo is to be a man of perfection and to perform '**Khuangchawi**', which is the last ceremony to attain the **Thangchhuah** title¹. “ '**Thangchhuah**' KL Rochama expresses, 'was the aim of every Lushai which gained him a coveted place in the society and entitled to open a window and to wear a stripped turban. In parenthesis, it may be pointed out here the Lushai believed that the souls of human beings and animals killed by a person during his life time would serve him in the next world'.”² According to CL Hminga, “to earn the **Thangchhuah** title was the highest possible achievement and honour in the old Mizo society. The few who gained the coveted title had the special privilege, extremely reserved for them of wearing a **Thangchhuah** dress (decorated), opening a window in their house, building a raised summer house in front of their house, and of entering **Pialral** when they die.”³

Every Mizo tried to attain the highly honoured **Thangchhuah** title, but only a few people could succeed in achieving their goal as it was hard to do so. One can possess the title in two ways : (i) by giving a series of special feasts at least five times for the public. (ii) by killing a prescribed wild animals. After killing each of the prescribed animals a special ceremony had to be performed which required unusual feast. If

a person fulfils either of the two, he becomes **Thangchhuah**; and therefore has all the rights and privileges not only in one's life time but also after life.

In the light of the above statement, it can be presumed that achievement played a very important role for attaining the highest freedom. Freedom in the traditional belief structure was one's achievement which depended on one's ability. Hence, a man worked hard for his own freedom.

There are two kinds of **Thangchhuah** (i) the **Thangchhuah** at home and (ii) the **Thangchhuah** in the jungle.

Incidentally, the **Sadawt** or the Priest and other types of clergy like the persons who sacrificed animals to **Pathian** or God were not given preference for entering into **Pialral**. This has led some to the conclusion that "it was not goodness and truth that matter but achievement with great ability."⁴

In a sense, generosity and services to others played an important role for the attainment of **Thangchhuah**. A person who gave away all his riches and goods for public feasts, or a person who killed wild animals for the public enjoyments was a man of **Thangchhuah**. The title could only be acquired after a person had distributed almost all his wealth for the benefit of others with feasts and ceremonies. One Mizo eminent writer, B Lalthangliana also stated the importance of serving others for the possession of their ultimate goal that "the ultimate goal of the traditional Mizo, that is **Thangchhuah**, was not only possible to attain through striving with one's life risk and giving away of all his possessions but also had to feed the public with feasts."⁵

With the inception of Christianity in Mizoram, the Mizos perspective regarding the concept of man and his destiny was

totally changed. All their earlier conceptions about his life were brushed aside as superstition and the Mizos have been trying to catch up with the new religious beliefs and practices. The following verse expresses this:

*“The ancient Mizos lived with the demons and fairies,
Living throughout the days with fear of enemies
Superstitious worship of hills and spirits,
But all that darkness was gone.”⁶*

Within a short span of time after the missionaries induced Christianity in Mizoram, almost all the entire population embrace the Christian faith. Total conversion to Christianity brought to an end the old religious belief system. The change brought about by Christianity in the life of the Mizo community was the passing away of its traditional polity leading to the emergence of a new dynamic society. The Christian missionaries guided and molded the life of the Mizo primitive society, and shaped the Mizo outlook.

The christianised elite referred to the mass conversion to Christianity as ‘a new spirit of freedom’. This change of value orientation brought about the introduction of western education and money economy, but in return it uprooted their social and cultural moorings.

*“The way of life is changing,
A new belief replaced the old one;
Now, the abode of God is not monument,
But the heavenly sweet home where God lives”.⁷*

The conception of the **Pialral** and **Mitthi Khua** were replaced by the two new conceptions of Christian **Vanram** (Heaven) and **Meidil** (Hell) respectively. According to F

Hrangkhuma, the Christian belief needs only some modification on the traditional Mizo belief. As he says, “there was no difficulty to convince the average Mizo of the facts of Hell and Heaven, and that to go to Heaven one needs to believe in Jesus in one’s life time. The last that is believe in Jesus Christ as the passport to Heaven is welcome substitute for the Mizo because it is much easier to simply believe than to give several series of free feasts to the whole village or to kill several species of wild animals and give feasts in their honour every time one was killed in a chase, to be a **Thangchhuah** to go to **Pialral**, the better place for the dead.”⁸ And, all the persons who do not believe in Jesus Christ as his saviour, will go to Hell where the spirit will suffer severe hardship and troubles

According to some theologians like Zairema and Raltawnga, man is created by God and the life of human being is also under the guidance of His own will. As he is God’s creation, the destination of man is also directed, “He is the creator of universe. There is no doubt that He is the director of human destiny.”⁹ Raltawnga expresses the relationship between God and man that man is made to know, to serve and to worship God. As he is made by God so his life is also His, man must not live according to his own will but his Creator’s will. The Bible says, “You do not belong to yourselves but to God; He bought you for a price” (ICor 6:19-20).

The Christianised Mizo concept of freedom lies in breaking the bound of Satan’s slavery and giving ourselves to God. Paul, the Apostle, in his letter to Romans says, “For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). “If the Son therefore, shall make you free; ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). It is believed that the Divine law is the law of freedom, so the one who submitted

himself under the control of Divine Law is a man of freedom. The conversion of the soul from the bondage of evil spirits to the divine law of God is freedom.

Without doubt freedom is the salvation of soul from Satan's bondage. Man has no power to free himself from this bondage, but when he had sincere desire to set himself free, he has to realize that the only way to freedom is to believe in salvation. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He tells us, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). This salvation is freely available to all. God calls people for salvation is freely available to all. God calls people for salvation, His calling is mild and calm. Man is free to say either 'Yes' or 'No'. He can do this because God has given him freedom of choice to choose and not to choose His salvation. Man's choosing of God salvation means that he was delivered from the possession of Satan, and he has become free.

Thus, man's freedom is within the larger freedom of God. Salvation cannot be attained by one's own work, it is not man's achievement but only by the grace of God. Paul tells us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Because man believes in His word that Jesus bore all his sins in His body on the cross, God who has pronounced him guilty of the sin declares him innocent. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Christ takes him out of the prisoner's chair and set him in the family of God. This is not because of anything which he have done, but because of what Jesus did with his transgressions, his sins and his

iniquities. He becomes a son of God only because of what Jesus did and because he believes that Jesus did was for him. Hence, freedom achieved its fullest meaning only in relation to God.

Therefore, all the sins of a person who believes in Jesus Christ will be taken away by the spirit of heavenly Father. This freedom is the freedom from God's condemnation. Only those who believe in Him have this kind of freedom. Only through this freedom, a man's spirit is free from Hell. And the spirit is believed to enjoy perpetual bliss in the eternal.

Both the Traditionals and Christians believed in life after death and the existence of two places for the spirit, one which is good and another which is dreary and unpleasant. One's life time determines where one will go after death. The Christian's **Vanram** and the traditional's **Pialral** are believed to be places of paradise where frustration and sorrow are not known, where the spirit enjoys bliss perpetually.

While the earlier Mizo conception of freedom made it an ideal to be acquired through achievement only the Christian concept regarded freedom as a gift of God which is opened to all through belief in Christ. As freedom is God's gift to all needy men, man's ability and achievement do not really matter. A free man since he gets his freedom from God must serve God and must obey His commandments. In the traditional world view after reaching the state of freedom or the **Thangchhuah**, one is not bound by anything as he has already fulfilled his commitments to all.

Then again while the Christians believe that man is not free due to the sin inherent in him and would go to the Hell, and

he can go to Heaven only after the blood of Jesus Christ has cleaned his sin. The traditionals believe that man would go to **Mitthi Khua** not because of any inherent sin but only because of his deeds.

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Terror Tales: The Naga Insurgency in the Writings of Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire

Prajna Paramita Ray

Senior Research Fellow, Department of English
Jadavpur University

Introduction:

“To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.”¹ - Elie Wiesel

“The stories that still need telling are what I call the people’s stories.”² - Easterine Kire

Given the cultural plurality of Northeast India, it would be an act of interpretive fallacy if the critics and scholars view the literature from this region only through the narrow prism of terror or violence. Generic terms such as ‘terror lore,’ ‘political literature’ or ‘literature of conflict’ undermine the vibrant diversity of Northeast Indian literary output. At the same time, one cannot disregard the fact that the northeast is no stranger to violence and terror. Political history of the seven states of the Northeast is riddled with bullets. The seven sister states continue to be the complex loci of ethno-national strife and the violence and massive human suffering that accompanies it act as creative fountainhead for the writers of this region. Tilottama Misra, in her introduction to anthologies on Northeast Indian writing, affirms this assumption when she writes:

¹ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 3.

² Easterine Kire, interview by Swati Daftuar, *The Hindu*, February 11, 2013.

Violence features as a recurrent theme because the story of violence seems to be never ending one in this region and yet people have not learnt to live with it . . . writers across the states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura are deeply concerned with about the brutalization of the societies by the daily experience of human right violation and the maiming of the psyche of a whole people by the trauma caused by violence.³

In this paper I will explore the representation of Naga insurgency by two writers from Nagaland – Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire - who have brought to the fore the traumatic experiences of common Naga people living in the midst of violence. Since Naga insurgency is not a well documented event in Indian history and since it has not been given adequate attention in the journalistic discourse, I will briefly summarize the important historical events of Naga struggle. And thereafter, I will steer my focus on the role that literature plays as a supplement to historical facts. Insurgency is a war against majoritarian and authoritarian policies that combines ideology with arms. Bertil Lintner, in *Great Game East: India, China and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier*, says that the Naga insurgency was the first in independent India to challenge the 'idea of India'. It arose out of Naga sub-nationalistic fervor with its focus on the sovereignty of the Naga people. The locals living in the isolated and treacherous terrain of Naga Hills are ethnically, linguistically different from the mainstream Indian culture. These differences acted as motivating forces for the insurgents. Annexation of Naga Hills by the Indian nation state

³ Tilottama Misra, ed., *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011) xix.

was seen as forced imposition of Indian-ness and annihilation of their differentness. On the eve of 15th August 1947 the charismatic and extremist leader of National Naga Council Angami Zapu Phizo declared independence from the emerging nation state of India. The first general election of 1952 provided another opportunity to challenge the celebratory notion of Indian democracy. The Nagas under the leadership of Phizo decided to boycott the election. These challenges were seen as aberrations and ruptures of Indian consciousness and integrity by the government. Therefore the central government under the leadership of Nehru decided to suppress these challenges by wielding military forces. As a result, forced displacement, search operation, curfew, torture became the norm of life for Naga people. When the counter insurgency operation was at its peak in 1963, Indian government granted a separate state to the Naga people. This declaration did not put end to the dream of separate Nagaland. The dream and demand of independent nation continues to animate the militant groups. The recent peace accord signed between the central leadership of Delhi and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I M) leaders villagers and Indian army, between factional insurgent groups and so on. Temsula Ao, a Sahitya Akademy award winning author from Nagaland, frequently appropriates Naga conflict as her literary inspiration. It is noteworthy that she consciously circumnavigates the political aspect of this discourse. The power relation between Indian nation-state and Naga nationalists is on 3rd August, 2015 is the newest addition to ongoing maze of political development.

The political events recorded in the historical annals speak in a monolithic voice highlighting only the exteriorities of the events. Creative artists who capture political conflict in art and

literature rewrite the history by giving voice to the lived experience of the common people. Literary representation goes beyond the political headlines that dominate newspaper report and delve deep into the unwritten personal stories of the common people. Creative writers from the Northeast painstakingly record the personal narratives of their people. The focus of this paper is on how writers from Nagaland, Ao and Kire, rewrite the history of Naga insurgency through literary imagination. I will here echo the words of Ashley Tellis who says "... the literary often helps in understanding the question of conflict its impasses and its possibilities much better than most other modes of articulation."⁴ I will see how Temsula Ao's and Easterine Kire's writings help in understanding the problematized terrain of the Naga insurgency.

Reading Resistance in Temsula Ao's Narratives on Naga Insurgency

"As soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance."

(Michael Foucault, 'The End of Monarchy of Sex,' 153)

Any separatist movement that challenges the integrity of a nation acts as a podium on which nation and its fragments enact the play of power struggle. Naga separatist movement, similarly, demonstrates complex power relations- between central government and the leaders of the insurgent groups, between commonnever addressed by the author. I will argue that Ao's appropriation of Naga conflict is always already

⁴ Ashley Tellis, . "Differing Resistances: Mediating the Naga Struggle in Easterine Iralu's *A Terrible Matriarchy* and Temsula Ao's *These Hills Called Home*," *Eastern Quarterly* vol. 5, Issue I(April June 2008), 34.

political and that her apparently dispassionate, apolitical tales can be read as resistance narratives of the subaltern.

In this section I will attempt a close reading of ‘Lest We Forget,’ Ao’s aptly titled introduction to her collection of short stories *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone*, to comprehend her position on the Naga conflict. Thereafter, I will focus on a short story from this collection, ‘The Last Song’ to see whether this fictive narrative reflect Ao’s (a)political stand or displace author’s original intention.

These Hills Called Home is located in war torn Nagaland of the 1950s and 1960s and in the introduction Ao summarizes her intended design to capture this temporal and spatial reality. In ‘Lest We Forget’ Ao places importance on the role of memory in preserving the history of Naga people. She writes, “. . . in these stories, I have endeavored to re-visit the live of those people whose pain has so far gone unmentioned and unacknowledged”⁵. But, simultaneously she strips off the historicity and the unique identity from the people’s memory which she wishes to preserve. She writes:

These stories however, are not about ‘historical facts’; nor are they about condemnation, justice or justification of the events which raged through the land like a wildfire half a century ago. On the contrary, what the stories are trying to say is that in such conflicts, there are no winners, only victims and the results can be measured only in human terms. For the victims the trauma goes beyond the realm of just the physical maiming and loss of life—their very

⁵ Temsula Ao, introduction to *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006), ix. All further references as Ao.

humanity is assaulted and violated, and the onslaught leaves the survivors scarred both in mind and soul. (Ao: ix-x)

Ao's framework, that aims to put forth a universal story of suffering, reduces the traumatic events of Naga conflict to a set of standardized and predictable narratives. It positions the suffering Naga men and women as archetypal silenced victims of war. Sanjay Barbora, one of the reviewers, also observes this problem about Ao's fiction when he writes that this ahistorical mode is "both liberating and (somewhat unfortunately) subject to self-censorship. The vague references to political positions and positioning of people as victims of circumstances beyond their comprehension are somewhat misleading." Therefore, Barbora adds, "one is left with a nagging doubt that one half of the story is missing."⁶

I will argue that the missing half of the story that Barbora alludes to can be recovered by a political reading of Ao's texts. D. H. Lawrence's famous dictum-"Never Trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it."⁷ - urges us to read Ao's apolitical and ahistorical stories against the author's intended design of universalized victimhood. I will attempt a reading of 'The Last Song' to exhume the absent political subtext from Ao's text.

'The Last Song,' one of the short stories in *These Hills Called Home*, stands out as a powerful portrayal of horrors of Naga conflict. It transcribes one of the most inhuman atrocities perpetrated by Indian army during their counter insurgency

⁶ Sanjoy Barbora. 'Book Review: Reading Temsula Ao,' *The Morung Express*, September 12, 2006, quoted in Ashley Tellis.

⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/LAWRENCE/dhltoc.htm> [12/11/2005 12.33.52]

operation. At the same time it is a subversive tale of resistance to such atrocities. 'The Last Song' tells the story of a young Naga girl Apenyo 'who was born to sing.' She is the lead soprano at the church choir and is fondly called 'the singing beauty' by the villagers. The placid life of Apenyo and her mother Libeni, an excellent weaver, come under an onslaught as the Naga freedom struggle intensifies. On a fateful dedication Sunday when Apenyo prepares to perform at the newly constructed church, the revengeful Indian army decides to conduct a dangerous raid to teach the villagers a lesson. Undeterred by the raid of the Indian Army on the congregation at the new church Apenyo sings on. Her courageous defiance infuriates the egoistic captain who, then, singles out her for punishment. A crazed Libeni rushes to rescue her daughter from the violent clutches of the men. But she too meets the same tragic end. Both the mother and daughter are brutally raped. The marauding soldiers then set the new church on fire reducing the dead and dying into an unrecognizable black mass.

This tragic tale of human suffering, told in a dispassionate way, is in fact a scathing attack on the phallogocentric premise of India's counter insurgency operation. It can be termed as a war rape narrative. War is a masculine enterprise and it uses rape as an instrument to humiliate, dehumanize the opponents. Sexual assault against women by warring armies is used as a trope in many war narratives. 'The Last Song' bears an uncanny resemblance to Alberto Moravia's Italian post war novel *Two Women* originally titled *La Ciociara*. In this novel a mother-daughter duo is raped by Moroccan allied soldiers of French army in a church under the silent eyes of God. This war rape narrative by Moravia portrays Rosette, the daughter as a victim who suffers trauma and loses her

innocence after the incident⁸. Ao's comparatively lesser known short story, by contrast, posits Aponyo's strength to the fore. The woman's body as a passive cite of torture and victimhood recedes to the background and her active act of singing takes up a central position as a cite of resistance. The most telling act of Apenyo's resistance is represented in the lines where Ao writes –

Aponyo stood her ground. She sang on, oblivious of the situation as if an unseen presence was guiding her. Her mother, standing with the congregation, saw her daughter singing her heart out as if to withstand the might of the guns with her voice raised to God in heaven (Ao: 27-28).

Her defiance brings to mind the dramatic protest of Manipuri women staged after Thangjam Manorama's brutal killing by the Assam Rifles in July 2004. The Hindu Nationalist structure of Indian policy empowered the armed forces to dehumanize the ethnically different tribal 'others'. And Temsula Ao is probably one of the subtlest commentators to raise this issue.

One familiar with Naga oral tradition could discern another form of resistance within the text of 'The Last Song.' Ao mimics oral folklorist tradition of Nagaland to revisit the story of Apenyo. In the postscript, an old storyteller on a cold December night recounts the story of "that Black Sunday when a young and beautiful singer sang her last song..." (Ao: 33). Her story is transformed into a legend and it is narrated in the way a legend is passed down to new generation by ancient story tellers. In doing so she asserts the oral tradition of her

⁸ See, for example, Sharon Wood, *Object, Language and Gender in the work of Alberto Moravia*, London: Plato Press, 1990, for a feminist critique of Moravia.

culture and set it against the hegemonic mainstream written culture of Indian mainland. Soumen Sen and Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, editors of *Orality and Beyond: A Northeastern Perspective*, articulate the importance of oral tradition in expressing ethnic identity when they write- “Oral tradition expresses self-identity and upholds social organization, religious practices, ethical values and customary laws. While being a wealthy repository of mythical, legendary and historical past, it provides example for the sustenance of contemporary social order. It articulates protest and dissent and simultaneously voices concern of reform and redress”⁹. The elements of oral tradition play a significant role in subaltern politics. The writers from Native America or Africa, for example, blend orality with the written to counter the Eurocentric literary discourse. Temsula Ao refers to the writings of Ben Okri, Chinua Achebe while writing about orality. Surprisingly, Ao refuses to see the use of oral elements by Northeastern writers in political terms. Nevertheless, I will here suggest that by turning the story of a Naga girl’s resistance to Indian army’s atrocity, Ao unwittingly makes an impactful political statement. The Naga oral tradition faced an onslaught due to the cultural maiming. Easterine Kire, another author from Nagaland, remonstrates that “The folktale lost its setting during the war years. The peace that is essential to the continuation of oral narratives was also lost. Folk narratives were further silenced in the premature deaths of their carriers.”¹⁰ But Temsula Ao shows how folk narratives can be kept alive within a narrative of war.

⁹ Soumen Sen and Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, *Orality and Beyond: A Northeastern Perspective* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy, 2005) 5.

