HORIZONS OF KONYAK FOLKLORE AND SELECT NATIVE AMERICAN FICTIONAL NARRATIVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN EXISTENTIALIST PHILOSOPHY

(Thesis submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)

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DECLARATION

I, Ms. Honngam Konyak, hereby declare that the subject matter of my thesis entitled *Horizons of Konyak Folklore and Select Native American Fictional Narratives: A Comparative Study in Existentialist Philosophy* is the bonafide record of work done by me under the supervision of Prof. Nigamananda Das and that the content of the thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other research degree, fellowship, associateship, etc. in any other university or institute. This is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Horizons of Konyak Folklore and Select Native American Fictional Narratives: A Comparative Study in Existentialist Philosophy* is the bonafide record of research work done by Ms. Honngam Konyak, Regn No.: 570/2014 (w.e.f. 05/05/2014), Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2014-2018. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC Regulations May 2016 (amended) and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances for submission of the thesis.

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PREFACE

This dissertation focuses on the comparative study of Konyak folklore and the select fictional narratives of Louise Erdrich and James Welch in the light of existential philosophy. It will delineate how the Konyaks and the Native Americans use their rich oral traditions and narrative writings to remember and memorialize and to narrate their own stories- both personal and community stories instead of relying on colonial interpretation of their history and thereby exhibit the struggle to find their own voice in a nation that imposes on their indigeneity. In both the societies, the Europe had endlessly reconfirmed its own identity and individuality as the 'civilised' and constructed the other, the non-West as 'primitive.' Before the advent of the British, orality defined the essence of Konyak Naga culture and played a pivotal role in the absence of writing and literacy. The Native Americans were "considered to be obstacles in the development of the American nation. The only choice left for them is that they must assimilate or disappear. Thus both these indigenous people have been 'spoken for' and '(mis)represented' by others. Their unique and indigenous tribal identity of their own prior to colonization have been distorted as their native voice is missing or obliterated in the ethnographic writings by the Europe. The study of the Konyak Folklore and the ficitional narratives of selected writers here becomes a necessity to analyse the deliberate attempt by the tribals to salvage their tribal identity by making their own choices in the situations that they find themselves in order to determine their essence.

This dissertation examines how the tribals are peopled by diverse groups of tribal cultures with varied language, religion, social and political organization and means of livelihood and how they refuse to accept a prefabricated identity conferred by external forces, the Europeans or by history. The colonialists and the dominant culture had violated and misused the uniqueness of the original inhabitants and also destroyed the compact tribal units of the natives for their own selfish ends. This in turn generated anxiety in the minds of the tribals who started underestimating their own culture and failed to understand and uphold their tribal values, customs and traditions. Their search for identity

whether to accept their past or to assimilate the present or the future, oscillating between the two

realities, destroys the meaningfulness of their everyday world and compels the individual to recognize that the world is not truly a home. The immense loss of cultural identity in the younger generation generated fear in the older generation that their children are being systematically stolen away from them. Anxiety thus becomes a deep-seated strife at the heart of the Natives over their existence in this confusing world.

Both the tribals need to realize that it is they themselves and not the others who is responsible for interpreting their world, and that they cannot avoid the freedom of choosing certain possibilities over others. If they refuse to revisit and reconstruct their own identities by themselves, then it will lead to what Sartre calls 'bad faith,' i.e crediting others with the ability and responsibility to define themselves. There is a need to maintain and recover their tribal identity which has changed over time due to colonization and therefore the Konyaks and the Native writers need to recover their tribal values and ideals from the past and narrativize it in writings to educate a generation that is gradually staying away from their origins.

(Honngam Konyak)

ABBREVIATIONS

1. ANVR : ***A Naga Village Remembered***
2. AW : ***The Antelope Wife***
3. BN : ***Being and Nothingness***
4. LM : ***Love Medicine***
5. FEIA : ***Folk Elements in Achebe***
6. TDJL : ***The Death of Jim Loney***

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘existentialism’ was not initially used by any of the existentialist philosophers, and it does not appear in any of the canonical texts of the tradition- it is not in Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* nor in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. In fact the term was initially coined by Gabriel Marcel in a 1943 review of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness,* and it only came to be accepted by Sartre and de Beauvoir a couple of years later in 1945. Marleau-Ponty never accepted the label wholeheartedly, while Heidegger and Camus vehemently rejected it. Moreover, it was not used as a self-description by early thinkers who in retrospect came to be labelled as existentialist, such as Kierkegaard or Nietzsche. It is hence difficult to argue that existentialism represents a single, unified philosophical movement, although it would be too harsh to conclude from this difficulty that existentialism is, in fact, a term with no real referent and no real philosophical unity (Joseph et al 3).

Though the term is sometimes used narrowly in connection with the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, however, it refers more generally to the work of several nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers, such as Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Neitzsche, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir. The origin of existentialism can be traced far back into the history of philosophy in its rejection of essentialism or the notion that human beings have an inner nature or essence. Existentialists claim that human beings have no predestined purpose or essence laid down by God or nature. They are responsible for creating their lives according to their own values- and not by following the ‘herd’- by reflecting clearly on their situation and relationships and by acting authentically (Tidd 14).

Following Ludwig Wittgenstein’s lead in *Philosophical Investigations*, it is possible loosely to define existentialism in a family resemblance, which does not require a single set of necessary and sufficient conditions for every philosopher labelled existentialist. In this respect, some of the major overlapping thematic concerns that are associated with existential philosophers include the following:

1. a focus on concrete lived experience as opposed to academic abstraction;
2. freedom;
3. death, finitude and mortality;
4. an interest in first-personal experiences and 'moods', such as anguish (or anxiety), nausea and boredom;
5. an emphasis upon authenticity and responsibility as well as the tacit denigration of their opposites (inauthenticity, bad faith, etc)
6. a suggestion that human individuality tends to be obscured and denied by the common social mores of the crowd, and, in the work of some, a pessimism about human relations per se;
7. a rejection of any external determination of morality or value, including certain conceptions of God and the emphasis upon rationality and progress that were foregrounded during the Enlightenment;
8. Methodologically many existentialists are invested in phenomenology and the use of transcendental reasoning (Joseph et al 3-4).

Existentialists believe that human beings are subjects, not objects; they are dynamic and changing rather than static, and their points of view on the world, with intellectual, emotional, '*existential*' involvements that significantly constitute what (or more appropriately *who*) they are (Joseph et al 6).

One of the core beliefs at the heart of Sartre's existential philosophy is that 'existence precedes essence' which means that the most important consideration for the individual is the fact that he or she is an individual—an independently acting and responsible, conscious being ("existence")—rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individual fits ("essence"). Sartre defined the word existence as a technical philosophical term that applied only to the kind of reality human beings have. "Existence precedes essence," meant that the choices we make in the situations we find ourselves determine our essence, that we exist first and thereafter define our essence by the way in which we live. An essence is what something is; it is the character, nature, or function of something; it is what defines the thing and distinguishes it from other kinds of things. In the case of a human being, the essence is who he or she is (Patrik 24). Sartre explains his meaning clearly:

> [If] God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept…this being is man…man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself…Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the principle of existentialism (Michelman 141).

The actual life of the individual is what constitutes what could be called his or her "true essence" instead of there being an arbitrarily attributed essence used by others to define him or her. Thus, human beings, through their own consciousness, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life. The main consequences that Sartre draws from this lack of self, essence or nature is that human existence is completely and irrevocably free.For him, with no essence defining us we are free to pursue whatever essence we desire, at least within an inter-subjective world, and it is this philosophy of absolute freedom that has been Sartre's most famous and enduring contribution to the history of philosophy.For him:

> Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of human being is suspended in his freedom. What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of "human reality". Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being free (*BN* 49).

For the existentialists, there is no intrinsic human nature. Whatever are our identities, they are formed by our interactions with the outside world. We are our choices. We are judged by actions and not intentions. Sartre tends to regard action as determinative of a person's identity. A person is defined by what he or she does more than by what he or she says, believes, or wishes, and thoughts, wishes and beliefs often reflect what one would like to be, or to have others believe, more than what one is. He also maintained that behaviors that do not appear to be within conscious control, in the sense that we are normally not aware of choosing them are nonetheless actions for which we are responsible. They are, or stem from, basic existential attitudes that each of us chooses to assume (Michelman 29).

Existentialists asked us to consider again an array of searching problems: Who am I? What is my purpose in existing? What does human existence mean? How should I live? How should I relate to others? Is there a God? Is there a relation between God's existence (or not) and how one lives? Why is there evil in the world? These are questions that can unsettle individuals to the core of their being, awaken them from the somnambulism of their lives, and direct us all to assume responsibility to create meaning from our situation in the world. In responding to these questions, existentialism starts with the problem of subjectivity: the question of human nature and the critical examination of how selfhood is constructed (Judaken and Bernasconi 6).The fundamental contribution of existential thought thus lies in the idea that one's identity is constituted neither by nature nor by culture, since to exist is precisely to constitute such an identity. It is in the light of this idea that key existential notions such as facticity, transcendence, alienation, and authenticity must be understood.