¹⁰ Easterine Kire, “War and Silencing Naga Narrative.” *Seven Sisters Post* <<http://nelitreview.blogspot.com/2011/11/war-and-silencing-of-naga-narrative.html>>.

The Naga Insurgency in Easterine Kire's Historical Fiction, *Bitter Wormwood*

The Naga Insurgency, like any other event of political conflict, is a site of multiple interpretations. In this section, I will analyze Easterine Kire's interpretation of Naga conflict in her historical novel, *Bitter Wormwood*. History is a narrative mode of knowing, understanding, explaining and reconstructing the past. And the role of literature as a supplement to history is to problematize it. Literary representation of historical event does not unquestioningly accept the exactitude of facts and simulate it in totality. As it has already been seen, Temsula Ao successfully reconstructs and problematizes the historicity of Naga insurgency by weaving together polysemic voices of authority and dissent. The subversive voice of Apenyo and the old story teller who narrates her story to the younger generation in 'The Last Song', the display of wit by Khatila in 'The Jungle Major'¹¹, the simple question asked by Imdongla in 'A Simple Question'¹² disrupt the authority of any monolithic single voice that claims to represent their history. Ao's texts, thus, become the site for the dialogic interaction of multiple voices. Kire's *Bitter Wormwood*, a historical novel also set in the war torn Nagaland of 1950s and 1960s, on the other hand, gives out a simplified and mimetic representation of Naga Insurgency. It speaks in a monologic voice and her characters are mere mouthpiece for communicating the bare facts about Naga insurgency.

¹¹ In 'The Jungle Major' a wife of an underground Naga soldier tricks the Indian army by disguising her husband.

¹² In 'A Simple Question' an illiterate old woman saves her gaonburah husband by silencing the Indian soldiers. Her question to the captain, 'what do you want from us?' challenges the validity of his presence in the alien Naga territory.

Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003), the first Naga novel to be published in English, fictionalizes Khonoma village's resistance to the invading British army in nineteenth century, her *Mari* (2009) attempts to portray the battle of Kohima during World War II. Her predilection for Naga political history is reiterated in *Bitter Wormwood* (2011). This novel chronicles the events of Naga freedom struggle against Indian occupation through the life span of an ordinary Naga man, Mose. At the very onset Kire instructs her readers not to read the novel as a historical text which according to Kire is a narrative of leaders and heroes. Her objective instead is to foreground the personal experiences of ordinary people. She writes - "This book is not about the leaders and heroes of the Naga struggle. It is about the ordinary people whose lives were completely overturned by the freedom struggle because the conflict is not more important than the people who are its victims."¹³ She reasserts her claim in an interview where she says-

Bitter Wormwood is about real people and their lives. I interviewed several people and used their experiences and insights. I wanted to write a non-stereotypical book about Naga political history and the story of the two grandsons of the two soldiers meeting up and striking up a deep friendship is not untrue. It's also a book that questions political ideologies, and their solutions and offers a human solution instead.¹⁴

I will argue that Kire does not fully succeed in achieving her objectives that she intends to achieve through her narrative.

¹³ Easterine Kire, 'Author's Introduction' in *Bitter Wormwood* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2011), 6.

¹⁴ Easterine Kire, interview by Swati Daftuar, *The Hindu*, February 11, 2013.

The real people whose life she aims to represent are disempowered by her narrative style. The author ventriloquises her opinions on Indo-Naga conflict through her characters, just the way the radio announces the news about Indian Independence and subsequent partition in the novel. Naga insurgency with its political intricacies, ideological conflicts and violent character does not blend seamlessly with the text of Mose's life. The political and historical facts appear in the form of conversation between Mose and his friend Neituo. The conversations read more like newspaper report than actual daily discourse.

Unlike Ao, Kire unambiguously adopts a nationalistic position on Naga freedom struggle. She supports the secessionist ideology of Naga National Council chief Phizo. The romanticized depiction of Naga nationalism is summarized in the chapter titled 'The Flag.' Mose as an underground soldier furtively hoists the Naga flag on the eve of Indian Independence Day. "The blue flag with a rainbow stretched across its breadth and a white star glowing above, brought tears to the eyes of everyone who saw it. Some people began to shout, "Long live Nagaland!" (Kire: 93). The idealism of freedom struggle, however, degenerates into factional killings. The ideologies of Communism and Maoism adopted by factional groups NSCN (I-M) and NSCN (K) are questioned by Kire. Her disapproval are summarized in the bomb blast episode and ultimately in the accidental death of Mose. And finally, the 'human solution' that Kire talks about in her interview seems to be the simplistic idea of fraternity. The friendship between two grandsons- retired Naga underground soldier Mose's grandson, Neibou and Indian soldier Himmat's grandson, Rakesh- encapsulates Kire's future vision for peaceful Nagaland.

The narrative that stands out because of its absence is the narrative of women's participation in the Naga struggle. Neilhounuo, Mose's wife is introduced in the novel as an underground soldier, and as 'rifle girl.' But, surprisingly, her background and exploits are not explored by the author. After a disappearing act she returns into the narrative as an ideal daughter-in-law, wife, mother and grandmother. In comparison to Ao's subversive women characters Kire's female characters are reduced to mere traditional representations of Naga femininity. The author does not allow her women characters to question the masculinistic character of warfare or Naga patriarchal society. Mose's mother's ignorance and passivity, Neilhounuo's conformity and the dismembered body parts of a rape victim, paints a disturbing picture of silenced, conforming and compliant Naga women. Kire's women are traditionalist at heart and happy to continue in the state of benevolent subordination rather than be involved in a struggle to reform the mindset of Naga patriarchy.¹⁵

In spite of its many lacunae one cannot deny that *Bitter Wormwood*, the first Indian English novel on Naga insurgency, makes an attempt to unearth some disturbing realities about post independence India. It brings to light the injustices done to Naga people during the insurgency. It also raises question about racial discrimination faced by Northeast migrants in major cities, but fails to go beyond the conventional newspaper narrative that most of us learn and internalize.

¹⁵ The idea of 'benevolent subordination' of Naga women is borrowed from Temsula Ao. See for example, Temsula Ao, "Benevolent Subordination: Social Status of Naga Women," in *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast*, ed., Preeti Gill (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2013).

Conclusion

“We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated. This remark takes on its full force when we refer to the necessity to save the history of the defeated and the lost. The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative.”

(Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 175)

Writers from Northeast India echo these stirring words of Paul Ricoeur through their writing. They give voice to the people’s narrative suppressed by the meta-narrative of conflict and terror. These suppressed narratives demand recounting and sharing. Writers from Indian hinterland, Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire, just like their contemporaries Arupa Patangia Kalita, Mitra Phukan, Anjum Hasan, tell stories of marginalized people to save their history from being silenced and forgotten. The literary expression of Ao and Kire spell out the buried history of Naga conflict. The history of Naga insurgency is that unwritten part of Indian history which challenges the hegemonic representation of Indian democracy in historiography and literature. The mainstream literati must make an effort to incorporate these narratives within the literary discourse not only for the sake of tokenistic inclusion of subaltern history but, because these simple yet impactful tales of terror offer new literary paradigm.

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Thangchhuah: A Passport for Attaining Pialral

Prof. S. Haukhanlian Mate

Department of History, Government Saitual College

Mob: 9436362443

Email: shlianamate@gmail.com

The early Mizo believed in the existence of life after death and the presence of mitthikhua (dead men village) and pialral (paradise). It was believed that the human soul would go to either of the two after death. The main goal of the Mizo primeval religion was to attain pialral after this worldly life. The only means to enter into pialral was to obtain the title Thangchhuah which means extraordinary distinguished. There are two ways to obtain the title Thangchhuah- one was by performing a series of sacrificial public feast known as In lama Thangchhuah and the other was by killing prescribed wild animals known as Ram lama Thangchhuah. It was not an easy task to be a Thangchhuah for a man whether it was an In lama Thangchhuah or a Ram Lama Thangchhuah. It needs wealth, bravery and good health. So, for a poor and unhealthy man, it was an impossible task to perform either of the two (Sangkima 56).

In Lam Thangchhuah:

According to Mizo primal religion, one has to perform a series of sacrificial public feast known as Inlama Thangchhuah to enter into pialral. One must have enough wealth and also possess enough domestic animals to perform a number of feasts to become Thangchhuah. One must perform the following series of feast to earn the title.

a. Sakung:

The Mizo are deeply religious as none of the family existed without establishing religious sacrifices. The first ceremony performed by a man who was going to have a separate house was to perform Sakung or worship of the family or clan god. This ceremony shows that the man had his own religion and no more worship his father's religion. It was performed by killing the biggest male pig known as vawkpa sutnghak. The sacrifice was performed by the Sadawt and only members of the family could be present at the ceremony. Before killing the animal, the Sadawt pronounced blessing to all the household members and killed the pig. The meat was cooked inside the house and everybody can take the meat and there was no restriction of taking it. They even invited their neighbours to take the meat (Mizo Sakhua 23). This ceremony lasted for three days. After three days, the Sadawt cleanse all those taboos which had been observed with a chant and that is known as Tukthen (Lianhmingthanga & Lalthangliana 118) so as to remove all the restrictions. Thus, the main purpose of Sakung was to establish one's family religion with the aim of getting protection from all kinds of sickness. This was the beginning of the worship of Mizo religion (Lalthangliana 334).

b. Chawng:

The second ceremony to be performed by a man to become an Inlama Thangchhuah was Chawng. It was also known as 'Chawngfang' and 'Chawngchen' (Challiana 36). It required the killing of three pigs- two boars and a sow. The sow was for the children which is known as 'Sabebuh' (Mizo Sakhua 36) while the two boars were for the main sacrifice. The Sadawt was the master of sacrifice and Thlahpawi (assistant) also has a role to

play. The sacrifice lasted for 4 days during which the people were fed with zu. As such, it needs a large quantity of zu.

The first day is known as In chhe siam ni, meaning repairing of damaged house of the sacrifice, to enable it to bear the total weight of the crowd of guests invited. The second day of the feast was known as Zupui ni, meaning ‘great drinking day’. As the name suggested, everybody who attended the feast drinks zu and the day was spent for feasting and drinking of zu. As it was the main sacrifice day, they killed all the animals for the sacrifice and threw a grand feast. The third day was known as ‘Zuthing ni’. Different villages have different ways of ceremony. Some villages celebrate this day as the main feast day. N.E.Parry called this day as Ruai pui ni or the day of great feast (N.E.Parry 97). But in some villages, it is not as popular as the second day and even the young men did not join it. However, in some villages, besides celebrating as the main feast day, they also performed one of the most important Chawngchen known as ‘Chawng Buhthai’(Tun Hma Mizo Hnunphung 51). The fourth day was known as Chawndoni. It was also known as Rual ni. On this day, friends and relatives of the sacrificer brings contributions of meat, rice, drinks and other eatables to the sacrificer’s house and will hold a feast which is known as Chawndo (Lalthangliana 337). After the performance of Chawng, the sacrificer was entitled to put a beam on his verandah and a shelf at the end of the bed.

After performing Chawng feast, the performer has to continue Dawino Chhui sacrifice. It includes Hnuait, Lasi, Chung, Vansen and Hnuaipei. But this need not however to be done at once but could be any time within two to three years. After performing Dawino chhui, the performer was allowed to perform Sedawi Chhun ceremony.

c. Sedawi:

Better known as ‘Sedawi Chhun’, it was the first time a mithun was killed to become a Thangchhuah and as such the name Sedawi (Mizo Sakhua 48) was given. It could only be performed by those who have already given the feast of Chawng. Besides a mithun, one boar and two small pigs are required for the feast. The sacrificer also should possess a large quantity of zu. It was one of the stages for reaching pialral.

The feast lasted for four days. The first day is known as In Chhesiam ni, meaning house repairing day. On this day, the house of the sacrificer was repaired and strengthened by the villagers and erect the Seluphan, the forked pole on which the mithun’s head was to be placed. The seluphan was erected in the evening and the night was called Sechallumenzan and those taking part must keep awake. What was essential in Sedawi Chhun was ‘Thlahual’, a prayer for abundant blessings for the family members of the sacrificer. The Sadawt will make ‘Thlahual’ of the sacrificer’s family one by one, starting from the oldest to the youngest. The priest will also make Thahpawh of the sacrificer’s family one by one to know whether fortune or misfortunes lies in their future on this same night (Sangkima 56).

The second day is known as Zupui Ni. In the morning the sacrificer and the Puithiam (priest) went to the outskirts of the village to make ‘Se thlah khung’ meaning calling the spirit of mithun. For this, they take with them, some white cock’s feathers, millet, job’s tears, a spear and a fairly large gourd used for holding zu. Then they built a model stone house line it with plantain leaves and placed the millet and other things inside (Parry 99). The priest than sings a chant calling the mithun’s spirit. After performing all these, they returned to the village

and will enter directly the sacrificer's house. During this period, the mithun to be used for the feast was deliberately exhausted by making it the object of excessive game and fun by the village youths. Then the mithun was held tightly into the Seluphan at the court yard of the sacrificer. The sacrificer with the priest then came out of the house with a spear. On the occasion the priest recited incantation and when it was over, the sacrificer pierced the mithun with a spear and entered the house straight in silence and without looking backward (Sangkima 56). The mithun was then killed with an axe in no time. After the mithun had been killed, a small pig was killed. This was a sacrifice to the evil spirits that lived below the house (V.S.Lalrinawma 111).

The third day is known as Ruai Ni. In the morning, the Puithiam and the sacrificer went to the outskirts of the village to let the mithun's soul go away to the place where they first called the mithun's spirit before the ceremony starts. After this, they returned to the village and after reaching planted the spear at the foot of the seluphan, make a funnel with the chestnut leaves and placed it on the point of the spear and then poured zu down it which is known as 'Feimungsil', the cleaning of the spear. The feast was observed for seven days. After seven days, a white cook was killed on the outside platform of the house which is called Arkhawthiangdawl (N.E.Parry 101). At the end of three months, the sacrificer had to perform another ritual called selulawh or bringing down the mithun's head. For this he has to kill a pig. Before bringing down the mithun's head, the priest will recite the chants again and after that the mithun's head was taken down of the Seluphan by some close relation or son-in-law of the sacrificer. After that, the head of the mithun was kept in a basket by the wife of sacrificer (N.E.Parry 102) and then placed at the

place where the skulls of other animals were kept. Then Sedawichhun was over and they can make the feast of Sekhuan.

d. Sekhuan (Sekhuang) Mithhirawp lam:

Sekhuan and Mitthirawplam are one and the same. It means that during Sekhuan feast, Mitthirawp lam, a feast and dance in honour of the spirits of a man's ancestors was also performed. It was performed in two parts- the first part is known as Sathingzar and the second part is the real Mitthirawp Lam (Parry 103). To observe this occasion, a mithun and two boars are offered.

This sacrifice lasted for four days. The first day is known as Inchhe siamni which means day of repairing the damaged house. On this day, Sathingzar (the exposure of wood to dry for cooking meat) was also done by young men and women of the village. The second day is known as Zupui ni which was spent in drinking zu. The third day is known as Ruaipui ni, meaning main feast day on which all the animals for sacrifice were killed. The fourth and last day is known as Chawndo Ni on which a feast was held again. As the preparation and procedures of the days except on the third day were identical with the previous ceremony i.e. Chawng, we will not go in detail except for the third day where the Mitthirawp Lam was performed. The most striking feature of the third day was the Mitthirawp Lam where dance was performed in honour of one's ancestors and deceased near relatives in the evening in which all their effigies were carried in the public in group and seated on the stretcher or Khuanglang specially made for the occasion. In the middle of the effigies, one 'thlahpa' (ancestor) was made taller and bigger than the other effigies. Thlahpa was the central figure in this ceremony representing the original ancestor of the

clan (Malsawma 144). Before the images were taken out in public, the oldest living member of the clan then came slowly from his house, bringing with him a gourd of zu and gives its effigy in turn a little zu, muttering a chant as he does so, he reached his own father's effigy last and when he has muttered his chant and given it the zu, he dashes the gourd down on the ground and bursting into tears, rushes into his house, where he remained confined for a month after the event (Shakespear 88-89). One of the effigies of the deceased must have a man's skull on it and if no skull is available, someone must stand with the images on the platform or Khuanglang. The dance took place in front of the sacrificer's house and if he had buy the Lalmual (Chief's montain), the dance was performed at the Lalmual. During the dance, they lifted up and down the stretcher three times and withdrawn again. On this day, a big feast was held for the villagers and zu was drunk all day. At the end of the day, the head of the goat which was put on the seluphan on the day of Sathingzar was taken down from the Seluphan and the head of the mithun is hung up (Parry 105). After the Mitthirawplam is performed, the official ceremony comes to an end.

H.L.Malsawma do not hesitate to see the mitthirawp lam in terms of ancestor worship. He says that "ancestor worship, which is a very ancient religious practices, was practised also by the Mizos" (144). However, Lawmsanga view and argued that the primary purpose of mitthirawp lam was the worship of god, who created their ancestors and also honoured their ancestors in their worship of god. Furthermore, in mitthirawp lam, not only the effigies of the deceased ancestors were made, but also the images of infants and children were included. Therefore, it could not be ancestor worship" (Lawmsanga 62).

After this ceremony was performed, the couple were entitled to wear a striped clothes and turbans, vakul chang (a headdress made of long tail feathers of bhamaraj) and he could also open windows in the house and could make Bahzar (a back verandah) (Sangkima 57). The last known person who performed Mitthirawplam was Hrangchina of Chauleng village, who performed this feast just before the Japan Ral i.e. the Second World War (L.K.Liana 154).

After the Mithirawplam, the feast giver had to perform the feast of Sedawi Chhun again before he was able to perform Khuangchawi, the final feast for the attainment of a Thangchhuah status (C.Nunthara 99).

e. Khuangchawi:

The feast of Khuangchawi was the greatest and the final stage to earn the coveted title “Thangchhuah”. It was held usually in the month of August, September and October (C.Lalluia 56). However, C. Nunthara writes that this feast was usually held in the month of October and hence the traditional name of the month Khuangchawi thla i.e.the month of Khuangchawi ceremony (C.Nunthara 99). The preparations for this ceremony were exactly the same with other previous feasts but in this ceremony they killed more animals and more zu was served to the people.

To celebrate this feast, it needs at least three grown up male mithuns, one boar and two young pigs with one grown up female mithun which was to be used as Tlangphal (Challiana 40). Tlangphal means the meat of the female mithun which is cooked and served specially to the children.

Before celebrating this ceremony, the first thing the sacrificer should do was that he must kill a sow in the chief’s

house and give the chief and his Upas a feast with pork and zu to get prior permission to hold the feast of Khuangchawi from the chief of the village who was the sole owner of the ground where dance was to be held during the feast. This is called mualleina sa (Challiana 40). However, if the sacrificer had done Sekhuan in the same village, he need not to kill again as he had already got permission earlier when he had performed Sekhuan.

When Khuangchawi feast was to be perform the sacrificer sent one of his sons-in-law with a forked piece of bamboo to which white cock's feathers and pieces of ginger are attached to the house of the Nupa, who is the father or brother of sacrificer's wife and places it in the wall of the house to invite him to perform dance in the feast. This is called Thingthiah. While going from the sacrificer's house to his father-in law's house, silence must be observed, to speak is Thianglo and after he had placed the pieces of ginger on the wall, he is allowed to speak. After the forked piece of bamboo has been fixed, the sacrificer father-in-law or brother-in-law should give Zu and also kill a pig for that person which is called Thingtuih and that day is known as Thingthiah ni (N.E.Parry107).