Anxiety (angst/anguish / dread) is not fear, which focuses on a particular being. The term is central to Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. For Kierkegaard, angst (sometimes translated as dread or anxiety) is not an emotion, but a deep-seated strife at the heart of human being over its existence. Angst is a reaction to the fundamental choices we have to make in the face of our mortality. In his writings of the 1920s, Heidegger took up Kierkegaard's term (but often translated as anxiety) to argue that human beings for the most part ramble on in 'idle talk', repeating clichés about everything from the weather to death to cover over their angst over finitude. Like Kierkegaard, Heidegger argued that angst was not directed towards fearsome beings or situations, but instead was nothing other than pure and simple experience of being in the sense of *being-in-the-world.* In angst, we are struck by a fundamental mood of uncanniness that presses home, so to speak, the fact of our thrownness into the world while bringing to the fore our possibilities to be something other than what we have made of ourselves. Camus would later link angst to the absurdity of existence, the mismatch between the cause-and-effect nature around us and our consciousness of the choices before us. Sartre, angst (translated as anguish) is the human awareness of not just our inherent freedom, but also our responsibility for our own free choices. Sartre argues that for the most part, we evade this responsibility, since we are devoted instead to the 'bad faith' that denies the freedom of an engaged existence (Joseph et al 327-328).

Anxiety is a central concept of existential philosophy, alternately rendered as "dread" as "anguish." The concept of anxiety receives a range of distinct treatments by different existentialists. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that anxiety is not merely a psychological state that reflects the personality of the individual but an ontological or metaphysical phenomenon that reveals a deep truth about the nature of human beings. The core of the idea is that anxiety is a reckoning of the self with its essential freedom to choose what it shall be, and in the face of its radical responsibility for that choice. The idea is expressed well by Jean-Paul Sartre: "In anxiety I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself" (Sartre, *BN* 63).

Sartre provides the most detailed account of the psychology of inauthenticity, which he analyses in terms of the phenomenon of *bad faith.* Bad faith (dishonesty, deception, hypocrisy) is employed by Sartre to designate various strategies of avoidance and self-deception that at the root of inauthentic existence. Pursued by diverse strategies, the goal of bad faith is to "escape oneself", to avoid acknowledging one's freedom and responsibility as a self-determining being, most commonly by construing oneself as casually determined by heredity, temperament, or social circumstances or by conforming oneself to social norms and the opinions of others. The project of bad faith, however, remains for Sartre highly unstable and ultimately unrealizable, because consciousness always transcends its objectifications, that is, each false self-interpretation deployed is at the same time held at arm's length and called into question as an object of consciousness (Michelman 47).

Bad faith is a form of existential self-deception theorized by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. According to him, most of our lives are spent in bad faith because we can never be fully sincere or even sure about who we are.Bad faith is a phenomenon in which an individual takes a decision or makes his/her choices without using their decision making ability, but takes help of some foreign agency such as society or religion or any emotional forces. In doing this he disowns his power of freedom, which is termed as Bad Faith. If the human being takes decision with the help of the external sources ignoring his own decision making ability, it is termed to be less a decision, a bad decision or his negative-freedom to take a decision.

Bad faith is an undesirable psychological phenomenon which Sartre thought was rife amongst humans. To roughly describe bad faith we might say that it is an attitude that is adopted in order to distract oneself from the existential crisis that we constantly face. The 'faith' part of bad faith attests to its epistemic nature. On some level we are always aware of the full terrifying truth of our existence but in bad faith we attempt to distract ourselves from this by lowering our demands of evidence and thus the need for proper inspection, as Sartre thought we do when believing based on faith.

Existential philosophy claims freedom for each and every human being, freedom of choice from the alternatives, to choose to live their life on their own terms and conditions, to develop their present and future. Man composes his individuality by choosing from the odds and develops himself. And at the same time he is solely responsible for his/her actions, either good or bad. As the individual is entirely responsible for his actions, sometimes he neglects his decision making ability and takes external help, but still the individual remains responsible for his actions, which is called Bad Faith.

Facticity, as Sartre uses the term, is generally understood to mean something like the set of facts which are true of someone (or something). These might include facts about your body, the environment you are in (physically/politically/socially, etc.), your place of birth, mother's maiden name, and so on. Transcendence also has a particular Sartrean meaning. Literally, 'to transcend' means 'to go beyond' and Sartre's use of it is related to this literal meaning. Sartre writes:

> … although this *metastable* concept of "transcendence-facticity" is one of the most basic instruments of bad faith, *it is not the only one of its kind* … We can equally well *use another kind of duplicity derived from human reality* which we will express roughly by saying that its being-for-itself implies complementarily a being-for-others (*BN* 81).

'Transcendence–facticity' is described here as not being the only 'instrument' of bad faith. It is joined by another: 'being-for-itself'–'being-for-others'. Later in the same paragraph Sartre goes on to list another two 'instruments': 'being-in-the-world'–

'being-in-the-midst-of-the-world'; and 'being-what-I-have-been'–'not-being-what-I-have-been'. This brings our total up to four distinct 'instruments' of bad faith.

Facticity and *transcendence* are two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of valid coordination. But bad faith does not wish either to coordinate them or to surmount them in a synthesis. Bad faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as *being* transcendence and transcendence as *being* facticity, in such a way that at the instant when a person apprehends the one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other (Sartre, *BN* 79). For Sartre, the human being has more aspects than just facticity and transcendence. It also has a being-for-itself and a being-for-others; a being-in-the-world and a being-in-the-midst-of-the-world; and its future and its past. Here, the instrument of bad faith in question is the 'facticity-transcendence' instrument. To 'use' this instrument is to affirm the identity of facticity with transcendence 'while preserving their differences' (Sartre, *BN* 79).

Sartre describes the human as a being 'which is what it is not and which is not what it is' (Sartre, *BN* 81). The second half – which claims that I am not what I am – means that while I am *some* of my properties, I cannot *fully* be said to be them because they fall short of being my whole self. These properties represent one aspect of my being, the aspect of my being which I share with unconscious things – i.e., the in-itself. However, I have another aspect of being not shared by the in-itself because of my being conscious. Thus they do not, by themselves, fully capture who I am because there is more to my existence than my existence as a thing. But there is a *sense* in which I am them. Sartre describes this sense by claiming that I am not them in *the mode of being what I am*.

The first half of the paradoxical phrase denotes the properties which constitute the other aspect of my existence; those which are unique to me as a human. I am not these properties because they only exist insofar as they are supported by my consciousness. If I were to die – and thus no longer be conscious they would fail to be true of me. However, I am these properties because my being conscious is what makes me a human. Thus, to ignore them as parts of me would be to ignore my being human.

Sartre describes the sense in which they define my existence by claiming I am them in the mode of not-being what I am.

With the two modes of being thus defined – 'being what I am' and 'not-being what I am' – we can see how using an instrument can achieve what Sartre describes as 'the goal of bad faith' (Sartre, *BN* 89). Affirming identity while preserving differences involves confusing the modes of existence of each of the properties contained within the instrument. To affirm that I am my future (that which *I am* in the mode of *not-being what I am*) in the mode of being what I am, whilst also affirming that I am my past (that which *I am not* in the mode of *being what I am*) in the mode of not being what I am. This then achieves the goal of bad faith which is '[t]o cause me to be what I am, in the mode of "not being what one is", or not to be what I am in the mode of "being what one is" (Sartre, *BN* 89).

According to Sartre, bad faith is not a "question of a reflective, voluntary decision, but a spontaneous determination of our being" (Sartre, *BN* 91). One puts oneself in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams. Once this mode of being has been realized, it is as difficult to get out of it as to wake oneself up; bad faith is a type of being in the world, like waking or dreaming, which by itself tends to perpetuate itself…(Sartre, *BN* 91-92).

With this "spontaneous determination of our being" goes a weak and uncritical acceptance of the world of bad faith, an initial decision not to make decisions, an initial decision to be indecisive. Bad faith does not maintain the criteria of truth as they are accepted by the critical thought of good faith. Bad faith is resigned in advance not to be transformed into good faith. Through the initial determination of bad faith there will be obstinacy in the face of truth and a willingness to adhere to uncertain evidence,

> "The true problem of bad faith stems evidently from the fact that bad faith is faith. It cannot be either a cynical lie or certainty-if certainty is the intuitive possession of the object. But if we take belief as meaning the adherence of being to its object when the object is not given or is given indistinctly, then bad faith is belief; and the essential problem of bad faith is a problem of belief. the project of bad faith must be itself in bad faith. The decision to be in bad

> faith does not dare to speak its name; it believes itself and does not believe itself in bad faith; it believes itself and does not believe itself in good faith. Bad faith does not hold the norms and criteria of truth as they are accepted by the critical thought of good faith. What it decides first, in fact, is the nature of truth. Bad faith apprehends evidence but it is resigned in advance to not being fulfilled by this evidence, to not being persuaded and transformed into good faith" (Sartre, *BN* 91).

The conclusion is that bad faith is a constant threat to consciousness: the unavoidable menace which accompanies the Nothingness of the being-for-itself. Sartre remarked:

> "If bad faith is possible, it is because it is an immediate, permanent threat to every project of the human being; it is because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. The origin of this risk is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is" (*BN* 94).

In existential philosophy the human being exists in this world without any purpose and is forced to create meaning in his/her life. In other words, the human being has the freedom to take decisions about his life and at the same time the individual is solely responsible for the outcome of his decisions. Man simply is what he wills, what he purposes to be, not simply what he conceives himself to be or what he may wish to be. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. This puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders and he becomes responsible for all men. "Man cannot be interpreted, Sartre says, as a solid substantial thing existing amid the plenitude of things that make up a world; he is beyond nature because in his negative capability he transcends it. Man's freedom is to say No, and this means that he is the being by whom nothingness comes into being" (Barrett 243).

When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men. For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as

he believes he ought to be. To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen; for we are unable ever to choose the worse. What we choose is always the better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all. If, moreover, existence precedes essence and we will to exist at the same time as we fashion our image, that image is valid for all and for the entire epoch in which we find ourselves. Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole.