After he was invited to dance on the day of the feast, the father-in-law of the sacrificer started practicing dance known as Khuallam. For this purpose, he requested some of the young men of the village and practiced dances. On the day of the feast, they dressed in their traditional dress and went to the village where the feast was held. Just before reaching the village, to intimate the villagers that they were coming, they fired guns. As soon as the villagers heard it, they went to meet them. Before they meet it, they started dancing in Khuallam and as they go on, they also did vakawllen lam. The dance performed on this

day is known as Khuallam because it was a dance performed by man from other village and the dancer were known as Thingdim (S.Haukhanlian Mate 118).

Usually, Khuangchawi ceremony lasted for 4 days which were 'In Chhe siam ni', 'Zupui ni', 'Ruai ni' and 'Chawndo ni'. The first, second and the fourth days were more or less the same as the previous feasts. The third day was the most colourful day. In the evening, the Thingdim party started performing a dance to the noise of gongs and drums which constituted the most unique and colourful features of the feast. The evening after the feast was also colourful because at this time, the Khuangchawipa family including the sacrificer himself and some of the elders of the village were placed together in a specially designed framed box called "khuanghlang" and others attending the feast lifted up the stretcher and carried to the Lalmual. The stretcher was lifted up and down and at the third time, the one who bring gun shot it (Zatluanga 85). After the gun was shot, the couple threw cottons, hens, brass pots, clothes, money and sometimes they also includes guns and gongs. People scrambled for these gifts (Sangkima 58). With these rituals, the third day which is known as Ruaini came to an end. After Khungchawi feast was over, the Khuangchawipa had to observe for 7 days after which he was free from social obligations.

After performing Khuangchawi ceremony, the sacrificer was known as Thangchhuahpa and his wife as Thangchhuah nu. Then, he was dubbed as 'Zawhzawzo' meaning one who had completed everything (Sangkima 58). He could now open windows as wide as he liked and build his house with Verandah or Vanlung and could make Bahzar (a back verandah). He can also wear striped clothes known as

Thangchhuah puan and wear a striped turbans. He was regarded as a distinguished person in the society and was welcomed with special cup of rice beer wherever he go (Zu in Mizo society 25). After his death, Pialral will virtually be his abode. With all his wealth and glory, followed by all the spirits of the animals he killed during his life time, he will go towards mitthikhua and will cross the gate of Pawla who dare to shoot and will enter Pialral which was the main aim of the early Mizo in their religious belief.

Many of the early Mizo have done the Khuangchawi ceremony. The last known person who performed this ceremony was Thansavunga of Khawpuichhip village, who performed this ceremony in 1963 (L.K.Liana 153).

f. Zankhuang:

The feast of Zankhuang was a prototype of Khuangchawi in which a mithun, a boar and a small pig was killed (C.Nunthara 99). In it, large quantity of zu was served. They also made one Seluphan on which the head of the mithun was to be placed. It was done by those who have performed other feasts but could not perform Khuangchawi feast. It is just like Khuangchawi but its difference was that it need less animals to be sacrificed, the stretcher was taken out at night and there was no Thingdim party to dance during day time (Mizo Sakhua 95).

In this feast, they also made stretcher during day time. On that stretcher, the family members of the one who performed the sacrifice were made to sit and was taken out and then to the Lalmual (Chief's mountain) at night and as such it was known as Zankhuang. They also threw hens and brass pots.

Those who can perform Zankhuang feast were known as Chhuahkhel (Challiana 38) and after this, the sacrificer was entitled

to open a window about six inches square, he could wear a striped cloth and could also use a turban. It is believed that after they die, their abode will be Pialral where Thangchhuah persons were to stay. Those who performed this feast were also respected by others. Before three years pass after the Zankhuang feast, the sacrificer had to perform the feast of Sedawi chhun again which is known as Zankhuangtliip (L.K.Laina 149).

g. Zau dawh:

The feast of Zau dawh did not account for much importance in the religious ceremonies performed by a man with a view to attaining Pialral. It was an additional ceremonial feast performed as a means of Thangchhuah extra, to show the performer's greatness and unlimited wealth to his fellow villagers as source of multiplying his social standing to the people. (C.Nunthara 100).

Zau dawh was performed after the performer had given three consecutive Khuangchawi feasts (Rev.Saiathanga 32). After the first Khuangchawi feast, the performer had to perform the feast of Sedawi chhun which was followed by Dawino chhui. After performing these two sacrifices, the performer will perform again the feast of Khuangchawi for the second Khuangchawi. Then, the performer will again make Khuangchawi feast for the third time. A man who performed Khuangchawi ceremonies thrice in his lifetime was called Zau dawh (K.Zawla 40). Zau means a small hut built with number of widows around it. Such small hut built by those who performed Khuangchawi ceremonies thrice was called Zaudawh.

To perform Zaudawh ceremony, it needs 14 mithuns and 13 boars at the minimum. Besides, it also required 1,000 pots

of zu (Liangkhaia:Mizo Sakhua in Mizo Ziarang 11). As it needs lots of Zu and a large number of animals to be sacrifice, it can be perform only by few chiefs and wealthy persons.

As it was very difficult to perform the feast of Khuangchawi thrice to make Zaudawh, there were very few person who perform this ceremony in the history of the Mizos. The only known person who performed this ceremonial feast was Vuttaia, (Mizo Sakhua 91) a Sailo chief. After a person had performed this feast, he can used a head turban known as Zawngchal which can be used only by a brave man. It is made of the fur of a he goat.

Thus, after a man had performed all the necessary ceremonial feasts for an In Lama Thangchhuah, he was known as Thangchhuahpa. He became a ‘Zawh Zaw Zo’ which means one who had completed everything. He was entitled to wear a special kind of cloth and turban and could now open window and built his house with Verandah which were signs of superior status. He was now entitled to go to Pialral after his death which was the main aim of the early Mizos.

Ram Lama Thangchhuah:

The alternative way of attaining the bliss of Pialral was to perform another type of Thangchhuah called Ram Lama Thangchhuah which involved the killing of prescribed wild animals. The list of animals given by different writers varies. Pastor Challiana gave the following list of animals to be killed such as savawm (bear), sakhi (barking deer), sele (wild gayal) sazuk (sambar deer) and sanghal (wild boar) (Challiana 42) whereas J.Meirion Lloyd gave such animals as bear, a wild boar, a gayal, an eager, a big snake, a barking deer and a flying lemur to earn the title (J.Meirion Lloyd 15; as was told by

Zairema). C.L.Hminga on the other hand gave the following list – elephant, bear, wild bison, stag, barking deer, wild boar and man. Besides these, a viper, an eagle and a flying lemur are to be killed. One may kill over a hundred animals but unless he killed all the above mentioned animals he cannot earn the title. After killing each prescribed animal or creature ‘ai’ ceremony has to be performed which required the killing of a domestic animal (C.L.Hminga 36). Only after killing all the above mentioned animals, he qualified himself for the Thangchhuah title and was known as Ram Lama Thangchhuah. He had a passport to go direct to Pialral to enjoy life there eternally. On the way to Pialral, he rode on the back of a stag with a cobra coiled around its horn and a hawk flying over them, followed by other animals which he killed while living on earth and reached Pialral (Sangkima 56) On the way to Pialral, Pawla would not shoot him and he would thus reach Pialral without receiving, Pawla’s pellets.

The early Mizos tried to earn the Thangchhuah title mainly for 3 reasons :

- (1) To enter Pialral after death and enjoy life there eternally;
- (2) To escape from being shot by Pawla on the way to Mitthikhua and
- (3) To be honour and respect by others during their life time (K.Zawla 40)

Thus, in the early Mizo society, to earn the Thangchhuah title was the most coveted goals and the highest possible achievement and honour a man can attain and thereby their whole endeavour throughout life centered in trying to achieve this goal. This titled also suggests the Mizo’s concern for life beyond the grave.

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Kelkang Revival Movement as Ethnic Movement: A Post-colonial Analysis

K.C. Lalthlamuani, Associate Professor
Catherine Lalruatfeli Ralte, Research Scholar
Department of English, Mizoram University

Consciousness of ethnic identities for most of the communities of North-East India were inadequate in the pre-colonial period, and their world was “confined to their family, clans, and villages” (Pakem 1). So the first sociological process has been to develop an ethno-tribal identity which was acquired in the phase of colonial administration. The arrival of the English Missionaries became undoubtedly one of the greatest twists in the history of the Mizos after settling in Mizoram. Christianity then spread throughout like a wildfire that remains inextinguishable.

Kelkang Revival Movement in 1937 which Lalsawma expressed as “an epoch in Mizoram Christianity” (qtd. in Lalsangmana, 57) is covered under the umbrella of ethnic movement in its behavioural traits of “assertion of identity around certain social problems” and “historic-cultural legacies” according to B.R. Rizvi, all of which come under the shadow of colonial arrogance (qtd. in Deb, 18). For in *Rights of Man* and “Common Sense”, Thomas Paine addresses man’s duty to allow the same rights to others as we allow ourselves, and the failure to do so causes the birth of a social issue which was evident in Kelkang Revival Movement.

Racial stereotyping is one aspect of colonialism that restricts the natives of the rights the Imperialists allowed for themselves. When Colonial ethnographers explored the terrains of human habitats of various parts of the hills of present North-East India, the British “perceived them to be wild, savage and disobedient communities that needed to be penalized and disciplined” (Biswas and Suklabaidya 53). This aspect trickled down to “Kelkang Hlimpui”, the Revival Movement at Kelkang. The word “Hlimpui” indicates “the superiority and an extraordinary incident, e.g. long continuation of feasts, unspeakable emotional excitement, abandoning of all Jhum works and schooling etc.” (Lalsangmuana 30). These incidences were enough to stir the in the colonizer’s mind that the Oriental is “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different”, thus they are “rational, virtuous, mature, normal” (Said 40). So they took it upon themselves the responsibility of giving penalties and disciplining them through the interference of the British Administration at Kelkang. McCall, the then Superintendent was informed that “the village had got out of entire control due to the machination of revivalists”, and reached the place “with a well-armed army to enquire and settle the issues as well as to capture the culprits” (Lalsangmuana 50). The Superintendent’s judgements and punishments against the revivalists were unnecessarily severe and excessive, going to the extent of labeling them as “revolt” (48). The major consequences included the transfer of the officiating Pastor, imprisonment of the ‘ring leaders’ of the revival at Sylhet jail for three years, and all the men at Kelkang were punished by forcing them for manual labour at Aizawl (1). The issues surrounding historic-cultural legacies in this Revival Movement included denial of the practice of indigenous culture in modes of worshipping, for instance, seizure of “Khuang” (traditional drum which is an “indispensable instrument for Mizo society

through the ages according to Lalsawma (qtd. in Lalsangmuan, 55), since the Superintendent seemed to believe that “Khuangs” were “the prime factor of revival frenzy” (Chhawntluanga 82). The colonizers imposed upon the natives the identity of a “subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves” (Said 35). David Huddart insists that this phenomenon of stereotyping is robbing and “denying (the natives) their own sense of identity” as it “fixes individuals or groups in one place”, presuming to understand them on the basis of prior knowledge “that is at best defective” (37). Identities were then constructed by the colonizers as ‘subjects’ of ethnographic disciplines and later brought under their rule as a set of (dis)obedient subjects. These identities “treated as tribes” further became the subject of nationalist discourses and, as ‘citizens’ they were determined by the capacities and constraints of ‘state’ discourse. As decolonized subjects, they now share the vision of India as “Europe’s Other” and Europe as “India’s Other”, while they position themselves as the “Other of both”, with respect to their otherness from both Europe and India (Biswas and Suklabaidya 53). For Bhabha, there is no simple pre-given notion of “subject”, and what is done constructs the subject as much as the subject acts upon the situation (qtd. in Huddart, 20). “Choices made by other people construct our identities”, asserts Huddart, which in this case is the construction of the Mizos as British colonial subjects by the colonizers, “and our own choices in turn transform and construct our identities” (21) and since this process of construction is continued by “our day-to-day activities”, the frenzy or revivalism at Kelkang brought about the production of “conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory identity effects” where the subjective identity of the native “never take on the fixedness and solidity of objects” (Huddart 21).

Christianity with its hermeneutical approach became a useful tool for the Missionaries to reinterpret the histories of the world to the natives. Such hermeneutical approaches became an all-encompassing affair for the early mission to develop an acceptable interpretation of indigenous religions and institutionalize it under the Church (Biswas and Suklabaidya 94). And since colonial discourse “encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer...the result is a...blurred copy of the colonizer” (Ashcroft et al 125). Therefore, apart from stereotypical identities enforced on the natives, colonialism imparted the identity of Christianity to the natives, validating itself according to Rizvi as a “symbol of tribal identity and status” (qtd. in Deb, 23). However, this mimicry can be “quite threatening” (Ashcroft et al 126), and can perpetuate itself as an “unconscious strategy” of “resistance” (Huddart 62-66), asserting identity in the process through its element of “mockery” by appearing “to parody whatever it mimics” (Ashcroft et al 127). This assertion of identity takes on a “subtle” and “unconscious form”, but Huddart claims that for Bhabha, the fact that it is resistance at all is “more important than the degree to which it is an actively pursued strategy” (62). Methods adopted by ethnic movements to achieve their goal of assertion of identity “range from peaceful persuasion to militant tactics, extortions, kidnapping, indiscriminate homicide and ethnic cleansing for creation of a homogeneous land of their dreams”, asserted B.R. Rizvi (qtd. in Deb, 2). However, Kelkang Revivalism unfolded a whole new method—an unplanned and instantaneous method overflowing from an unconscious mind. “Kelkang Hlimpu” as an ethnic movement succeeded towards the assertion of identity through the production of a number of what Naipaul termed as “mimic man” who are “appropriate objects of a colonial chain of command, they are also

‘inappropriate’ colonial subjects because what is being set in motion in their behavior is something that may ultimately be beyond the control of colonial authority” (Ashcroft et al 126). The “mimic man” is encompassed in the prominent figures of Thanghnuai Ralte, a “mihlim” (spiritual person) with “Tawnghriatloh” (“unknown tongues or Tounge-speaking), a visitor from the west who initiated the revival there (Chawntluanga, 1, 24), Kapdai and Chalruala were also “Mihlim” and were subjected to expulsion from the village for rejection of the plea that they should not be happy or excited anymore (Lalsangmuana,55) whose behaviours could not be subdued by the British ruler in spite of the punishments inflicted upon them.

Most of the features of “Kelkang Hlimpui” were akin to earlier revivals such as the Welsh Revival including “singing, praying and preaching”, but they prevailed in “extreme manner” appearing to parody whatever it mimics of the colonizer’s institution of religion (Lalsangmuana 32). Remarkable ecstatic phenomena appeared- somersault dancing, dancing by hopping on one leg were prominent kinds, running in the street and running up to the pulpit was a kind of dancing, some people would write Cross sign through their body while dancing; frequent worship service, and repetition of the same song for over twenty to thirty times were another “marvelous gesture” (Lalsangmuana 41). People abandon their Jhum for singing and dancing repeatedly. Generosity was the other ecstatic phenomena. “Joy feasts, spiritual attachments, charisma of singing and charisma of preaching etc. were the features which Lalsawma comprehended were difficult to handle for the ecclesiastical leaders” (qtd. in Lalsangmuana, 158).

The “assertion of identity” which D. Saikya and D.N.Majumdar comprehend as the goal of ethnic movement was achieved at Kelkang Revival Movement through mimicry (qtd. in Pakem, 28). Bhabha suggests that identity normally operates in terms of metaphor (or at least wants to), but that in mimicry it explicitly operates through metonymy: the substitution along a vertical axis in terms of parts for wholes (Huddart 65). Identity is asserted by the natives through mimicry by propelling them beyond being a mere objectified figures of the colonized to “the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as ‘inappropriate’ colonial subjects...producing a partial vision of the colonizer’s presence” (Bhabha 88). In this aspect, they assert their identity of being “actors”, whom for David Huddart have the potential of turning “the fetishized colonial culture” to “an insurgent counter-appeal” as was evident in Kelkang Revival Movement (66). Mimicry imbued identity to the Mizo natives not quite like the colonizer which Bhabha put as “almost the same but not quite” (qtd. in Ashcroft et al, 126) which further suggests that the colonial culture is always potentially and strategically insurgent as is the case of the revival movement discussed here. The Kelkang Revival Movement adopted the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions and values particularly of the Welsh Revival in 1904 where the main features of the revival are “singing, praying and preaching” (Lalsangmuana 16). Yet it was not quite the same due to the ecstatic phenomena and revival frenzy accompanying it, appearing as a parody of what it mimics-of the Welsh Revival and this mimicry is not far from mockery (Ashcroft et al 126). This further revealed the limitation in the authority of colonial discourse “almost as though colonial authority inevitably embodies the seeds of its own

destruction” (126). Bhabha further argues that mimicry does not merely rupture the discourse, but asserts identity to the natives as a “partial presence” specifying both “incomplete” and “virtual” (86). The play between equivalence and excess made the colonized both reassuringly similar and terrifying since mimicry is at one “resemblance and menace” (86), and this creation of mimic men “made the British themselves anxious”, for instead of being secondary, the “imitations are actually superior to the original and authentic” (Huddart 61-64). This may impart justification to the intervention of the British Administration when the revival broke out in 1937.

Regarding the advent of Christianity Dr. V.C. Kanite Sema feels, “tribal religions are among those uninstitutionalised religions sacked by Christianity” (qtd. in Deb, 7). He further vehemently professes that he is “crystal clear” about the waning of tribal religion by the organized religion” (8). He contends that “it is a fact that where the culture is too strong and there is a strong background of established system and philosophy, it could resist the foreign religion to overpower them”, and since “the tribal religions...had no access to script and scriptures...their established systems have had to accept the same” (10). Yet for this notion of cultural strength which is so “vague and yet so important”, Edward Said asserts that “it is better not to risk generalizations” (40). It may not be necessarily that the culture is not strong, but simply that Mizo native religion tend to coincide with Christianity. As such, the organized religion of Christianity does not necessarily clash with nor wane the tribal religion. In fact, Christian theology explains “the rationale of indigenous faith” which helped the tribes “to examine their own faith critically and identify loose ends” (Biswas and Suklabaidya 95), further propelling them

towards the assertion of their identity through the process of mimicry.

Through the assertion of identity of the natives from objectified figures of the colonized to more than just objects wherein mimicry operates through metonymy, “the colonized returns the colonizer’s gaze” by producing a partial vision of the colonizer’s presence (Huddart 20). Regarding the advent of Christianity in Mizoram, the politics of the modern nation-state has been turned into a politics of appropriation, and “resistance” on the part of the natives as in the Revival Movement for Biswas and Suklabaidya “harps distinct claims of their identity” (53). The cultural politics of Christianity is different from the colonial politics of culture which reduce indigenous culture to a mere object. The cultural grounding of Christianity is accommodated within the tribal ethos as was evident in Kelkang Revival Movement which was “deeply rooted in the indigenous culture” (Lalsangmuana 1). This mode of cultural transmission of something perceived to be destructive of tribal culture contradicts the foreclosed view that Christianity necessarily destroys tribal culture (Biswas and Suklabaidya 96). Rather, it would be wrong to see the Mizos as victims of a process of deculturation. Instead, the ways in which ethnicity is actively and consciously moulded in the present era should be discerned, precipitating the emergence of a vigorous sense of history and identity at all levels.

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R. K. Narayan and the Holy Man: An Endless Dialogue

Dr. Sravani Biswas

Associate Professor
Department of English and Foreign Languages,
Tezpur University

ABSTRACT

R.K.Narayan-creator of the famous and fabulous Malgudi, had a favourite disclaimer, that he was not seriously involved with his creations. However, the act of writing literature is no longer considered an agential enterprise. It is a complicated act where the author turns into a tool within the powerful and impersonal system of form and language. It is at this point that the work turns serious. Even the tiniest and nondescript details in his writings are seeped with a world-view. At this point of negotiation the author and the intellectual reader are dialogically engaged. The uniqueness of each reading transfigures the literary creation, often to such extent that the creator himself finds it alien to his own consciousness. As a literary work is expressive of a world-view, so are critical theories. It is interesting to notice that critics from the west like Walsh or Greene often analyze Narayan's novels as spiritual journeys. Perhaps they are guided by their pre-conceptions about India and deceived by Narayan's use of simple language and mild metaphors which they interpret as tranquility of temperament. They fail to see how the ordinary people of Narayan's novels are thrown relentlessly

*in the hurly-burly of Indian nationalism and British capitalism. Negotiating Narayan with the critical insights of Bakhtin rescues them from a categorization of Narayan as the defender of Indian spiritualism. Narayan's novels are carnival spaces that create polemy. Fresh re-reading of *The Guide* and *A Tiger for Malgudi* reveals how Narayan was in an endless dialogue with the image of India that was ideal.*

The response to R. K. Narayan's novels has always been extreme. Criticism of Narayan is either a sort of indulgent nod to his humanism and his restricted wanderings in the follies and foibles of the middle class, or a resistance in perceiving him as a writer of any serious considerations. In fact, many critics, comparing him to his illustrious contemporaries Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, found him embarrassingly indifferent to his time. Ramesh Srivastava writes, "It seems unbelievable that throughout the intensity of sufferings and tortures during the British rule over India and the pangs of the independence movement, Narayan should have remained completely unaffected and that his imagination should find no job but to churn out humorous books for children and common people without any reference to the contemporary events." (in Ram, 1981: 207) If Gandhi's impressive presence influenced Raja Rao or Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan's depiction of Gandhi is not satisfactory. In *The Swan and the Eagle* Prof. Narasimhaiah expresses his doubt about the authenticity of the Gandhian principle in Narayan's novels and thinks Narayan has made a muddle of it. Supporting him Prof. A. N. Kaul says that Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* are "incomparably superior 'Gandhi Novels'." (in Poddar, 1972: 227) But was Narayan interested to depict Gandhian principles in his novels?

This exemplifies a sort of hegemonic reading prompted by the spiritual politics inherited from Gandhi and the expectancy of continuity and stability of values which canonical texts supposedly embody. The innate habit of canonization fosters stratification, and in that the comedy is not taken seriously – as if laughter is not serious. This assumption is questioned by Mikhail Bakhtin when he substantiates through his argument in favour of the carnival that the language of laughter is the much needed antidote for ideological abstraction. Negotiating Narayan with the critical insights of Bakhtin rescues him from a categorization as the defender of Indian spiritualism and the inevitable frustration of the reader at the outcome of embarrassment that this idea ultimately leads to.

Narayan wrote at a time when the Indian scenario was throbbing with high idealism and revisionary activities. Tagore had already won the Nobel Prize. Tagore envisioned his time as apocalyptic, “... just as sandalwood, when gashed emits fragrance, India also has laid bare her inmost treasure of truth, has offered her best self, whenever she has been struck by outsiders.” (Tagore, 1911) The milieu favoured the writings of autobiographies which were success stories of the individual struggle for self improvisation or enlightenment. In fact, spiritualism was the bedrock of Indian nationhood, and the emergence of novels and biographical writings were simultaneous.

The reading of Narayan’s *The Guide* is affected by this culture of writing. Not only western critics like William Walsh, Indian readers too see it as the character’s epistemological journey to self realization. For the readers the Indian novel was bound to be reversionary, even if the protagonist was a rogue.

This habit of reading segregates the protagonist from his environment. It underestimates all the other voices that could thwart the protagonist's journey towards an ideal goal. This is clarified by Bakhtin, who identifies a different kind of artistic vision in the polyphonic novel. The polyphonic novel is the ideal democratic space to accommodate different valid voices or counterpoints that hinder ideological tendencies to lead the novel towards a monologic terminus.

In *The Guide* was Raju truly transformed? If so, then it would take away from Raju's character the essential beauty of pathos. It would require the reader to comprehend a different world-view that Narayan projected in his writing. In his own creative space Narayan, instead of speaking lets all his characters speak and thus creates their own points and counterpoints. This is often mistaken as lack of motivation and direction. In *My Dateless Diary* Narayan remembers his American friend Metro's comments and says "... he realized that I was after all a writer of weak motivations, and with probably no theoretical knowledge of fiction writing." (Narayan, 1960: 115) But for Narayan, each little voice is valid and no less important than the protagonists. It is the carnival space where the figure parading as the king has the potentiality to turn into a clown. It is the carnival space where the mass is the true hero. Even if Raju is the central figure, he is the creation of the mass, and eventually undone by it.

It is universally accepted that Narayan depicted the middle-class. But for the readers it is the imagined community soaked in the Indianness that is too simplistically conceptualized. This community is simple and religious. They have their shares of sins but these are harmless. They also have the capacity to clamber out of their shallow pitfalls. In short, the readers'

conceptualization of the middle class is innately moral. This idea is created upon Gandhian texts that had inspired the creation of Bakha of Anand's *Untouchable* or the ordinary people of *Kanthapur* created by Raja Rao. But Narayan's polyphonic writing is capacious to accommodate a different truth. Ramesh Srivastava had once criticized Narayan for his detachment – "How one wishes that Narayan too, like Mark Twain, had sweetened the bitterest truths of life, quoted with laughter the pangs and sufferings of a subjugated and dumb race..." (in Ram, 1981: 207) This 'bitter truth' about a 'dumb race' is subverted in Narayan's polyphonic novel where he lets all his characters talk for themselves. In the process, a far more bitter truth is exposed. It is the truth of a class of people thrown hurly-burly between two hegemonies – Indian nationalism and British imperialism. It is a half-conscious and selfish life. If critics saw the absence of national fervor it is because there was also emerging the self-centered world created by imperial capitalism that the British brought to India. Caught between their relentless struggle for self-sustenance and the immense possibility of a fairy tale existence that capitalism offered to them, they turned to unscrupulous tricksters. Narayan must have been sensitive to the impact of British capitalism ruthlessly thrust upon India. Raju is a creation of that historical and political event.

The British came to India to exploit its resources, which is characteristic of imperial capitalism. The introduction of the railways was a strategy to accomplish imperial interest. But as a side effect it also provided the Indian middle class unimaginable job opportunities. It proved the Gandhians who based their nationalism on the superiority of India's spiritual civilization wrong because it is a kind of materialism that affected the newly born middle class.

The railways in *The Guide* brought strange people and strange occupations – the railway-workers, the vendors, the taxi-drivers, the tourist-guides, the hoteliers and many such entrepreneurs quite new to the Indian experience. This surge of people and activity provides an overwhelming backdrop which almost usurps the main role.

Raju is the inevitable product of this environment. He is the first entrepreneur hero who that appeared in Indian writing in English. Thus Raju's supposed monologic journey towards a spiritual awakening cannot be without a snag.

Critics have already identified Raju as a picaro, but interestingly they missed the point that the qualities that distinguished a picaro are conducive to the making of an entrepreneur. Both emerged from the population and distinguished themselves as individuals who are adventurous, ready to undertake risk to satisfy their own opportunism and accept full responsibility for the outcome. Their path is tricky, often resulting in failure.

Raju is the opportunist, who, when the railways were built in Malgudi, was quick to identify a market opportunity and immediately took up a stall inside the platform. Raju's journey from the railway platform is meteoric. His capacity to play upon chance, accept risk, exploit the opportunity by organizing his resources effectively and his leadership quality turned him into a star-maker. At each turning point of his career – as when he changed from a shop-keeper to a tourist-guide and then the program-manager of Rosie's performances he showed great flexibility to reinvent himself into a different role. He is a creation of mass demand and on his part he exploited them for his own ends. Like an adroit musician touching the right keys he touched

their desire. He invented and reinvented Malgudi for the wide-eyed tourists eager to enjoy every bit of the beautiful place. He played upon the big dreams that lurked in the ordinary heart. He saw it in Rosie and fulfilled it with his resourcefulness and manipulation.

But throughout the career of Raju, Narayan never allowed his protagonist to leave the ground. He flourished when at the centre of mass attention, mesmerizing them with his flair for verbal articulation. He discovered it while running the railway stall; this very knack lures him out of the shop to be a tourist-guide and when in jail he uses it to befriend the hard-bitten convicts and impress the jailor, so that even within the restricted boundaries he created for himself a smooth life. When he is mistaken for a Swami by Velan he again readjusts himself to this role. He realized that the "... essence of sainthood seemed to lie in one's ability to utter mystifying statements." (Narayan, 1958: 46) Raju is no holy man in the making but is throughout goaded by a more palpable materialistic drive.

When creating Raju, Narayan negotiates with a truth that lurks in the grotesque sphere of the world. The essential principle of this form of realism is degradation, lowering of all that is ideal and spiritual. By way of degradation it materializes the characters and turns them into flesh. In this world created by Narayan what is most striking is the inability of the characters to transcend and overcome their material bodily drives. Even when creating Malgudi for the tourists with his imaginative flair Raju remains calculative – "It was adjustable. I could give them a glimpse of a few hours or soak them in mountain and river scenery or archaeology for a whole week. I could not really decide how much to give or withhold until I knew how much cash the man carried or, if he carried a cheque-book, how good

it was.” (Narayan, 1958: 54) His relation with Rosie, much romanticized by Dev Anand in the film version is not beyond the desire for money and glamour.

The critics who see Raju’s transformation from rogue to saint as an inevitable outcome overlook the very architectonics of Raju’s creation as a character. While Raju is gifted with an overdose of wit and practical intelligence, this bounty of nature is balanced by a lack of other mental faculties leading to the depth of character. Raju’s journey is never epistemological for he lacks the capacity to learn from memory. Raju’s changes are not transcending the material existence but episodic in nature – a simple readjustment to a new role. The narrative ending of *The Guide* is so lucid in its beauty and control of words and images that it overwhelms the reader. It is early morning and then in a prognostic mode the dying Raju utters – “Velan, it is raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up my feet...” (Narayan, 1958: 221) The purity of the morning sun takes away the stink of death and consecrates it. Carried away by this last scene the reader forgets the recurring thought of food that had haunted Raju throughout his career as a Swami. If we look back at the moment when Velan mistook Raju for a holy man, it was another opportunity for Raju. The problem started when the villagers began suffering from drought. When Velan failed to bring food Raju panicked. What are Raju’s fears? It is the rogue’s fear that the shortcut way of earning food by beguiling others being forestalled and returning to the more dull and routine path of the ordinary people where nothing can be achieved without a serious struggle: “If he returns to the town he would have to get his house back from the man to whom he had mortgaged it. He would have to fight for a living space in his own home or find the cash to redeem it.” (Narayan, 1958: 31) So he took the chance,

bribed the shepherd boy with the last piece of banana to call Velan. The idiot boy spread the rumour that Swami would fast to bring rain. Soon the people began to crowd around Raju and he is forced to fast.

The question that evades the reader is that if by chance the rumour was not spread, would Raju have volunteered to fast and sacrifice his life to bring rain? A desperate need to beguile the public to save his self-created image blurs into an intensely qualitative moment for Raju. Having his back to the wall Raju decides to play- act the role of the Swami sincerely.

But burdening Raju with sainthood would rob him of his true worth. The pathetic beauty of his ordinariness is more true because the memory of his stealing and gulping down stale food hiding inside the inner sanctum, and then hurriedly rinsing his mouth to get rid of the smell of the food lingers like a pain at the back of the mind. It is impossible for a saint to invoke a scene of such moving poignancy; only a man who is innately earthly may come out to be as ambivalent and unredeemable as Raju. It is possible to discover this Raju only through the appreciation of the carnival world praised by Bakhtin. Raju who exploited the mass is ultimately overwhelmed by it.

Narayan's negotiation with spiritualism in the form of holy men or legends like Gandhi is ironic and self-reflexive. When his peers were busy depicting true Gandhism in their writings, Narayan was on the lookout for a pretext that would enable him to observe the cranks of ordinary people. While he writes about Gandhi, he is not interested in Gandhism but in the reactions of the average men when thrown into the magnetic vicinity of the legend. It invites serious question – did the people understand Gandhi's spiritualism?

After twenty-five years of the publication of *The Guide* (1958) Narayan wrote *A Tiger For Malgudi* (1983). This again was interpreted as the fable of a wild ferocious tiger, who under the influence of a yogi explores through philosophical discourse the pathway of enlightenment.

But was the tiger saved? If so, then why would the pristine silence of his mind turn into a disturbing bee-hive with the newly acquired language? Why would he, segregated from his natural habitat, lose a sense of purpose? Why would his beautiful strong body degenerate? And finally, why would Narayan subvert the Swami's supposed holiness by bringing his wife to the scene who accuses him – "I have borne your vagaries patiently for a lifetime; your inordinate demands of food and my perpetual anxiety to see you satisfied, and my total surrender night and day when passion seized you..." (Narayan, 1983: 170) Carnival has the tendency to insult deliberately, for it is critical of all that is canonized. Narayan's shocking exposure of the holy man is deliberate. Narayan is questioning the perennial values that stood for Indianness. Instead of static forms of culture his novels attempt to grasp the formless energy of history. He keeps his doors open for dialogue. Raju's death at the end simulated sacrifice. The friendship between man and tiger is utopian which stands out as a hope for the friendship between man and nature. It is a reality of man's innate materiality that creates an eternal desire to transcend itself. Narayan celebrated that materiality.

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Things Fall Apart: A Voice against Cultural Denigration

Nirupa Saikia

Associate Professor
Govt Aizawl College, Mizoram

The denigration of indigenous culture by the colonial power is an undeniable historical fact. Its most adverse consequence is the disappearance of the Kinetic force in the colonised – the force that takes care of the inner being without which man gets reduced into a state of oblivion. The powerful voice of Chinua Achebe decries the cultural denigration that the Africans experienced during the colonial regime. The impact of the cultural denigration – deeply corrosive in nature, manifests itself in terms of loss – loss of self-identity, self-confidence and more importantly, the loss of spiritual values. Achebe’s creative as well as critical writing is an attempt at resisting the Western cultural hegemonic tendency through a coherent construction of the indigenous African cultural norms and values. For him novel has become the most effective medium for contesting the European projection of Africa as a Dark Continent inhabited by uncivilized primitive tribes. His fictions can rightly be termed as serious intellectual and cultural endeavours aiming at creating a totally different image of Africa by depicting its rich indigenous culture and traditional system of values. With a profound sense of awareness to the adverse impact of colonialism on the African psyche, he attempts at creating national consciousness by reflecting the inhumanities and injustices that the Africans had been subjected during the colonial regime.

Achebe's abiding concern for the restoration of African cultural heritage lies at the core of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), his first novel portraying the ancestral African (Igbo) past. The novel justifies Achebe's claim that African past "was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (Achebe 30). By presenting a concrete and comprehensive picture of the traditional African (especially Nigerian) life Achebe implicitly interrogates the validity of the Western claim of bringing the blessings of knowledge and civilization to Africa. He strongly feels that there has been a willful and determined Western attempt to undermine the indigenous African culture and civilization:

Quite simply it is the desire – one might indeed say the need – in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest. (2)

Achebe opines that during the colonial regime a sense of inferiority was instilled in the African natives that led to a deep spiritual crisis and catalepsy resulting in profound loss in every sphere of life.

Achebe's resistance to the Western cultural hegemony is on the line with the post-colonial discourse that seeks to explore the "formation of colonial and post-colonial subjects: hybrid subjects, emerging from the superimposition of conflicting languages and cultures" (Culler 130). Culler further refers to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in the context of the concept of "other" constructed by the Eurocentric discourse. In the European discourse, the colonized is the "other" representing raw, untamed, unpolished, gross, chaotic and instinctual qualities whereas the West is the "centre", representative of culture,

sophistication, civilization, rationalism, intelligence and harmony. The Western perspective is crystallized in the writing of Hegel, one of the best European minds:

The Negro, ... exhibits the natural man in is completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality, all that we call feeling, if we would comprehend him. There is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found ... What we properly understand by Africa is the unhistorical, underdeveloped spirit. (qtd in Ngugi 6)

This self-assumed sense of superiority also reverberates in the statement of Albert Schweitzer, the well-known European philanthropist: "The African is indeed my brother, but my junior brother" (Achebe 46). Reacting strongly to such colonial portrayal of Africa, Achebe asserts that Africa did have history and civilization enlightened and dignified enough to claim its own entity but crumbled altogether due to the Western intrusion. He terms Joseph Conrad's oft quoted fiction *Heart of Darkness* "an offensive and deplorable book" (Achebe 10) as it projects the image of Africa as "'the other world', the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Achebe 2). As a socially committed writer, he seeks to help his society regain confidence by making his people realize that "African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies ... had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty." (Achebe, "The Role of the Writer" 160)

The thematic concern of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is the old Igbo society on the verge of colonial subjugation. The novel is set in a period between 1850-1900 when British rule extended

its hold in different parts of Nigeria. The setting is an Igboland in a transitional period due to the advent of Christianity and British rule. Okonkwo, the protagonist has already established himself as the most respected elder of the community. But a string of offences committed by him brings gradual decline in his fortune leading to his banishment from Umoufia, his native village to Mbanta, his mother's village. During his absence, the white men arrive in Umoufia in the forms of Christian missionaries and the British government officials leading to the establishment of church, govt and trading system that gradually eradicate the traditional way of life. The last part of the novel dramatizes Okonkwo's return to Umoufia, his abortive attempt to lead his tribe against the foreigners, his tragic death and the consequent destruction of the old ways of life.

The narrative establishes the old Igbo society as a living existence governed by the traditional practices and values. The impression of a powerful, proud, dignified, self-balanced society is rendered through the description of ordinary customs, celebration of festivals and observance of rituals and ceremonies such as Week of Peace, the ceremony of *egwugwu* settling disputes of the clan, wrestling match, marriage, sports etc. The Week of Peace is observed before the planting season when no work is done and no physical injury is inflicted on anyone. The tribal wisdom is reflected in the words of Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess while offering reason for its observance: "We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow" (Things Fall Apart 28). The Feast of the New Yam which is "an occasion for joy throughout Umuofia" (34) is celebrated after the collection of harvest in gratitude of *Ani*, the earth goddess and source of all fertility.

The description of the formal and ritualistic trial scene where *egwugwu* are shown settling a marriage dispute, gives the idea of a practical, self-assured, wise and flexible society. The importance of the ceremony is not allowed to be diminished even by the people's knowledge that *egwugwu* are actually human beings. After hearing the contradicting accounts from the young husband and the wife's brother, *Evil Forest*, the leader of the *egwugwu* gives an acceptable verdict settling the dispute in an amicable way: "If your in-law brings wine to you, let your sister go with him." (85). The traditional law court in its ritualistic form appears to be awful but the laws seem to be flexible enough to accommodate the interest of the ordinary villagers. The traditional belief defines man's existence in relation to the natural and supernatural worlds and this is apparent in the description of the search for Ezinma's *iyi-uwa*, her link with the spirit world. Achebe's record of the rituals in a traditional marriage and his description of a solemn traditional funeral makes one realize the grandeur and dignity of the old Igbo society.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe sketches the Igbo society at a critical juncture of change and the whole process of change and its immediate consequences are embodied in the life and character of Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel. In this context, Killam's comment on Okonkwo's character is significant: "Achebe establishes not only the character but the ethical and moral basis of his life and, by extension, the ethical and moral basis of the life of the clan." (Killam 15-16). Okonkwo has inherited nothing from his father nor received any support from him. Yet in a slow and painful way he lays the foundation of a prosperous future during his father's lifetime. Okonkwo's fame rests on his personal achievement. Here is a suggestion of a acephalous and achievement oriented society where although a person is not

considered to be the master of his fate yet his personal efforts and achievements are duly recognized.