Karl Jaspers sees the historical meaning of existential philosophy as a struggle to awaken in the individual the possibilities of an authentic and genuine life, in the face of the great modem drift toward a standardized mass society (Barrett 32). Man exists and makes himself to be what he is; his individual essence or nature comes to be out of existence; and in this sense it is proper to say that existence precedes essence. Man does not have a fixed essence that is handed to him ready-made; rather, he makes his own nature out of his freedom and the historical conditions in which he is placed.

The Archimedean point for existentialism is thus the question, "Who am I?" In order to reply, we must first reject the pre-digested mores, rules, orders, and routines of the modern world, all of which divert our focus from making purposeful choices. Pursuing this thought in his *Journal*, Kierkegaard wrote:

> What I really need is to get clear about *what I must do*, not what I must know, except in so far as knowledge must precede every act. What matters is to find a purpose…the crucial thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die*. Of what use would it be to me to discover a so-called objective truth…constructing a world I did not live in but merely held up for others to see…if it had no deeper meaning *for me and for my life?* (Judaken and Bernasconi 7).

As succinctly stated by William Barrett, what existentialists held in common were "such matters as anxiety, death, the conflict between the bogus and the genuine self, the faceless man of the masses, [and] the experience of the death of god." In short, existentialists addressed the most fundamental concerns of human existence: suffering, loneliness, dread, guilt, conflict, spiritual emptiness, the absence of absolute

values or universals, the fallibility of human reason, and the tragic impasses of the human condition (Judaken and Bernasconi 6).

Alan Dundes definesFolk as “any group of people whatsoever who share a least one common factor” (2). Literally translated, folklore means the wisdom or knowledge of the people. It also refers to the common orally transmitted traditions, narratives, arts, beliefs, philosophies, pastime activities, and festivals in all cultures. The word folklore was first invented in 1846 by British scholar William Thoms who wanted to give a new name to the study of ancient customs and traditions. Today, folklore is often defined as knowledge or forms of expression (folk arts) that are passed on from one person to the next by word of mouth or the oral tradition. These different kinds of expressions include songs, rhymes, folktales, myths, jokes, and proverbs. Folklore is passed on among many different kinds of groups; such as family members, friends, classmates, or people you work and play with.

Folklore is an integral and vital part of our daily lives. It encompasses a wide range of community traditions that tend to evolve over time and that may be articulated through ballads, tales, epics, dramas, legends, and myths, as well as through less literary forms such as folktales, folk dramas, folk songs, folk dances, folk costume, folk art, folk belief, folk medicine, folk instrumental music, folksongs, folk speech, folk similes, folk metaphors, and names, proverbs, maxims, riddles, nursery rhymes, superstitions, spells, and plant and animal lore, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking formulas.

In *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (1972), Richard M. Dorson divides folklore into four categories; the oral literature, the material culture, the social folk custom and the performing folk arts. The first category, the “oral literature” or verbal art or expressive literature, is composed of folk narrative, folk song or folk poetry, with their subclasses. Folk narrative consists, for instance, of myths, legends, folk tales, proverbs, and riddles and so on, most of which are genres that are passed down from generation to generation orally and without known authorship (2). Folk poetry consists of different kinds of poems including narrative folk poetry, folk epics and so

forth. The second category, namely the "material culture", "responds to techniques, skills, recipes, and formulas transmitted across the generations and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art" (Dorson 2). This is concerned, for instance, with how societies build their homes, make their clothes, prepare their food, farm and fish and do all their other everyday activities. It is concerned in brief with the society's craft arts. With regard to the third category, that is the "social folk custom", "emphasis is on group interaction rather than individual skills and performances" (Dorson 3). It relates to community and family observances in connection with villages, households, churches, holidays, rites of passage such as those performed at different occasions like birth, initiation, marriage, death and so on. It includes the customs and beliefs of a given folk. And finally, the fourth category, that of "performing folk arts" primarily consist of traditional genres like "folk music, folk dance and drama" (Dorson 4).

Folklore is an integral part of a complex of creations and conventions which are fundamental to the existence, perpetuation and survival of humans as social beings. The complex interrelated behaviours that human beings create, learn from and teach other serves as basis for collective social identification, their culture. William R. Bascom in his famous article, "Four Functions of Folklore," discusses four main functions of folklore. The first function of folklore is that it serves as "a form of amusement or as literature" (Dundes 284). The first function of folklore, that is of amusing both people who tell it and those who listen to it, is very important. Most folklore is told at leisure time, after a hard working day, in order to amuse both the teller and the listeners. It is also "a mirror of culture and incorporates descriptions of the details of ceremonies, institutions and technology, as well as the expression of beliefs and attitudes" (Dundes 284). A second is that which "it plays in validating culture, in justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them." The third function of folklore is found in the role that "it plays in education" (Dundes 292-293) and the fourth function consists in "maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behavior"; "it operates within a society to ensure conformity to the accepted cultural norms, and continuity from generation to generation through its role in education and the extent to which it mirrors culture" (Dundes 297).