Despite being immensely powerful, Okonkwo is shown subservient to the judgment of the society as he obliges the Priest by paying the fine imposed on him for breaking the Week of Peace by beating his youngest wife. The social control is thus shown as a harmonizing factor by punishing aggressive acts. Okonkwo's meek acceptance of the punishment of banishment from Umuofia also displays the social control on individuals. During the funeral dance of Ezeudu, an elderly and noble warrior of the clan, Okonkwo's gun goes off unexpectedly killing the sixteen-year old son of the dead person. The punishment of man slaughter, not deliberate but due to inadvertence, is banishment from the village for seven years. Because to kill a clansman is a "crime against the earth goddess" (113) and if not punished her wrath will spare none. The banishment of such a powerful person demonstrates the impartiality in the dispensation of justice in the traditional society.

The British rule and Christianity firmly get entrenched in Umuofia during Okonkwo's absence. On his return after seven years of exile, he finds his community rapidly disintegrating responding positively to the new order where status, eminence and honour have acquired new meaning. Yet the unmasking of an ancestral spirit unites his clan together who raze the Christian church to the ground. The consequent arrest, unjust trial, torture and humiliation of the village elders including Okonkwo by the colonial rulers make him determined to pursue his lone struggle against the white man. Okonkwo kills the interfering court messenger and realizing the inability of his confused and passive villagers to go against the white man, commits suicide. Achebe presents Okonkwo as an integral part of the social reality.

His death is, therefore, not the death of an individual; it signifies the falling apart of “things” – the disintegration of the whole social order. In his ignominious death we have the epitaph of an old social order.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe establishes the identity of a self-sustained Igbo society through the portrayal of indigenous practices in terms of rituals, values and creed inherent in the traditional social structure. The Igbo society is also depicted as flexible and dynamic; the community seeks to adopt and compromise to move with time. In Achebe’s words:

... the Igbo culture lays a great deal of emphasis on differences, on dualities, on otherness. This is why we do not find it difficult to accept that other people somewhere else might be doing one thing differently from ourselves. (Ogbaa 2)

The other positive potentials of the old Igbo society like selflessness, strong communal sense, impartiality in the dispensation of justice are also explored in details in the course of the novel.

Things Fall Apart demonstrates Achebe’s critical observation on the role of the missionaries in the disintegration of the traditional Igbo society. In Africa, they were, in fact, the harbingers of colonialism. The missionaries promoted the cause of colonialism in a systematic way by converting people into their faith and establishing churches:

But stories were already gaining ground that the white man had not only brought a religion but also a government. It was said that they had built a place of judgement in Umuofia to protect the followers of their religion. It was even said that they had hanged one man who killed a missionary. (141-42)

The ruthlessness of the white man comes to light in the indiscriminate shooting at the large market in Abame wiping out the whole clan in retaliation to the killing of a white man. The colonial perspective in regards to cultural denigration is evident in the District Commissioner's plan to write only a single paragraph for his proposed book on the colonial adventure in Nigeria on Okonkwo who epitomises the cultural values of an indigenous African Society. (187)

Achebe, a novelist with marked objectivity, turns no blind eye to the shortfalls of the traditional Igbo society that rendered it vulnerable to the overwhelming pressure of colonialism. Raymond Williams states: "Okonkwo, is destroyed in a very complicated process of internal contradictions and external invasion." (William 86). Although the role of the internal feud and dissensions among the tribesman, mass illiteracy, superstitions and prejudices, blind adherence to certain customs cannot be denied in the falling apart of the traditional life yet Achebe's perspective is quite clear: the most decisive factor in the process happens to be the colonial intrusion.

The common western prejudice about Africa as an old stereotype is contested in *Things Fall Apart* through the exploration of the unique tradition and values of the African (Nigerian) past. The recreation of the Umuofian civilization is further aimed at revitalizing the post-colonial generation which is now perplexed and in a state of flux. Though the novel dramatizes Africa's initial contact with the West and the subsequent transition, Achebe's real narrative concern is not the confrontation of two radically different cultures but the predicament of the indigenous Igbo culture denigrated by the colonial power.

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A Comparative study of the Assamese and English versions of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Iyaruingham*

Sumi Daadhora

Research Scholar, Deptt.of English,
Assam University, Diphu Campus, Assam.
Email- sumidaadhora7@gmail.com

Translation as a mode of cultural exchange especially in multilingual countries has led to globalization of culture and promotion of inter and intra culture bonding. In the process of translation languages jostle with each other, colouring the creation with varied hues and allow the original texts to grow larger. It is a process of double-writing, re-writing and re-interpretation. The translator is under the pressure of not only to produce a version of the original text but also to understand and interpret the original adequately to convey its message faithfully and keep intact its authenticity.

This paper is a comparative study of the two versions of the novel *Iyaruingham* by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, the original being written in Assamese and translated into English by the author himself. The novel takes us into a terrain of war and “ruthless battlefields of the China-Burma-India Theatre of World War II and its aftermath in Nagaland” where “there’s more to life than vendetta and violence...”¹ The author’s play with language in replacing the textual material of the original text in Assamese by the equivalent textual material of the translated text into English offers a good ground for comparative interpretation. This paper illustrates how Bhattacharya treats

elements of Naga culture and language in Assamese as well as in English in his writing.

The interchange of texts through translation has led to further criticism and appreciation- a significant attempt of binding cultures and binding the nation and helping globalization. Most of the Indian texts are accessible in English which has expressed its variety within the country as well as abroad promoting cultural globalization. It is the demand for sharing of information and exchange of ideas that has given impetus to translation allowing movement from one language to another and from one culture to another. This movement from one language to another involves a process of replacement of textual material in one language by textual material from another language. What matters here is the equivalence and closeness of the translation to the original text. Bhattacharya, being the bilingual author and the source text author in Assamese and the translator in English has faced certain problems usually faced by a good translator. Among the complications faced by a translator the foremost is finding the exact lexical equivalent of the mother tongue in the lexical item in a language like English. This happens due to difference in or absence of context and difference in range of collocation. In *Iyaruingham* though Bhattacharya has certain freedom as the legitimate owner of the textual creation being the translator of his own text, yet is bound by such problems. In the translation, in certain situations, he has referred to no term for kinship or equivalence in English but has just kept them as used in the source language i.e., Assamese or Tangkhul Naga as there might be a failure to convey the real relational network in the target language due to difference or absence of the context. As for instance in Indian languages there are a number of culturally defined “uncles” and “aunts”

whereas in English there exists only one generic “uncle” and “aunt”. The setting of the novel is Ukhrul district in Nagaland in Burma border. Here the inhabitants are from the Tangkhul community and the place is known as the land of the colourful Tangkhuls. The author had gone to Ukhrul to take up the job of a school teacher. The author's experience and influences of the Tangkhul community and its language is distinct in his text. As a result even in the source text the author has treated certain terms in the Tangkhul language to fit into the context or to fulfill the purpose of keeping the reader or the receiver rooted to the culture and context one is going into as he/she reads the text. The author has used words of addressing in Tangkhul such as *Oja* (Teacher, Preacher), *Awo* (Uncle, Father's elder brother or someone older than one's father), *Ava* (mother), *Ame* (Aunt), *Naomayara* (male child), *Naongalava* (girl child); words of position/designation such as *Thilakapo* which means the head of a village who is the most respected person in the village and *Maiba* who is a local doctor treating through superstitious practices. There are names of certain indigenous and traditional things in the Naga culture used in the text, such as *Sopkai* (a case made of bamboo to store food or other things), *Kashai* (a hand made bamboo case with a belt to hang on the head used to carry things like crops, firewood, etc.), *Zu* (rice beer), etc.. Other terms used are *Kazeiram* which means heaven, *Kameo* (God of Evil), *Kathi Kasham* (a feast held with rituals on the tenth day after the death of a person), and *Kairao phi* (a piece of woven cloth worn by men). This lack of formal correspondence between the source and the target language leads to linguistic untranslatability and this happens mainly due to oligosamy i.e., the restricted range of meaning of an item. Cultural untranslatability occurs when a situational feature relevant for

the source language text is absent from the culture of the target language text.²

A study of the texts- the source text and the translation.uncovers another problem of translation, i.e., the difference in syntactic pattern. Here, Eugene O. Nida can be referred whose theory focuses on the receptor and his reaction and considers the pragmatic or the emotive meaning as the most important factor in transferring the message from the source language to the target language. Nida has provided two different methods for translating- the first is the direct method where the source language structure gets transferred to that of the receptor language through a universal linguistic structure. The second method consist of three stages-

- a) **Analysis-** in which the surface structure is analyzed in terms of the grammatical relationships and meanings of words and combination of words.
- b) **Transfer-** in which the analyzed material is transferred in the mind of the translator from source language to receptor language.
- c) **Restructuring-** in which the transferred material is restructured in order to make the final message fully acceptable in the receptor language.

Going through these stages a good translation becomes lengthier than the original because whatever is implicit in the source language text is made explicit with more details in the translation. Comparing both the texts, it is found that the translated version is more refined and polished with further details and definitions to suit the greater universal context of the reader or the receiver. The source text is found to be well-

written in Assamese confined to the Tangkhul Naga and Assamese context whereas the English version is broad as it is written with the intention of placing it before a greater audience beyond the region. As a result there are certain gaps and absences in both the texts. In the translation the author has used extra descriptions and definitions to make the meaning of certain lexical items and situations accessible to the reader in the target language along with structural or semantic distortions in code switching. The author has provided a detailed definition of the Tangkhul word *ngalalongas* “it was the house of the virgins, a community centre where unmarried girls were trained in traditional crafts and initiated into adult social life”.(p.22) This lexical item is mentioned in the original text as “girls’ dormitory” (p.19) as this is a concept absent in Assamese cultural context. Again in the beginning of the chapter two of the translation we find the author referring to a historical incident during the World War II which is absent in the source text. “The first bombing of Imphal by the Japanese Tojo army had taken place on a Sunday, in the summer of 1942.” (p.22) In the same chapter the discussion on war and politics between the central characters Rishang and Sharengla is limited in the source text. The characters are found to be speaking more on the idea of freedom, war, violence and peace in the translated version.

Generally, when a translation is done by another author, there is the fear of trespassing or intruding into the realm of the power and property of the source text author. “The act of translation is often considered unethical in a moralistic ideology, [...] often stigmatized as “penetration” stage of Steiner’s hermeneutics where it is an aggressive act compared to robbery and plundering.”³ In a moralistic ideology, loyalty and faithfulness to the source text and the source text author is the

foremost criteria and moral value in translation evaluation. Here, Bhattacharya himself being the author of the source text and the translation has no question of trespass. The author becomes the legitimate owner of the source text and of his textual creation in translation. But manipulation in translation is justified to serve the best interest and the specific purpose in favour of the receptor. This manipulation takes place through selecting, highlighting and modifying of items from the source text to the target text. At the end of chapter two in the translation, there is a situation where the girls in the dormitory sing praying to Jeshu. But the situation in which the singing takes place varies in both the texts i.e., the source text and the translation. As Rishang, Sharengla and Khatingla sit by the fireside discussing about the war, the Indian National army and politics, and Sharengla turns emotional and cries; it's seen that the night has passed and as morning arrives Rishang wakes up the other girls sleeping in the dormitory to cheer up the gloomy moment. The girls get up and after sometime sings about Jeshu and his love and they called upon all men to love each other. But in the translation there is a slight difference in the situation where Sharengla cries after the singing of the girls and it is her friend Khatingla who sings another song about the hopefully awaited coming season of spring to cheer her up. Thus there are two songs in the translation. Another difference here is the lyrics of the songs. In the source text the lyrics given is of the prayer song whereas in the translation the lyrics given is of the spring song sung by Khatingla. The later song is in Tangkhul written in the target language.

*“O katangkarakamlo
Papaiwonseiharwonwonya
Iyaraoseijikei
Iyasemyasemvaya.” [p.29]*

and as everyone listens her singing Rishang quips in and explains the meaning of the song as, “Everyone of us is waiting for spring, aren’t we?” (p.29) Tangkhul is a dialect which is limited to the Tangkhul community and to write a novel with characters from the tribe, first the author chose to write in his mother tongue Assamese which got published in 1960 and was translated much later and published in 2005. Thus, the author takes full advantage of his legitimacy in his creation of the translation exploiting the raw ingredient i.e., the source text and reproducing the translation with imaginative recreation in the target language. The signified is the same and what differs is the signifiers which are language-bound, period-bound, author-bound and readership-bound. This high degree of freedom is possible in fictional works. Gayatri Spivak has spoken about the self losing its boundaries in the process of translation- “Translation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate.”⁴

Translation is produced on the basis of an original text with the intention of adapting the original to a certain ideology or poetics of a different audience – the process being initiated by the systems of the target language and its contexts turning into a rewriting of the source text to conform to certain demands and purposes of the target language and the readers. J.C. Catford, in his *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* defines translation as the replacement of source language text material by equivalent target language material and since translation deals with relation between languages, he considers translation as a branch of comparative linguistics. Catford has also introduced the phenomena of “total translation” and “restricted translation”. In total translation there is replacement of the phonology and graphology of the source language and in restricted translation there is replacement of the textual material of the source language

by the equivalent material of the target language. Therefore, Catford's theory of translation is the theory of meaning derived from J.R. Firth, who considered meaning as a property of a language i.e., a source language text has a source language meaning and the target language text has a target language meaning, thus making it clear that source language texts are not absolutely translatable or absolutely untranslatable, but they are just more or less translatable.⁵

A translator is urged by historical context and there always lies a social purpose behind every translation. *Iyaruigam* is a novel where the author interweaves fact and fiction as he himself says in his letter to noted writer Indira Goswami as- "Art selects only a part of the reality and makes it harmonious and beautiful."⁶The novel tells us of a land and its people under the impact of World War II and an undercurrent of insurgent movement. The novel opens during mid July of 1944 at the village of Khonoma, a historic model warrior village in Nagaland which is the only Naga village to resist the British intrusion into the Naga hills and their extension of control over Nagaland and adjacent Assam. The painful and complex political issues in Nagaland have led to an insurgency along with its negotiations between the traditional and the modern. It is this historical fact behind the novel that has made it interesting and added value through the translation making it accessible to readers beyond the region at the national and international level introducing the land, its community and its problems being situated at the margins away from the Centre of India. Apart from this, the author himself was a part of the life in the land during his service as a teacher in Ukhrul district which has made it possible for the author to add his own life experiences in the novel. Being a non-tribal, the author has enjoyed the right to

deal with the tribal experiences of Naga culture and society by living amidst them and gained intimate knowledge of their culture, life and land. Eminent writer Indira Goswami remarked,

“...when he went to Ukhrul on Burma borderto take up the job of a school teacher, he had only two pairs of clothes and a great coat of Army surplus, bought cheaply, to protect himself from the intense cold. There is no doubt that in his one and a half years’ stay in Ukhrul, he had gathered enough insight into the working of the Naga mind. This experience resulted in his most famous novel, *Yaruingam*.”⁷

If judged from a political point of view there might occur the problem of insider and outsider which brings in certain limitations in art and its creation seeking certain credentials and background on part of the author. As Edward Said warns,

“A double kind of possessive exclusivism could set in: the sense of being an excluding insider by virtue of experience (only women can write for and about women, and only literature that treats women or Orientals well is good literature) and second being an excluding insider by virtue of method (only Marxists, anti-Orientalists, Feminists can write about economies, Orientalism, Women’s literature).”⁸

But Bhattacharya has never tried to look into his work with political insight but regards it as a piece of art as he wrote in his letter to Indira Goswami as,

“For critics it is easy to label *Iyaruingamas* a political novel, because by dividing the literary works into different

categories, they can analyze and dissect them according to their subject matter. It is difficult to divide life itself into compartments, and politics is just one of the many divisions of life... For writing a novel, we accept only part of a particular time and place, but the reality is like the current of a river. Art selects only a part of the reality and makes it harmonious and beautiful.”⁹

Thus, a work of translation gains double existence- first as a work of literature and then as a work of translation.

Finally, the interpretation on the title remains. The title of the source text is “Iyaruigam” which differs from the title of the translation “Love in the Time of Insurgency”. “Iyaruigam” is a Tangkhul word which means “people’s rule”⁸. But the title of the translation text completely differs from the literal meaning and gives us two different ideas as we look at the titles. First, when we know that “Iyaruigam” means “people’s rule” we have a notion of the novel as giving us a story about governance or politics whereas, when we look into the title of the translation text we have the notion of expecting a novel with a love story which might have taken place amidst the troubled times of conflict of insurgency. The author’s freedom and authoritative treatment is visible as he recreates his own source text into a work of translation making it a work of rewriting as well as recreation. Roland Barthes remarked,

“We know now that a text is not a line of words realizing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the message of the Author God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is the innumerable centre of culture... a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.”¹⁰

The English version of *Iyaruigam* is capable of reaching out to the larger audience outside the region and establishes itself as a better rewritten and recreated piece than the source text in Assamese. Bhattacharya's work is a significant contribution to the world of literature and translation that has a lot of potentialities for further studies. This paper is just a humble attempt of a very small part of the larger area of study. However, there are more issues for interpretation, discussion and criticism which are limited in this paper.

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Representation of the Marginalized in Silko's Ceremony

Alexander Lalrinzama

Research Scholar, Department of English
Mizoram University

Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* was published in 1977 to much critical and popular acclaim. Other works by Silko include *Storyteller* (1981), *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace* (1985) with James Wright; *Almanac of the Dead* (1991); *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (1996), a collection of essays on Native American life; and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999).

Silko bases her works on traditional Native American stories. *Ceremony* features the three most important figures in Pueblo mythology – Thought Woman, Corn Mother, and Sun Father both in their traditional stories and in updated versions. Tayo, the main character in the novel, is also a figure in traditional Laguna stories. *Ceremony*, like all of Silko's works, demonstrates her concern with the preservation of Native American culture and traditions. It may also be viewed as an attempt to tell the story from the perspective of a marginalized group which has never been able to tell its side of the story.

Ceremony reveals certain aspects of Native American culture, traditions and beliefs. At the same time it can also be seen as a platform through which is aired the plight of the Native American people. Through the ages Native American culture has often been misrepresented; usually so, because the

representation has been done by white men, or in any event, by people other than Native Americans themselves. Writing as a Native American from a Native American perspective, Silko stresses some aspects of Native American life and customs which have often been subject to misrepresentation, in the process opening to the reader a vista of Native American life which reveals its beauty and uniqueness.

The first prerequisite in approaching Native American literature is that it should be understood in terms of Native American culture. The problem that arises in this regard is that readers, used to the norms and traditions of Western literature, tend to apply these assumptions in their reading of Native American literature. The result is that such readers often end up labeling this literature as “primitive,” “childlike,” or even “pagan.”

An important point to keep in mind is that Native American beliefs are essentially different from the dominant Judeo-Christian beliefs. While the latter sees God as a supreme, all-powerful being who single-handedly created the universe, the Native American believes in an All-Being who created the universe in co-operation with other creatures. Thus the Native American believes that all living creatures are sacred and interdependent on each other, rather than arranged in a hierarchical pattern with God at the top. The belief in the sanctity and importance of all creatures is constantly stressed in the verses which intersperse the prose narrative of this novel. A majority of the verse narratives deal with the story of how Hummingbird and Fly intervene with Mother in the “fourth world” on behalf of the humans when there is a drought. The reader can therefore understand Josiah’s disapproval of Tayo’s killing of the houseflies, even though Tayo’s teachers at the

Indian school have taught him that houseflies are dangerous and should be killed.