The Konyak Naga society is rooted in oral tradition and their folklore serves as a rich resource to reveal their identity and history. It is the means by which they regulated themselves and organized their present and past. Folklore informs the younger generation of their tribal lineage and cultural heritage, educate young people in the history of their tribe and help them stay connected to their root. Folklore is the beliefs, traditions, rituals, stories, and other creative expressions of ordinary people that have been transmitted orally by word of mouth or shared by example through successive generations. Through oral traditions, the Konyak Nagas preserve their community stories and tribal histories which are passed on from one generation to the other. The traditional customs, beliefs and practices handed down orally to the successors create a sense of community response and responsibility. The Konyak peoples evolved without written languages. They lived as oral cultures, traditions generating mouth to mouth, age to age, alive only as the people passed on a daily culture. Their literatures came down as remembered bodies of myth and ritual, song-poetry and narrative tales, legends and parables. Their oral traditions gather the people tribally, as they poeticize the common speech.

The Konyaks live in Mon District, their native place and headquarter. Mon is bounded by the state of Arunachal Pradesh to its northeast, Assam to its west, Myanmar to its east, Longleng district to its south-west and Tuensang district to its south. The Konyaks can be found in Myanmar, in the Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal, and in the Mon district of Nagaland, India. They are known in Arunachal as Wancho Konyak. The Konyak language belongs to the Northern Naga sub-branch of the Sal sub-family of Sino-Tibetan.Situated in the northeastern most part of the state of Nagaland, it remained an “Unadministered Areas” till 1948. According to S. K. Chattopadhyay, the first Deputy Commissioner of Mon, “Even in the beginning of the nineteenth century, a vast tract of land lying between the administered areas of Assam and Myanmar was not brought under the Civil Administration by the British. In the year 1914, the foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, by a notification, extended the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation of 1880 to the Hills which were either inhabited or frequented by the Abors, the Akas, the Mishmis, the Singphos, the Nagas, the Khamtis, the Bhutias, and the Daflas. It was by this extension of the aforesaid Regulation, the Government of India brought the area under some administration in 1914 and the area was known as

the North East Frontier Tract (NEFT). Hence the present Mon District was brought under the preview of the same notification but practically there was no civil administration till 1948. In 1951, the plain portion of Balipara Frontier Tract, the Tirap Frontier Tract, the Abor Hills District and the Mishmi Hills were transferred to the administrative jurisdiction of the Government of Assam. Thereafter, the remaining areas of the said North East Frontier Tract together with the Naga Tribal Area of Tuensang including the present Mon District, was renamed as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The Mon Sub-Division under the Tuensang Frontier Division (NEFA) was established on the 14th of November, 1951 at Mon Pangching and W. H. Rynjah was posted as the Assistant Political Officer" (Mon Town Golden Jubilee 16-17). Wakching Town was the only administrative outpost under the British administration and the rest of the Konyak areas were referred to as "Free Nagas" in the "Unadministered Areas." The Naga Hills District and the Tuensang Area were constituted into one administrative unit Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) on 1st December, 1957. This led to the creation of the State of Nagaland as the 16th State of the Indian Union under the Ministry of External affairs of the Government of India. However, Mon was under Tuensang District until it was given the status of a district on 21st December 1973 with S. K. Chattopadhya as the first Deputy Commissioner.

The term 'Konyak' comes from Konyak words such as *'khaonyak,' 'khejak,' 'khenak,' 'khonyak,' 'khenyak,' 'henyak,' 'shenyak'* which have one meaning, literally 'human being' or 'man.' The connotation is human with black hair on them. So the name Konyak is not given by outsiders but the people declared themselves as human being with black hair.Like the other Naga Tribes, the Konyaks do not have a written history of their origin and migration. However their oral history narrates their migration and origin to *'Longphang Veenyu,' 'Longphang Phinyu'* which literally means valley beneath the stone. According to Reverend Y. Chingang, "*Longphang Veenyu*" may have connection with the story of the Tower of Babel mentioned in Genesis 11: 1-9 of the Bible. This view is strengthened by the way people invoke blessings, "*Longphang Veenyu, Shemnyu Hamnyu mepu moiman yahkei,"* (grant us blessing from Shem and Ham of Longphang Veenyu). Both T. Honlong and Reverend Pongsing opine that the mention of Shem and Ham, children of Noah, and the use of names such as Yona or Jona, Mosa, Aaron, Hosea and Abram from time immemorial

even before they became Christians might suggest that they were one of the groups of Noah's descendants (Konyak Union 26-30). A. Peihwang also viewed that the Konyak originated from 'stone caves.' According to him, *'Longphang'* which literally means 'under the rock' is an indication of cave dwelling and '*Phinyu*' as wide open space or valley (Konyak Union 26).

Mon is called as the *Land of Angh*. The very social system of the Konyak is dependent on the hereditary Kingship or *Angh- Wanglam* which is hereditary. Every village has an *Angh* who is the supreme head of respective territory. The *Angh* belongs to the royal clan by birth but not all the members of the royal clan can become a clan. Only the son of a royal *Angh* and *Anghya* (queen) can become *Angh*. The village system plays an important role in the Naga society and by tradition the Village chief is the nominal head of the village. The village chief is not chosen but hereditary passing down to the eldest son of the family. Under the village chief a village council or village authority are nonnally formed. The members of this council are equal representatives from each clan who are either elected or nominated by their respective clans. Konyaks are village-centric like the other Nagas. The tribal village is the apex social and political structure. They are structured on the basis of clan and family. Each family is headed by the father or a senior male member of the family. Community life was intact and ordered. Every head of a community at different levels like clan, village and territory is generally honoured, obeyed and accepted as the head of the group. Konyak society is community oriented. If a person fails to obey and abide by the social norms of the community and clan, he is looked down by the society. Even though there are more than one hundred villages in Konyak area, every person can be identified from his name as belonging to a particular clan. When a child is born, elders of the child's family alongwith the clan decide the name based on ancestral clan lineage worthy for the child to bring name and fame to the clan and family. They cannot use the name of other clans by any chance. The Konyaks are never to call their elders by name even though the gap between two persons might be by months, weeks, days or seconds. Otherwise they are rebuked by the community.

Nagaland is known as the Land of festivals as each and every tribe has their own festivals throughout the year linked with agriculture. The festivals of the Konyak

rotated round the agricultural year. The biggest festival of the Konyaks is the *Aoleang Monyu* celebrated in the first week of April every year. It is celebrated after completion of sowing of seeds in the fields to welcome a new season and to invoke the divine blessing. It also marks the end of the old year and the beginning of New Year. Aoleang highlights the whole view of life of the Konyak's. It involves family and community feastings, folk and cultural dances and singing, games and sports, ritual ceremonies which remind the tribe of its own rich culture and heritage, customs and traditions which is still practiced and learnt even today. Their rich cultural life shows their roots in religion, which is the manifestations of the religious beliefs and practices of the people. It is in ritual that the community heals itself, enlightens itself, brings forth gifts from everyone and to let go.

In Konyak villages, there is a *Baan* and *Ywo* (Morung). The word 'Morung' is Assamese in origin and it means 'bachelor's dormitories'. According to Peal "The morung is a survival of the communal house from which private dwellings split off" and the purpose of the dormitory was, according to Shakespeare 'to prevent incest' (Moilee. http://nagaland.faithweb.com/ articles/konyak.html).It is a dormitory where *Baan* is for the unmarried male members and *Ywo* for all the adolescent girls. With the attainment of a particular age, of the boys and girls were sent to these institutes and they remained there till adulthood or till marriage. The youngfolk were trained in discipline, war-fare and art of dealing with an emergency. This is the institution for learning different types of handicrafts, the work of blacksmith, folksongs, poetry, stories, sports and skill of socialisation. They learn the way of life here. It also acts as a court where disputes that arises are solved. The community sense of life and their rich oral traditions is learned and passed down from generation to generation. With the changing time, the importance of such institutes is losing ground but they still exist in a lesser extent.

Headhunting was the most important thing in the social life of the Konyak forefathers. It was considered as the highest profession as the social prestige of the particular person or groups or village depended on their success. The man who could behead enemies and had more heads collected was regarded as *naomei* or warrior. One of the reasons was revenge killing of the enemies who might have killed some loved ones.

Another reason was when the subjects failed to obey the wishes of their *ahng* or if they fail to pay tribute to him. Headhunting was also done for religious purpose as it was connected with fertility and economic growth. Headhunting also occurred due to encroachment of land and territory, and also when their livestocks were stolen or killed or granaries were stolen. Security of life and survival was the chief concern of people those days. Tattoo is an important practice of the Konyaks which is also associated with head-taking. In Konyak language, it is '*tatu'* or 'huhtu.' '*Ta*' or *'tangta'* refers to body and '*tu*' means 'prick.' The latter '*huhtu,*' where '*huh*' means 'thorn,' is more commonly used among the Konyaks (Konyak Union 73). The Konyaks practiced tattoo by pricking their skin on different parts of the body according to the need of their custom.

Marriage is an indispensable part of the social institution of the Konyaks. They follow the patriarchal system of family. In choosing their daughter-in-law, the male's family and clan look into the various criteria of eligibility and suitability from the cleanest ideals of the clan. Careful questioning is done about the girl and her family and clan. It is the man's parents and family who starts the negotiation for the girl's hand in marriage. There are also some areas among the Konyaks where child engagement prevailed.