One distinguishing feature of Native American thought, as pointed out by Paula Gunn Allen, is the denial of “the opposition, dualism, and isolation (separateness) that characterize non-Indian thought” (Allen 5). The first of the verse narratives describes how Iktoa’ak’o’ya-Reed Woman, scolded by her sister Corn Woman, went away “to the original place/down below” (Silko 13), taking the rain with her. This verse suggests the interdependence of all things and highlights the Native American refusal to draw dualistic divisions. For a reader familiar with the Western tradition might well be tempted to view this tale within the structural framework of the tale of the industrious ant and the lazy grasshopper. But here, the suggestion is that even Iktoa’ak’o’ya Reed-Woman, who seems to do nothing but laze around in the river, has an important place in the overall scheme of things. She is responsible for making the rain fall and without this, the industriousness of Corn Woman is all for nothing. Thus, instead of drawing an opposition between laziness and industriousness, the verse suggests that both are necessary to maintain a precarious balance – at any rate it refuses to privilege one over the other.

The novel also draws our attention to the traditional explanations that Native Americans have for the various phenomena of nature. While these appear to be irrational and even superstitious to the Western mind, they yet have their validity in a society which is not grounded on the logos of Western philosophy. In fact, we can see how these stories attempt to explain the significance and importance of everything within nature – even the fly has an important role in the overall scheme of things. While such stories may be dismissed as irrational by the modern

man, we can see that they have their validity grounded in science. For modern science is becoming increasingly aware of the fact that there is a delicate balance in nature in which even a seemingly insignificant creature plays a vitally important role in helping to maintain this balance. It would seem that even the early Native Americans, despite their seeming lack of “rationality,” were able to grasp this vitally significant scientific fact.

The verse narratives give us some idea about the Native American ceremony. The constant repetition of some lines in these verses suggests that repetition is an important element of the ceremony. Allen argues that such repetition is not just a childish aid to memory like Margot Astrov seems to suggest (Allen 13). Allen explains:

A stanza may be repeated in its entirety four times – once for each of the directions – or six times – once for each lateral direction with above and below added – or seven times – once for each direction plus the centre “where we stand.” (Allen 12)

Such repetition can be seen in the verse narratives in the novel, like the one where Hummingbird tells the people to repeat chants over a covered jar:

Cover the jar with a
new buckskin
and say this over the jar
and sing this softly
above the jar:
After four days
you will be alive
After four days
you will be alive

After four days
you will be alive
After four days
you will be alive (Silko 71-2)

The title *Ceremony* is rather appropriate. The novel suggests that in a world of the atom bomb, in a world where anything which is not scientifically verifiable is dismissed as “nonsense,” in a world of neon lights and loud jukeboxes, it is the traditional ceremony which has the power to heal the world and restore balance to a world teetering on the brink of destruction.

One thing that is stressed in this novel is the miserable plight of the Native Americans. The miserable plight of the Native American and the injustice done to him is a motif that keeps recurring in the novel. The narrative’s constant movement backward and forward in time suggests that the oppression and injustice against the Indian continues to the present day. If Tayo’s forebears had been the victims of the white man’s treachery, an unscrupulous car dealer in the present day is still able to sell a worthless truck to Leroy. As Helen Jean puts it to Leroy: “Gypped you again” (Silko 157). There is a telling passage which describes what Tayo sees when driving through Gallup:

I saw Navajos in torn old jackets, standing outside the bars. There were Zunis and Hopis there too, even a few Lagunas. All of them slouched down against the dirty walls of the bars along Highway 66, their eyes staring at the ground as if they had forgotten the sun in the sky; or maybe that was the way they dreamed for wine, looking for it somewhere in the mud on the sidewalk. This is us, too, I was thinking to myself. These people crouching outside bars like cold flies stuck to the wall. (Silko 107)

Passages such as this highlight the fact that alongside the America of skyscrapers and dream homes exists an America where the residents live in shanties built from cast-off materials. And yet, despite acknowledging all this, the novel refuses to blame the white man as being the sole cause for the oppression of the Native American. Betonie tells Tayo that “you don’t write off all the white people, just like you don’t trust all the Indians” (Silko 128). What we have again is the articulation of the Native American refusal to see things in terms of dualisms.

“That is the trickery of the witchcraft,” [Betonie] said. “They want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates; and I tell you, we can deal with white people, with their machines and their beliefs. We can because we invented white people; it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place”. (Silko 132)

What Betonie is pointing out here is the danger inherent in dualistic thinking. What Betonie, and by extension, the author, is suggesting is that they should not fight the white man using his weapons, for in doing so they run the risk of themselves becoming like him.

While *Ceremony* highlights the difference between the Native American culture and the Western one, it suggests that the former is in no way inferior, by positing similarities shared between the two traditions. The structural anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss has pointed out that the enormous number of myths from various cultures reduces itself to a rather limited

number of what he called *mythemes*, the fundamental units of myths (Tyson 216). In the light of Levi-Strauss' observation, we can see that the verse which narrates the account of how the Ck'o'yo medicine man called Pa'caya'nyi strikes the rock to produce water, and the Judeo-Christian account of Moses striking a rock wall to provide water for the thirsty Israeli fugitives, are variants of the same my theme.

He struck the middle of the north wall

He took a piece of flint and he struck the middle of the north wall.

Water poured out of the wall and flowed down toward the south. (Silko 47)

Thus the suggestion seems to be that despite their differences, both cultures share some basic features and that neither is necessarily superior to the other.

The novel also highlights the Indian belief about ownership of land. Indians do not believe that people can own the land. Rather, they see people as belonging to the land. Betonie articulates this belief before the ceremony with Tayo.

“Look,” Betonie said, pointing east to Mount Taylor towering dark blue with the last twilight. “They only fool themselves when they think it is theirs. The deeds and papers don't mean anything. It is the people who belong to the mountain.” (Silko 128)

A folk song by Johnny Cash called “The Ballad of Ira Hayes” tells the (true) story of Ira Hayes, an Indian who went off to fight the war and returned after distinguishing himself in the battle for Iowa Jima hill. The song tells us that Ira Hayes returned home a hero; but his bravery and service to his country

were soon forgotten owing to the fact that “he was just a Pima Indian”. We are then told of how Ira started drinking and was given the privilege of raising and lowering the flag “like you’d throw a dog a bone”. It ends by telling us that Ira died drunk and “alone in the land he fought to save” (Cash).

The story of Ira Hayes fittingly sums up the situation of many an Indian war veteran. Once Tayo, Robert and the rest of the Indian war veterans enlist and are in US Army uniform, they find that a world which had been inaccessible to them earlier has now been thrown wide open to them. This is a world where white people accept them as one of their own; a world where white people are seemingly able to look beyond the colour of their skin and see them for who they really are; a world in which white women see them as potential suitors and eligible lovers. When Tayo and Robert are walking down a street in Oakland, a Chrysler stops and an old woman blesses them. However, the fact that their access to this world is limited and that the white man can, and will, withdraw these privileges once he has taken what he needs from the Indian becomes evident after the war. After the war, the Indian war veterans soon find that white people no longer welcome them the way they used to during the war. As Tayo tells the other Indian war veterans:

The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of a sudden that man at the store waits on your last, makes you wait until all the white people bought what they wanted. And the white lady at the bus depot, she’s real careful now not to touch your hand when she counts out your change. You watch it slide across the counter at you, and you know. (Silko 42)

The novel suggests that the war in which so many Indians were killed was not a war which concerned Indians. It subtly

suggests that the Japanese soldiers against which they fought are racially closer to the Indians than the whites, and could potentially have been their allies. After Tayo and the sergeant accidentally drop Rocky, two Japanese soldiers arrive to investigate. The taller of the two soldiers reminds Tayo of a Navajo he had known in school. “The tall one looked like a Navajo guy from Fort Defiance that Tayo had known at Indian School. They looked tired too, those Japanese soldiers. Like they wanted this march to be over too. That tall one, he even shook his head like Willie Begay did ...” (Silko 43). Despite the fact that they went off to fight the Japanese, the novel suggests that the Japanese may not be the Indians’ real enemies. After being discharged from the Army hospital, Tayo is at the train depot in Los Angeles waiting to catch a train home. He suddenly passes out and it is some Japanese women who come to his rescue, not white people. The novel, like the ballad about Ira Hayes, can thus be seen as a condemnation of the manner in which the Indian soldiers were manipulated by the white man to fight his war.

Allen claims that Native American literature “does not rely on conflict, crisis, and resolution for organization ... Rather, its significance is determined by its relation to creative empowerment, its reflection of tribal understandings, and its relation to the unitary nature of reality” (Allen 7). We have seen how Silko’s novel makes Native American traditions, customs and beliefs accessible to the reader. At the basic structural level, the plot of this novel uses the structure of the quest narrative. The protagonist, in this case, Tayo, is on a quest to bring back the rains and also to recover his uncle Josiah’s lost cattle. In this respect, the novel is quite similar to the mass of other “traditional” narratives which share a similar narrative structure. However, it establishes its difference through its conclusion. For it does

not end with the hero emerging victorious after doing battle with the forces of evil. The possibility of such a conclusion is available to Tayo who sees a perfect opportunity to stab the screwdriver into Emo's skull. But he refrains from doing so, and it is through this unconventional conclusion that Silko establishes the difference of her narrative from the mass of Western literature. Had Tayo stepped in to kill Emo then, he would have fitted the stereotype of the crazed Indian war veteran who goes on a killing spree because he cannot deal with the psychological effects of modern warfare. The novel then would have been just another story about the negative effects of modern warfare. Just like the narrative he figures in, Tayo must work out an alternative resolution which fights the effects of stereotyping because, as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, stereotyping is a "major discursive strategy" utilized by the oppressor (Bhabha 94). This is what Tayo, and his creator, must fight against, and if this means that Tayo's friend must die at the hands of Emo, then it is a sacrifice that he is willing to accept in the greater interests of the tribe. By resisting easy classification, both Tayo and the narrative assert their uniqueness.

The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull the way the witchery had wanted, savoring the yielding bone and membrane as the steel ruptured the brain. Their deadly ritual for the autumn solstice would have been completed by him. He would have been another victim, a drunk Indian war veteran settling an old feud; and the Army doctors would say that the indications of this end had been there all along, since his release from the mental ward at the Veterans' Hospital in Los Angeles. The white people would shake their heads, more proud

than sad that it took a white man to survive in their world and that these Indians couldn't seem to make it. At home the people would blame liquor, the Army, and the war, but the blame on the whites would never match the vehemence the people would keep in their own bellies, reserving the greatest bitterness and blame for themselves, for one of themselves they could not save. (Silko 253)

The novel also suggests that the Native American people have unknowingly acquiesced in a process which Ashis Nandy refers to as the "identification with the aggressor" (Nandy 7). The victim tends to internalize and accept the victimizer's discourse about him. When Tayo sees his uncle Josiah's cattle inside the fenced-in property of the white man, Floyd Lee,

he had a crazy desire to believe that there had been some mistake, that Floyd Lee had gotten them innocently, maybe buying them from the real thieves. Why did he hesitate to accuse a white man of stealing but not a Mexican or an Indian? . . . He knew then that he had learned the lie by heart – the lie which they had wanted him to learn: only brown-skinned people were thieves; white people didn't steal, because they always had the money to buy whatever they wanted. (Silko 191)

Silko's use of post-modernist writing techniques is rather appropriate since some of the techniques of the post modernist style lend themselves rather well to a story about a war veteran who has suffered, and still occasionally suffers, the effects of shell shock.

For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realise that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. It faded into the white world of their bed sheets and walls; it was sucked away by the

words of doctors who tried to talk to the invisible scattered smoke. He had seen outlines of gray steel tables, outlines of the food they pushed into his mouth, which was only an outline too, like all the outlines he saw. They saw his outline too but they did not realize it was hollow inside. . . . He inhabited a gray winter fog on a distant elk mountain where hunters are lost indefinitely and their own bones mark the boundaries. (Silko 14-5)

Silko also disrupts the linear narrative structure in *Ceremony*. The narrative constantly shifts from the present to the past and back again. For instance, the novel opens with a description of Tayo who is unable to sleep because the memories of the war in the Pacific keep intruding on his consciousness. It then describes how Japanese prisoners were shot by their American captors before it moves back to the present again with Tayo getting out of bed. This disruption of the linear time sequence reflects the Native American's concept of time as cyclical rather than sequential. The belief in the cyclical aspect of time is best articulated by Tayo's grandmother towards the close of the novel.

Old Grandma shook her head slowly, and closed her cloudy eyes again. "I guess I must be getting old," she said, "because these goings-on around Laguna don't get me excited anymore." She sighed, and laid her head back on the chair. "It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different." (Silko 260)

Silko's choice of using post modernist techniques to tell the story of Tayo is significant. It can be seen as a demonstration of the adaptability of the traditional literary form. At one level, her choice of using post modernist techniques, while integrating traditional forms within it, can be seen as a literary attempt to

refute Frederick Turner III's assertion, in his introduction to Geronimo's autobiography, that American Indian cultures are static (Allen 5). That they are not static is shown by Allen, and Silko too demonstrates that the literature, which is inextricably bound up with culture, is alive and dynamic.

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Ways of Seeing: Politics of the Gaze in Chetan Raj Shrestha's *The King's Harvest*

Abrona Lee Pandi Aden

Assistant Professor, Department of English
Sikkim University

Chetan Raj Shrestha's *The King's Harvest* brings together two novellas *An Open and Shut Case* and *The King's Harvest*, both set in Sikkim. *An Open and Shut Case* tells the story of ordinary people caught up in an extraordinary murder committed by Kamala who hacks her wayward husband into forty seven pieces. Dechen OC, the Officer-in-Charge of the Nayabazaar police station is the Investigating Officer in the murder case. As she grapples with the sordid details of the murder case, she finds herself going back in time to her own helpless mother who had simply surrendered herself to piety after two failed marriages. *The King's Harvest* tells the story of Tontem, a loyal subject to his King, who makes his way to the capital in Gangtok to present the king with his share of the harvest. It is a poignant story of a subject's undying love for and loyalty to a King who is caught up in the changing tides of his time.

This paper will focus on the first of the two novellas, *An Open- and- Shut Case*, the story of Kamala, who hacks her lecherous husband Puran, on New Year's Eve. The story begins with a taxi ride shared by the constable Puran, the OC Dechen, Straun, a tourist who has come to visit Sikkim and some others. Straun becomes witness to all that goes on in the novella. The gaze in literary studies is crucial in defining and also re-defining

the way we see things. This paper will focus on the politics of the gaze in the novella. It will engage critically with the gaze of the White man, Straun, and that of the men on the women, and how it alters the subjects of their gaze and how those subjects return their gaze.

The epigraph for the novella is from the short story “Lispeth” in Kipling’s *Plain Tales From The Hills*. This epigraph Shresta uses at the beginning of the novella is suggestive of the male gaze that longs to look upon a lovely hill girl:

“When a Hill-girl grows lovely, she is worth travelling fifty miles over bad ground to look upon.”

Kipling’s “Lispeth” is set in Kotgarh in Shimla and is a story about a *pahari* or hill girl whose parents become Christian after their crops fail. When Elizabeth (Lispeth in the *pahari* pronunciation) loses both her parents to cholera, she stays with the Chaplain of Kotgarh as half- servant and half-companion to the Chaplain’s wife. She grows exceedingly beautiful and according to the narrator, Christianity seems to suit her well.

Lispeth invites the hatred of her people because she walked and talked like the white people and had ‘become a memsahib’ (1). Things go wrong for Lispeth when she brings home a wounded Englishman and says she intends to marry him after they nurse him back to health. She does not understand that the Englishman who is made of ‘superior clay’ (3) has no intention of marrying a Hill-girl and he also claims he has a fiancé back home. Both the Chaplain’s wife and this gentleman decide to lie to Lispeth saying he would come back for her. Lispeth is unable to accept the deception; so she dons the garb of her people and looking ‘infamously dirty’ (3) announces that she is going back to her people because the English were liars.

She took to her own unclean people savagely, as if to make up the arrears of the life she had stepped out of; and, in a little time, she married a wood cutter who beat her after the manner of paharis, and her beauty faded soon.

“There is no law whereby you can account for the vagaries of the heathen,” said the Chaplain’s wife,” and I believe that Lispeth was always at heart an infidel.” (3)

In the story “Lispeth” examples of the gaze of the White people on the natives, the coloniser on the colonised, also abound. Edward Said’s account in *Orientalism* of how the idea of the Orient was created and sustained by the West is also true in the context of “Lispeth”. He says that the Orient is one of the West’s ‘deepest and most recurring images of the Other’ (1). Said also contends that European culture ‘gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self’ (3) and by producing a kind of knowledge of the Orient as the absolute knowledge which even the Orient had to subscribe to. Jean Paul Sartre’s engagement with the gaze in his preface to an anthology of African texts puts forward the return of the gaze by the colonised:

I want you to feel, as I, the sensation of being seen. For the white man has enjoyed for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen. It was a seeing pure and uncomplicated; the light of his eyes drew all things from their primeval darkness. ... Today these black men have fixed their gaze upon us and our gaze is thrown back into our eyes. ... By this steady and corrosive gaze, we are picked to the bone. (Sartre: 7-11)

In her book *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, E. Ann Kaplan contends that the male gaze and the imperial gaze within western patriarchal cultures could not be separated. She uses the word gaze to mean a ‘one-way subjective vision’ (xvi) and says that the gaze, for her, connotes an ‘active subject versus a passive object’ (xviii).

The natives in “Lispeth” are looked upon as savages and described as ‘heathens’ and ‘infidels’, the savage ‘Other’. By returning to her people, Lispeth doesn’t fare any better (or perhaps, she is not allowed to fare better by the narrator) because she marries a woodcutter who beats her up frequently and her beauty gradually fades away. However, the fact that she returns to her own people and defies the Chaplain’s wife and the ‘Kotgarh Mission’ is an act of reclaiming herself and her identity.

Frantz Fanon gives an effective account of how the subjectivity of the Black man is affected and over shadowed by that of the White man in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He says that the Black man simply wants to be white and wants ‘to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect’ (3). Fanon returns the white man’s gaze as he declares: “Get used to me, I am not getting used to anyone.” (100). Lispeth, too seems to be defiantly telling the Kotgarh Chaplain and his wife to get used to her *pahari* ways.

The tourist Straun is captivated by the Nepali folk song *Resham Firiri*¹ he picks up from a shop in Kathmandu from a vast range of diverse choices including Eminem, AC/DC, and Nepali music with Spanish, pop and heavy metal influence! *Resham Firiri* appeals to his musical sensibilities and he asks the driver of the shared taxi to play it as he travels to Pelling in Sikkim. Straun’s fascination with the song amuses all his co-

passengers who make absurd attempts at translating the song into English for his convenience. The whole process of translation becomes a massive farce when the essence and significance of *Resham Firiri* is totally and most unfortunately lost in translation. The White man's gaze is potent and disarming at the same time. As he gazes upon the non-White Other, he not only does so with unquestioned superiority but also effects a sea change in the way the objects of his gaze see themselves. They readily surrender to his gaze and also try to be gaze-worthy in more ways than one. This psychological phenomenon is at play right from the beginning of the novella when Straun boards the taxi to Pelling. All his co-passengers are conscious of his presence in the taxi and respond promptly and with interest to all his queries.

When Straun asks the taxi driver to play *Resham Firiri* for him, the taxi driver breaks the protocol of public travel and causes a ripple of disappointment when he entertains Straun's request. Normally, the taxi driver alone holds monopoly over the songs that play in his taxi and asking him to play a song of the passenger's choice would be considered a rude imposition. By allowing Straun to have his way with the music, the taxi driver concedes part of his authority as the man behind the wheels who holds the lives of all the passengers, quite literally, in his hands. When Straun asks Dechen OC to translate *Resham Firiri* for him, she asks the plump young man to do it as he looked like a graduate and hence the perfect candidate for the task. The young man is, of course, thrilled to bits and immediately asks the driver to play the song again to which the driver complies without any hesitation. The young man translates *Resham Firiri* flatly as 'Silky fluttering' (7). The verses are also translated word for word, in a desperate attempt to make the song more legible

for Straun. “*Kukhuralai kuti ma kuti, Biralola suri/ Timro hamro maya preeti, do bato ma kuri*” (7), which is an exhortation of the lover asking his love to put aside mundane activities like engaging with the chickens or the cat and to prepare to meet at the place where two roads meet. This is crassly translated as: “Tickle the chicken and give the cat chicken shit. Your love and my love came up in mid-way” (7). This totally strips the beautiful song of its charm and lyricism and is intolerably insulting. The translation gets even worse :

*Sanu ma sanu, gaai ko bachho, bheeriyama Ram Ram
Chodera jana sakina maile, baru maya sanghai jau.*

This was broadcast as, ‘ Small, small calf on the edge of hill, Jesus Christ. I cannot leave you, let us go together.’ The party-politics man enquired if Ram could be fairly interpreted as Jesus Christ. The youth defended the necessity of a closer cultural reference to ease the foreigner’s bewilderment. (7)

This translation of deities is absolutely absurd and it testifies to the fact that the gullible locals are willing to go to any length to make Straun feel comfortable with their song. The desperation to find cultural parallels in songs and deities, among other things, is amusing but sadly true of the locals.

Straun’s presence in the taxi and in Sikkim as the storyline unfolds is very significant because he becomes an observer of sorts. Straun is a tourist who comes to visit, albeit in the wrong time, who gets to see these people going about their lives. Towards the end of the novella when Straun asks the Housie-man in Geyzing to play the song *Resham Firiri* for him, Dechen OC does not allow him to play the song. When the annoyed Straun asks Dechen OC whether she liked

to use her power that way, she unabashedly replies in the affirmative. When Straun asks her whether he was to report to the police station as a witness to Puran's murder, Dechen OC again replies in the affirmative, befooling him. Straun somehow begins to sense a romantic encounter with Dechen OC, when, to his disappointment, she asks him to get out of her police jeep:

He was disappointed but not surprised. 'Savages,' he said to himself. He watched the jeep turn the bend, kicked a pebble and began the walk back to Geyzing, at least half an hour away. (91)

Straun's estimation of the locals as 'savages' speaks volumes about his attitude of superiority, but Dechen OC gets it across to him that she simply doesn't care. John Berger in his book *Ways of Seeing*, writes thus of the male gaze:

Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relations of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (47)

Berger's book on the ways of seeing and the influencing factors like class-based power and gender inequality suggests that the gaze is not simply an innocent visual exercise. Berger suggests that women start to look at themselves with men's eyes, assuming that the male estimation of them is superior to their estimation of themselves. There is an unequal power relationship between men and women. The male gaze divorces the woman from her own self, because she internalizes the male gaze. The woman turns herself into an

object because the male gaze is so powerful that it displaces her own gaze with that of the man. However, in Kamala and Dechen OC we see two women who refuse to be passive objects, despite being subjected to the male gaze. Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" discusses the various ways in which women are subjected to the male gaze and used for visual pleasure in cinematic representations:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (4)

Mulvey refers to Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) where he 'associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze' (3) and suggests how scopophilia is typical of cinema. This kind of scopophilia is also typical of the Daman OC rape case. The OC rapes a mother of two in the police station and makes her son engage in sexual activities with his sister and mother while he watches. The OC derives a voyeuristic pleasure from looking at his victims. This is an instance of the male gaze gone to extremes. Birey Constable later recounts the sordid incident to Dechen OC saying Puran had been in the Nayabazaar police station and instigated Daman OC by remarking how nice it would have been to violate the mother and daughter together. He says that half an hour after Puran had left, Daman OC had turned into a demon.

The 'active/male' and 'passive/female' binary Mulvey talks about is significant because the male gaze, just like Berger suggests, does create these binaries. These binaries do operate in *An Open and Shut Case* too. Kamala, like Lispeth, is described as a beautiful woman. Her father tells Dechen OC that people would come from all around to their village, Yuksom, just to look at her and that even tourists would take photographs with her. It is interesting how Kamala's father associates his daughter's beauty with the appreciative looks she gets from all her admirers. The fact that people came to look at her and that tourists took pictures with her seem to be an index of Kamala's beauty, as if beauty needed an audience to establish itself as beautiful, as if her beauty was insignificant in itself. The gaze that Kamala is subjected to, therefore, seems to be important in confirming that she is indeed worthy of the gaze and she is beautiful, thus connoting the 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. In the process, she simply becomes an object of visual pleasure.

Dechen OC is also subjected to the male gaze, that of Puran constable, her subordinate and the taxi driver Lakpa:

He saluted. She nodded and walked away from the jeep, her blue jacket puffy around her upper half and her dark jeans tight around her legs, down to her heeled boots. Puran watched her behind. He found Lakpa driver doing the same and asked him, 'Would you do it with her if you got the chance?'

Lakpa Driver played it safe. 'Would you?'

Puran said, 'Of course! Face not so great, but body, what a body she has.' (12)

The male gaze does not care for hierarchies or class structures. It penetrates through layers of class and hierarchical structures and is, in a way, unstoppable. Puran and Lakpa Driver's gaze is tinged with desire that is even more potent because it is a desire that cannot be expressed. Women, even if they are superior to men in terms of professional or other attributes, are not excused from the male gaze. The gaze can of course be a positive one of aesthetic or general appreciation, but the one that Dechen OC is subjected to is definitely not one of that variety.

Michel Foucault's ideas on the Panopticon in his *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* as an instance of an all-seeing stance effectively discusses the power of the gaze. Borrowing Jeremy Bentham's term 'Panopticon', one Bentham used to describe a prison where all the prisoners would be kept in individual cells encircling a tower at the centre which would have visual access to all these cells, Foucault states how the Panopticon would be an effective tool in discipline and punishment because the prisoners would know that they were under continuous surveillance. The knowledge that they are being watched, makes the disciplinary measure even more effective because they internalize the surveillance system making it part of themselves and there is no escape from the system simply because there is no escape from the self:

Bentham's Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside,

corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. (200)

Continuous surveillance and consciousness of being surveyed thus becomes a tool that imparts power to the surveillance system, the purpose of which is:

to induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (201)

The idea of the Panopticon can be extended to Dechen OC's police station as a place that is set up to watch over the areas under its surveillance and maintain law and order. Though the police station does not share the ring-like structure of Bentham's prison, it is a kind of surveillance system that is supposed to be all-seeing when it comes to matters of keeping

peace and dealing with law-breakers. Dechen is the officer-in-Charge of the police station and that makes her superior to all the rest in that she is at the centre of the all-seeing set up she is in charge of. Despite being in charge, Dechen OC also falls prey to Puran constable and Lakpa Driver's gaze. There is simply no insulation like power positions or professional hierarchies that the male gaze cannot penetrate.

Kamala's horrendous act of hacking her wayward husband into forty seven pieces is much more than an act of self -defense. It is pure, unadulterated hate. It is her way of punishing him for neglecting his family obligations, his daughters, and her. Dechen OC seems to grudgingly admire Kamala for her murder of Puran, as she remembers her own helpless mother who had taken on the garb of piety after two failed marriages:

Jayanti coaxed Dechen OC to recount the case of the constable's murder so far. At the end, she said, 'If only our mother had been so brave.'

'Hate,' Dechen OC said, 'she didn't hate them. Hate gets things done. (71)

Dechen OC had searched for traces of her mother in Kamala and as she compared the two she found how different both of their approaches towards the men who mistreated them had been:

Kamala had equipped her rage with limbs and weapons, Dechen and Jayanti's mother had accepted her fate and withered. One had murdered and the other had surrendered. Kamala had exhausted her hate in two acts; their mother had disguised her hate as piety and rationed it out over thirty years. (72)

When she finds that Kamala has beaten her own womb (the second of the 'two acts' of hate) to kill Puran's three month old baby inside, yet another murder, she helps Kamala clean up and conceals the fact that she had actually killed Puran's baby before delivering it. Her mind races back to her own childhood when her mother had fainted in the bathroom, an evening after her second husband's departure, and bled out what could have been Dechen OC's little brother or sister. She cannot accept the fact that her younger sister had eloped and fears for her. Dechen OC herself is a fearless and vocal woman who doesn't quite understand why women were expected to always be prim and proper:

She looked around her house. The cement floor reflected its cold to the room messy with half-drunk cups of tea, jackets and magazines. Why are only women supposed to know how to keep a place clean, she thought, and kicked an upturned kettle beside her bed. (40)

As she investigates Puran's murder, she begins to realize that it isn't as simple as it appears. She then has to embark upon a complex trajectory of interrogation and fact-finding in order to understand what really urged Kamala to murder her husband and then turn herself in, voluntarily, at the police station.

Kamala is a 'battered woman'² mistreated and even raped by her husband Puran. Puran avoids getting transferred nearer home and neglects his family. When Kamala finds out about his affair, Puran simply tells her the girl was only a 'small thing' (19) and then beats Kamala, as if she were the guilty party:

They had fought when she found out about the girl in Gangtok. He had gripped her. He had gripped her thin wrists with his left hand and whipped her legs with a belt,

as he did servants accused of stealing at the thana. He had beaten her when he came to give his statement in the Daman OC case and she asked him thrice over dinner about his transfer. She had spat in his face and accused him of being involved in the incident and raping the mother and daughter. He had shown her then what rape actually meant. (18)

The murder itself is very shocking, gory and macabre. When Puran comes home to report for duty at the Nayabazaar police station Kamala and Puran get into a discussion about his attempts to get transferred nearer home to Nayabazaar which never seem to materialise. He brings a cake to celebrate New Year's eve and tells Kamala it is time to celebrate. She only replies saying only Puran knew of such occasions and that she had lost all her memories. Her marriage to Puran had been so traumatic that she had even lost her memories. Puran had been deflecting their arguments into beatings often. He felt that flogging his wife was justified because she 'insisted on being flogged' (14) by arguing and fighting with him. When Kamala tells him about their family's inconveniences, Puran simply tells Kamala that she should be grateful for he worked hard to provide clothes and food for her. A heated discussion follows but a civil discussion is not what Puran is going to have with his simple minded country wife. He simply starts beating her, a routine act which Kamala is well accustomed to. Kamala picks up her own weapon, a *bamphok*³, to strike back as Puran picks up a *khukuri*⁴ and strikes her husband down. Even after striking him down, Kamala doesn't stop. She keeps on hacking at the dead body, channeling her hate and hurt into every swing:

She knelt over her husband and hacked at him with the bamphok. His body twitched with each cut. He emitted a

soft groan and moved briefly, like a sleeping man resisting a summons, and the twitching ceased. She continued to hack at him when he was beyond pain and had gone still. Then she sat on the ground with her knees bunched up and, resting her head on them, she slept. (21)

Gruesome as it is, this act of hacking her husband had perhaps helped Kamala to release all the pain and turmoil inside her. Perhaps the hours of sleep she gets after the act was the best sleep she had got in a long time. When her elder daughter Thooli wakes her up, she prepares to go to the police station and as she leaves the compound, Kamala feels her hunger return. She goes into the kitchen, walking past her husband's mangled corpse and eats the cold food, forcing her children to do the same. Sleep and hunger, both natural urges she had perhaps resisted before, come to her and she obliges these needs of her body before she gives herself over to the police. It is interesting how Kamala kills her husband on New Year's Eve and ushers in a new phase in her life, one without an insulting husband. Of course she goes to jail after the murder, but perhaps it was better to be imprisoned within real bars than within a marriage that was full of deception and lies.

The investigation of the murder takes quite some time as Dechen OC grapples with the details, which get more and more intriguing. She finds that Kamala had been married earlier and her former husband had run away because their fights got out of hand when Kamala had attacked him with a pincer. Kamala's father says the fault was in his daughter, while her mother simply calls the former husband a coward. Kamala's father tells Dechen OC that Kamala had always been 'hot-headed' and that he had always known that she could never have made a good wife. This is not news. Women who fight back when provoked do

not make for good wives because good wives simply do not fight back.

Clifton P. Flynn's article "Relationship Violence by Women: Issues and Implications" deals with the analysis of violence of women on their intimate partners, and tries to map understand the motives behind this kind of violence. Flynn agrees that acts of violence by women are either a case of self-defense or a reaction to the violence of men. Kamala's violence is an act of self-defense, a reaction to Puran's violence and also an act of protest. It is an act of liberation from her being a battered wife and an assertion of her identity as a free woman.

Doma, Puran's mistress in Gangtok is also not exempted from Puran's beatings despite being a smart youthful go-getter whose only regret at Puran's death is his inability to carry out his promise of providing her with a mobile phone. She seems to blame herself for getting beaten:

'How was he?' Dechen OC asked.

'Very kind.'

'Did he hit you?'

'Yes. But the fault was mostly mine. I'm quite immature.' (70)

Doma's position as a mistress is no better than Kamala's as a wife. Both are victims of Puran's gaze and of gender based violence⁵. In fact, Kamala seems much surer of herself than the young Doma who dreams of becoming rich the left hand way. Puran Constable is a man who wants to wed one woman and bed another, without caring for the consequences. He uses and mistreats both Kamala and Doma, instigates Daman OC to rape a mother of two, and disregards Dechen OC's authority. Kamala's murder of her husband seems somewhat justified given his lechery and crassness.

Conclusion

Both Dechen OC and Kamala are active agents in returning the male gaze. Dechen OC is better than all her male colleagues in doing her job. She is one step ahead of all of her colleagues with her razor sharp instincts and her ability to see through all the people she interrogates. Kamala takes the law in her hands in a bid to do herself some justice. This is, of course, not the most preferable of options but it is the only one left for Kamala. Puran is a constable and that doesn't make his wife's situation any better because Kamala cannot go to the police with her woes as Puran himself is a part of the police force. What does a woman do then? When her husband, the law-keeper flouts all the laws himself? Thankfully for Kamala, there is one woman in the police force who understands her plight and works tirelessly to protect her. Both these women return the male gaze and seem to say:

“You can look at us all you want, and we will look right back at you.”

NOTES

- ¹ A popular Nepali folk song which talks about love. The refrain, *Resham Firiri*, which is both lyrical and catchy suggests silk fluttering freely in the wind.
- ² The 'battered women's' movement of the 1970s grew out of the second-wave feminist movement. The UN's Decade for Women (1975-85) played a significant part in giving the movement an international platform by organizing conferences that dealt with violence against women.
- ³ Bamphok: a tool used to cut wood, meat and other items.
- ⁴ Khukuri: a Nepalese knife used basically in combat and as a tool for cutting items like meat, wood, etc.

- ⁵ Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) describes violence against women as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life’.

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The Legend of Pawngvina

Lalrindiki T.Fanai

Associate Professor, Deptt.of English
Mizoram University

Introduction:

Pawngvina is a Mizo legendary character who epitomises extreme hot-temperament. His name to this day is used to denote any exhibition of uncontrollable tantrums and hot-temper caused by slight irritation. This aspect of his personality has become a legend among the Mizo to denote uncontrollable anger accompanied with abuses and also violence. To this day, the name Pawngvina is used to refer to people who are hot – tempered. Pawngvina for a male because “a” is a masculine marker and Pawngvini where “i” is a female marker.

Pawngvina

Pawngvina belonged to the Renthlei clan of the Mizo tribe. His real name was Pawngliana. He was nicknamed Pawngvina¹ because of his extreme uncontrollable temper. He was brought up from a disadvantaged family background. He had one brother and two sisters. He was born at Khuangleng, a

¹ The first syllable of the name ‘Pawng’ could have been taken from his real name. It is also assumed that it could have been taken from the word ‘pawng’ meaning ‘with no rhyme or reason’. The word ‘vin’ means ‘to shout/scream in an abusive manner’

village under the chieftainship of Lianpuia popularly known as Palian Lal. He and his family migrated from one village to another till they settled in a village called North Sabual.

In spite of his temper, Pawngvina was counted among the Mizo 'pasaltha'² because of his prowess and 'tlawmngaihna'³. There are numerous stories about Pawngvina's temper told by people, some of which are highlighted below.

In the past Mizo men used to grow their hair long and would tie it in a bun on the nape. It is said that Pawngvina never had the patience to tie his own hair in a bun and would always be helped by his sisters. Once he came home from a jhum⁴, a bitch hovered around him as a show of affection. Even such a gesture was intolerable and was enough to make him flare up with anger. Gnashing his teeth, he immediately took a dao⁵ and cut off the head of the bitch. "Hei ha, hui ha!" is a sound uttered by Mizo when they are exhausted in order to ease the tiredness. But Pawngvina at such times would say "De de dei dei dei!"⁶ in quick succession. It is said people were often scared to walk home with him from the jhum.

Pet animals are often victims of his temper. Mizo men in the past used to carry fire-wood in a bundle over their shoulder

² 'pasaltha' is a title given to men who are famous for their bravery/ courage etc.

³ 'tlawmngaihna' there is no English equivalent for this word. The quality of 'tlawmngaihna' is shown through various forms of bravery/ courage/ the willingness to sacrifice one's life / to help others/ even to the extent of the willingness to be defeated for the benefit of others. etc

⁴ jhum' is a farm used for cultivation of rice

⁵ 'dao' is a big knife

⁶ This is words of abuse or retort that one often uses in times of quarrel at the height of anger, when words fail to express the anger

and would drop the bundle in the court-yard of the house .If dogs or chickens were around,they would first shoo them to avoid hurting them. Pawngvina would never do it. He would just drop his bundle sometimes leaving a dog limping away with pain. When the harvest is over, every household would put the rice before husking it in the court-yard to dry. This attracted chickens and they would be shooed off frequently by saying “Sik. sik, sik !” Pawngvina never had the patience to perform such practice. What he would do was to catch them and wringed their necks.

There were instances of his ‘tlawmngaihna’ blended with his temper that were often viewed as a quality of his courage or bravery in the different villages he migrated to. Once ,in the valley of Saikhua on the banks of the Tiau river, a “tumpang”⁷ was sighted and the villagers wounded it. A wounded animal was (is) considered ferocious. No one dared to go near it. Pawngvina was asked by the villagers to find the wounded animal and kill it. At such times, what Pawngvina would do was to work himself up into anger and muster up his courage. He was able to kill the animal through this strategy.

His short,blinding-temper was as mentioned above was often the source of his courage. This was exhibited when he was living in a village called Dungtlang. A tiger killed one of the villagers named Lianruma. The tiger would not let go off the body and sat on it. Many attempts were made by the villagers to somehow make the tiger move away from the body but failed.. This broke Pawngvina’s patience. In anger he started ranting,cursing,yelling and finally the very volume of the sound of his anger frightened the tiger and it ran away.

⁷ A species of wild gayal or mithan

It was said that his sisters were very concerned that he might not be able to get a suitable match because of his temper. They often chided him to learn how to control his temper. He did try often but it never lasted even a day. It was in the year when they had a jhum nearby⁸; Pawngvina was sowing beans and people passing by asked him what he was sowing, he responded normally in the beginning and said “Be chi⁹”. But when the same question was asked more than once by others who were also passing by his jhum, he could no longer control his temper and said, “Be chi, be chi, bechi!!” with great irritation.

When Pawngvina finally got married, he surprised everyone by his behaviour, with his wife he was as tame as a sheep. Though nothing had changed as far as his temper was concerned, as a married man he was considered a “henpecked”.

1. **Sources** : Unpublished manuscript : Department of Art and Culture , Mizoram Government.

⁸ It is a tradition to allocate land for each family in the village for rice cultivation by either the chief or people in-charge of village administration through lot system

⁹ ‘Be chi’ means seeds of beans

A Frog's Frock

-A short story by *Vanneihluanga*, translated from the Mizo
by

Margaret L. Pachuau.

Professor, Deptt. of English, Mizoram University
Email:maggielpachuau@gmail.com Cell:09436141232

I am quite the boss, but since I am not the kind to sing praises of myself, I will tell you about my friends. And by then, if you are not a fool you will be able to decipher exactly where I stand in life. On my left, sat a man who was a media person cum industrialist and he was probably as profound as the Rihdil¹. On my right, there sat a man who was quite punctilious and absolutely eloquent to the hilt. He was well versed in the nuances of prose and verse and as for the word sluggish, why! It never existed in his dictionary. So you see, exalted men such as these sat by side. Let me tell you that sitting in the centre is actually a kind of prestige. A lamb on the right and a goat on the left, and lo and behold, the one in the centre will remain the undisputed men on either side of the cross were remembered only because of the one man in the centre. In my case, the ones by my side were neither lamb nor goat. Nor were they criminals who deserved to be hung. As I have indicated before, they were illustrious people, who had been able to stand on their own feet for over the past forty years. They were the kind of men who were consulted by people, on matters related to the home, the

¹ The name of a lake, to the east of Mizoram, said to be passed by departed spirits on the way to the abode of the dead.

hearth and the state. So the fact that I was ensconced between the both of them like their beloved youngest child, was for me a matter to remember always and I was proud of that. Mind you, I was not merely sitting in the warmth of the living room couch, rather I was actually on my way to Guwahati, riding inside a vehicle of great speed, popularly known as a ‘Gypsy’.

The friend on my right held on to the handle of the vehicle tightly, even as he drove and it was evident that he had my safety in mind. The friend on my left, was equally poised and on guard to defend me from wild animals. You see, he sat as though he were my “bodyguard”. In fact when I first embarked upon the vehicle they both cautioned, “Lest you be the one to meet danger head on.”

And so, obviously they did not permit me to sit up front. But after a while when things were seemingly more stable, they made me sit up front, flanked by the both of them. Although the prospect of sitting with the gear box between your feet seemed uncomfortable, they assured me, “Kings and gentlemen do not sit with their legs crossed while traveling, and in fact, sitting in the manner that you do now is a sign of greatness.”

And so I sat likewise in a most contented manner.

None of us spoke much during the journey. Yet we conversed about the ginger export rates in Mumbai, how it was not wise to make a crown out of ‘hnahtial’², the magnitude of the Subash project, and the fact that there was no inter connecting strand between AIDS and soyabean. We delved into the aspects of total prohibition, the efficiency of the CBI, the invincibility of the Rajput carriages, the magnificence of

² The name of a plant and also its leaves.

Bill Gates and the Microsoft company and eventually in that manner we arrived at Guwahati.

I must confess that we were not there for any particular reason. In fact, the three of us had decided to get away because we were fed up of being under the thumb of our wives, so we decided to go ‘camping’ without them. So thoroughly did we enjoy ourselves that we did not even feel the heat of the summer. We passed the zoo, went across to the press and visited the offices of the *Sentinel* and *North East Times*. Why... we even met with the editors and shook hands with them. We purchased tobacco as well. There was one thing though... we were not avid shoppers and so we were uncomfortable with the ordeal of shopping. At length we trudged through the market and the rickshaw wallah zoomed us right across town and very soon he deposited us amidst a throng of people. We gawked around for a very long time when suddenly the friend on my right spotted a sign in the distance that read: “BUY 2 SHIRTS GET 1 FREE!”

All three of us scrambled into the shop in search of the great bargain offer. Both friends to my right and left purchased two shirts of a matching colour, and that great buy actually got me two free shirts. We stepped out into the light and perhaps because there were no other shops that could quite meet our expectations we ended up stepping inside once more into the “BUY 2 SHIRTS” store. My friends repeated their purchase of buying two shirts of an identical colour and once again I ended up with two new shirts on the house. We went back to the hotel and freshened up and wore our new shirts of a similar colour and we meandered about the streets of Guwahati. Again, we stepped inside the store where we had purchased these very shirts and got yet more shirts. The salesmen were wise to the fact that we

were wearing the shirts that they had sold us, just about three hours back and they kept smirking slyly at each other.

Of course, we did not dare to go back without buying anything for our wives so, we decided that we should buy a ‘pawnfen’³ for them. Yet we were apprehensive about the purchase. Since we were not at all expert in buying clothes for women, we pondered about whether they would be offended by what we got for them. Yet we shuddered at the prospect of going back home without getting them a gift. So, we approached what seemed to be a shop that sold ladies apparel. It was a huge air conditioned store, with very smart sales ladies bustling about. And the man who opened the door for us was elegant enough to pass off for a Major in the army. While we were walking astride the marble steps of the shop, attired in shirts of the same colour, the friend on my left whispered, “Hey, I do not know what they call a ‘pawnfen’ in English, how on earth do we buy one?”

I replied, “Isn’t petty god... no, pettygoat is what it is... I think...”

I was miles away from the Chambers’ Dictionary which I had left at home.

But the friend on my right was a know it all and he was actually very deft in the nuances of translation, so he confidently argued, “Of course not, pettygod refers to a beautiful god, while a petty goat is small goat; it doesn’t refer to a pawnfen at all. I think it is called petty guard.”

I felt it was not quite right but since I myself did not really know the right word, we decided to agree upon that term amid

³ Pettycoat.

much apprehension, even as we confidently sauntered forth. I, being in the centre, was regarded to be quite fluent in English. So I bolstered my confidence and approached a lady, whom I regarded to be the smartest and the most attractive salesgirl. Very politely I said, “Madam, I have the honour to say that I want to know whether you have a petty guar...”

When the friend on my left broke me off and hissed, “Stop speaking to her, she will never reply for she is only the mannequin.”

And I took a good look and realized that I was indeed speaking in earnest, to a was figurine. I took a lingering look at the figure I had spoken to, and before I could recover I noted that the friend on my right was speaking to a sales girl in a high pitched voice,

“Do you have petty guard... petty guard?”

I felt his tone was most impolite, but then assured myself that it was alright, just as long as it fetched us what we wanted. So I sauntered forth to his side. Just as we feared, we realized that the salesgirl was totally unaware of what a petty guard was. Most diplomatically she queried, “You want petticoat?”

“Yes pettyguard,” he replied.

And not content with that, he even spelt out the word for her. She was most astonished and she whispered a hasty,

“Excuse me,” and went to fetch the manager.

The manager was a man, endowed with a flowing beard and whose countenance was as safety as that of Rabindranath Tagore. It was indeed daunting that we should have to explain

what we wanted to him. After sometime, with explanations rallying back and forth he decided to show us several samples. There were samples galore! Apparel that were designed in myriad ways; trouser-like skirts, school uniform skirts, saree-like skirts, dhoti-like skirts... yet none that could remotely resemble the kind that our wives would wear. The man on my left asked in dismay,

“Tinbo, Sike, Siphu, Elevendayhai⁴?”

(Actually, ‘hai’ was the only word he knew in Hindi.) At this everyone in the shop grew more and more perplexed. In utter consternation they called for the owner of the shop. At her approach, all the salesgirls stood ramrod straight, akin to all their mannequins. She was a huge lady of a rotund frame. We spoke in what we felt was, to the best of our knowledge, in the tongues of men and angels, but we still could not make ourselves understood. We even wrote down the term ‘prettyguard’ and baffled them all the more. In despair I turned to the friend on my left and declared in a conspiratorial whisper, “My friend, instead of ‘prettyguard’, I think it should be ‘pretty-God.’”

At that the owner of the shop declared triumphantly, “Ah! Now I know what you want.”

And saying this she led us to an inner room where the gods were kept.

“Shree Durga or Lord Ganesh or Hanuman?” she offered.

It was way off the mark and did not feel right at all. In utter dismay, our friend on the left, took off his pants and

⁴ Fashionable brands of cloth.

demonstrated the manner in which his wife wore the required garment. He gestured wildly both upwards and downwards and pirouetted back and forth. After he had done all that he could, the owner of the store took a deep breath, looked at us with folded arms, and declared, “I think what you want is... frock.”

“Frog?” we cried out in unison. So astounded were we.

“Yes frock, woman’s frock,” she pronounced confidently.

We rolled our eyes in horror and were no longer interested in the purchase. In despair and utter bewilderment, we walked out of the magnificent store, leaving a host of equally perplexed people behind. How we reached our room at Guwahati Mizoram House I am yet to decipher. The words, ‘Yes frog, woman’s frog’ was enough to diminish our morale.

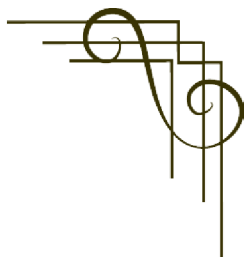
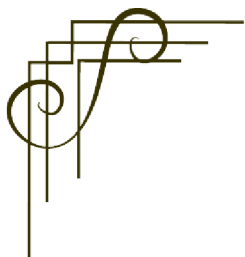
The man on my left declared, “When that lady saw me gesticulating wildly, she must have felt that we wanted to seek out a prostitute. And in all her wisdom, must have realized that a woman is actually a frog. Being unable to bear the fact that we were about to lie abed with frogs, she must have decided to tell us the truth.”

As for me, I, have always placed women in the same pedestal as God and I have always treated my wife great tenderness. So, it was an even more greater hurt. I mustered up all my knowledge about the English language and yes, there was no doubt about it, she did say, “Yes, woman’s frog.”

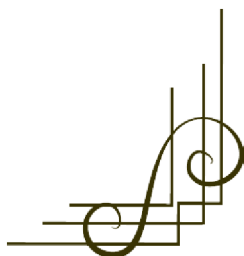
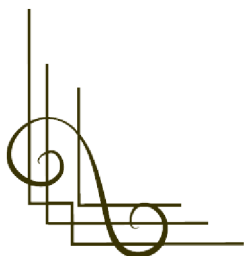
There was no other way to interpret it. Surely such a noble woman belonging to a learned community was far more intelligent than us. I thought of the wedding vows I had taken and became mortified. The friend on my right, being well read

and profound counseled, “It could be true. Even Europeans say that women are frogs. If my reading of history serves me well, then I recall reading about a prince who could not find a wife. Eventually, he kissed a frog nestling in a lake and she turned into a beautiful damsel. And he married her. But alas... she always needed a kiss to retain her human shape.”

By now, we had spent four nights in Guwahati and it was true that it had been quite a while since we had last kissed our wives. We were horrified at the thought of them turning into frogs while we were away. There was no time to buy garments for them now. And secretly we were all apprehensive about kissing the frogs we had left behind, but we reminded ourselves that we were indeed chivalrous men who had to rise to the occasion. Why... if other men could do it, there was no reason as to why we could not do the same. We packed our belongings in the hope of rescuing the women who were about to turn into frogs... and raced away from Guwahati in tremendous haste.



*Random
Thoughts*



RIP in the Half Moon

Prof.Sudhakar Marathe

Visiting Fellow, DRS I / SAP

English Department, Mizoram University

The half moon brightens the West
And the owl who-who's to the dark
Jungle on the side of the tlang
And the mad Hawk-Cuckoo moans
Too-tu-roo, too-tu-roo ecen as Geckos
Tch-tch-tch,guarding the deep nightshade.
Bright brave Moths flutter at our window
Knocking like a guest, Let me in,let me in
And the little talking Saurian sounds on
And on , O-kay , O-kay , O-kay ,echoing
The Hill Nightjars truncated chuck chuck
As I peer into the past,long long past at
Men and women who have made their
Lives in these daunting hills,tumbledown
Slopes,murderous cliffs,deep cluttered
Ravines choked with trees,bush and grass,
The tasselled tail feather-tip elephant grass
That no elephant ever treads with his heavy pads.....

My mind's eyes sees vividly other, more
Distant hills and jungles and monstrous
Trees in whose shadow walk Leopard
And Jackal and I grew big from small.....

But men and women there know no
Longer the prime closeness of being
One with nature, uncluttered, simple
In mind, clothed in pattern 'puans',
Companion to Bamboo and giant slopes –, hearing voices
Upward guides to the westward Moon –
That makes the Owl and Mad Cuckoo
Call , who – who and too – tu –roo - too – tu –roo

I drift off to sleep slowly
Young and hopeful, stringing the rhythms
Of life in the lap of there here hills.

Angel

Lalsangliani Ralte

Research Scholar, English Department
Mizoram University

“A whore,” “a woman of loose character” they call her.
“No moral,” “no conscience,” “no shame” they say of her.
They cast discerning glances her way;
Heavily made-up face, blood red lipstick
A mini-skirt that mothers would forbid their daughters to wear
A deep neckline that displayed too much bosom
A cheap cigarette placed between her sensuous lips.
They see enough to send her to hell
Hungry to condemn, eager to collect the stones
That would be hurled at her.
They fail, however, to notice 'How her eyes were always lowered
Her voice was so meek it was just a whisper
Her prayers were said in the most secret of places.
Had they taken the time to listen
Had they taken the time to really look
They might have heard her muffled screams of terror
They might have seen
The look of fear and pain in her eyes
Her struggles in vain, to escape
From the malicious grasp of him
Who is forcing himself upon her
A child not yet thirteen, a child not yet nubile
A child whose earnest pleadings for him to stop
Were turned a deaf ear to.

In their haste to lead her to her Calvary
They do not remember of her
How she once was a child full of innocence and dreams.

.....

A Child's Plea

Lalsangliani Ralte

Mother! Am I not of your own blood and flesh?
Why do I feel so alienated by you, and your other children?
Is it because I do not wear sarees like my sisters
And do not eat what my brothers do?
I do not speak their tongues
I am forced to resort to sign language.
Who would be able to tell
I am of your family? I look so different.
I join my hands for my prayers
And sing hymns unknown to you.
I live alone in the hills
From where I watch my brothers and sisters below
So lovingly, though they do not seem to look for me.
Mother! Even with all these differences
Can I not be a part of your embrace?
Or do you call me your child
Just for name's sake
To keep the neighbours away
So your other children are not disturbed?
It is not just food and clothes I need
I need to feel safe, loved and welcomed.
Mother! If you claim I am truly of your own blood and flesh
Would you help make me feel at home?

Skeptical Atonement

Rosangzuali Chawngthu

4th Semester IMBA: Department of Management
Mizoram University

There's an empty void unfilled;
A sense of skin untouched.

A person with a scarred memory;
A black ink to write.

Betrothed falls, scraped knees;
He who swung life away.

A skeptic now proved what love meant;
In shame, stitched his wounds untreated.

An unsoldered man with a heart of gold;
He who took the cap off the bottle.

God of passion, God of malice;
A skeptic, who, now believed all beliefs.

.....

Flora and Fauna

Rosangzuali Chawngthu

The old embellishment still hung
On top of that ghastly tree,
Higher by the time
A miscellanea of pines and dried leaves.
And of that deranged truffle
Exhumed from grounds beneath

The fallen portion of boles
Strewed amongst exanimate grunge.
The ravishing wild flowers
Confined by lingering perfumes
Of the green goddess.
Incandescence sparked
The resplendent flora
Until all vision
Became buoyant.
The lamp lit sky
Parched the flooded rivers,
A hint of spring
Marching towards bottomless pool.
And all the while,
The trees of dead foliage
Gangly as ever
Under which I lay
To witness the profound creation
Of how nature oeuvre in cycles,
And of how living beings
Devoured one another.
Through the oceans, the vast streaming lakes,
The meadows and cornfields,
Through timber and sprawling mountains
Up above where the flyers soar
Down below where the fauna plunge.
O' Dreadful sight,
Do not deceive me!
For peach lies
Not in the oculus,
But in the bosom
Of the mastermind.

Inside A Womb

Lalbiakdiki

Research Scholar; English Department
Mizoram University

Inside a womb darkness is a friend
Of day and night the difference is none
I can barely think but I can hear
Sad grieves in my seven months of stay
I sleep to the tune and live within the tune
Is this what they call a cry!
Mother who bears me sound
I am a part of you, part of your grief
Two months then I shall join your world
And then I'll see with my senses
If your world is indeed sad.

Inside a womb your grief is a friend
Of day and night the sound is all I hear
Am I your grief? Am I your relief?
A fetus in darkness learns what is hurt
But what lies beyond, is there a counter-hurt?
Inside a womb I can barely foresee
Mother who bears me sound
I am a part of you, part of your hurt
And if your world is all that you have cried
Then why should I plunge to interrupt
And truth be seen which is indeed sad.

Stories

Lalbiakdiki

Stories never end
No matter where they went
Years of building up a wall
Years of struggling a crawl
They survived somewhere
Jilted deep within a lair.

Two lovers once upon a time
Full of innocence was their prime
Soft and young had their days
Of sweet and tender gaze
Indeed a sweet little love story
Twas theirs in all its glory.

Yes! Stories never end
Even when years sum up to ten
It takes a bold heart to awake
Love that longs for a remake
And finally you've revived ours

Let the World Go to Them Each

Sarangadhar Baral
Professor, Deptt. of English
Mizoram University

We go to the poets
For they go to the winding deep
And bring us the songs curled
In life's mud, murk and mists to the lip.

The knowledge of the philosopher
Would not vie for their delightsome vision.

We go to the saints
For they go to the other shore
And bring our mundane world the benedictions pure
Curled in the invisible lotus of million petals.

The treasure of the state
Would not vie for their blissful abandon.

We go to the flowers
For they come with the divine smile
And light up the houses of dark and stony hearts.

The grit of science
Would not vie for their delicate grace so clean.

We go to the animals
For they go to play simple every way
And bring the sentiency of sacrifice
For this one earth without record.

The arrogance of man
Would not vie for their simplest magic living.

We go to the door of love
For it embalms the weary and wounded present
And unfolds the sweet fluents in the baser bone.

The pomp of reason or politics of action
Would not vie for its nearness to the fuller being.

Let the world go to them each
Over and over again, without fatigue or shame,
For each is rich with an embodied giving free

Unconditioned by the torture and taint of time,
Before any one dies in poverty or wealth
Alike a play of delusion for the earth's meaning.

.....

The *Vai* Lore in Aizawl

Sarangadhar Baral

Here the *vai* comes with his Indian more,
An unfashionable camera reel;
A veggie winding away from our meat corners
Looking askance at the fresh green of the hill.

His late cooker whistle frightens the night sparrow;
Even wakes up the baby to a first dry nappy.
In a wasteful ritual,

He would wash the body morning and evening all winter,
Confounding the house-owner's hill sense of water.

He seems weekly down at residence on Sunday
Our only hymnal day,
Goodly with doctors and vendors turning down the coin;
And the hard, black street wearing festive colors
With trotting heels and *puan* patterns on every lane.

Looking for animal and bird songs
In all crevices and nests to find little bones,
He strangely forgets the sufficient Hymn;
How could his single head divide prayer equal
Between a thousand godheads without a brain din?

We have the song of *vai*-curfew
Springly performed in a year,
Which he scarcely understands of the good
Rest given in his abject confinement indoors;
Scarcely even a culture's wronged muse on a reversal.

These hills are cool and peaceful
Without his different take.
He scurries homeward at every opportune holiday;
Would the *vai* belong in the hill for the namesake.

The next issue of MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies Issue III Volume 2 December 2016, shall focus upon writings pertaining to and about **Northeast India** within the parameters of the literary paradigm. Articles for the same may be sent by October 2016. All contributors are requested to kindly refer to the prescribed format that has been denoted in the inside back cover of the journal. The themes related to the above may be pertinent to, but not solely confined to the following:

Peace, Conflict and Media	Women's Studies
Ethics and Conflict Studies	Gender and Sexuality
Death ways	Memory
Cultural Traditions	The Body and Performance
Pop Culture	Storytelling
Comparative Studies	Craft
Belief Narratives	Food ways
Religion	Trauma
Witness	Life-Writing
Testimony	Communities
Photography	Insurgency
Music	Art