Land occupies an important part of life of the Konyaks. They are very much attached to land. Even today Nagas are known for their intimate link with nature and land which form an inalienable part of their life. Land plays a pivotal role in their social structure, their identity and life. They follow the tradition-based community governance on ownership of land. Land is owned by the *ahng*, *baan* or clan and individually. It is the most valuable property and the capital source of livelihood.Christian missionaries and British colonialists convinced or forced the Konyaks to Christianity, in order to make them give up the habit of cutting off human heads. The Konyak tribe resisted christianization and modernization for longer than most other Nagas tribes because wars and headhunting were an essential part of their ritual life in the past. Despite that, Christianity subdued them and headhunting is no longer practiced. Today most of young Konyaks are giving up their traditional way of life and adopting modern customs and westernized way of life.

Historically, tribal knowledge and beliefs are passed from generation to generation using indigenous languages and oral traditions. Tribal oral traditions include stories, songs, and histories as well as prayers, ceremonies, and rituals. They are usually related integrally to the spiritual belief systems of specific tribes, clans and individuals. Much of the cultural knowledge and context necessary to understand the individual components of tribal oral traditions is available only to tribal members. "The languages and oral traditions of Native American peoples have carried the thoughts and beliefs of their ancestors forward to their descendants in contemporary America. Passed from generation to generation through storytelling, oral traditions represent living libraries containing thousands of years of knowledge and history about the world and how to be in it" (Riley 28). Storytelling has been one of the major ways of entertaining and educatingNative American children about the history of the people. Throughout history, Aboriginalsocieties in North America have relied on the oral transmission of stories, histories, lessonsand other knowledge to maintain a historical record and to sustain their culture and identities.

Gloria Bird defines "the major trope of Native American literature" as "the interconnectedness of all things- of people to land, of stories to people, of people to people" (Coulombe 73). The native people of North America speak of their relationship to the Earth in terms of family. They link the people on the earth with the plants and animals, the rivers and rocks, and all things that are believed to have been very significant in the lives of Native Americans. The written texts tie Indian people to the earth and its life through a spiritual kinship with the living and dead relatives of Native Americans. Tribal cultures are often deeply informed by religious and spiritual beliefs. "The Native American sees all creatures as relative, as offspring of the Great Mystery, as c0creators, as children of the same Earth Mother, and all as necessary parts of an ordered, balanced, and living whole" (Serafin and Bendixen 806).

The tribal Native American finds power in natural circles-sun and moon, stars, nest, tepee, flower, rainbow, whirlwind, human contours, nature's seasonal cycles. Tribal life centers in a common blood, a shared and inherited body of tradition, a communal place, a mutual past and present. The tribe is thus imagined in a circle. Daily

relationships preserve this continuity, at once personal and ceremonial; all tribal members are specially kin, as a parent to a child or a brother to a sister. Tribal values include sharing material and spiritual wealth, loyalty to the kinship system, care for one's place in the the world, an extended familial identity for the individual, and kindness in the older sense of the word, that is, "of the same kind" and "kind" or generous within that bond (Swann 21).

One of the most compelling themes of Native American fiction is the sacredness of the land. This traditional worldview was not only considered important by most old time Native American people, but it is also strongly expressed in the writings of contemporary Native American writers. In James Welch's novels such as *Winter in the Blood* or *Fools Crow*, a reader can see the vital importance of the land, of Montana's prairies and sacred animals. Native Americans have a strong sense of sacredness to the land as they believed that the earth nurtured them and their tribal origins and histories are associated with the tribal land.

The Native Americans were "considered to be obstacles in the development of the American nation. The only choice left for them is that they must assimilate or disappear; and that the answer to the Indian problem again lies in abrogating their special relationship with the federal government" (Lewis 204). The tribal identity of Native Americans is decided by the land they inhabit and the tribal space to which they belong. People have an identity as long as they belong to the tribal community and the tribal land. An individual identity is of little importance to Native Americans as they believe in a wholesome tribal identity and community feeling of oneness. The dispossession of sacred and ancestral place-based tribal land is considered to be one of the most critical moments in the history of Native Americans. Before the colonizers came, the Native Americans were self-sufficient people who have a strong sense of community feeling and respect for all living things on earth. people and place were inseparable in tribal societies. There is a unique relationship to the land and everything that co-exist in their tribal land.

Along with this reverence for the land is the community feeling of oneness and brotherhood. A strong sense of communality and cooperation, reflecting Native Americans' belief in the importance of harmony is another recurrent theme in Native

American literature. Tribes stress cooperation and good relations with the group which is demonstrated in rituals, work and play and decision making. Among many tribes, generosity, helpfulness to others, and respect for age and experience are highly valued that enabled them to survive and continue their culture. In *Speaking of Indians*, Ella C. Deloria writes that her people, "the Dakotas, understand the meaning of self sacrifice, perhaps because their legends taught them that the buffalo, on which their very life depended, gave itself voluntarily that they might live" (Ruoff 11). Native Americans believe in the importance of harmony which is reflected in the tribals' strong sense of communality and cooperativeness. Tribals give utmost importance to cooperation and good relations within the group which is demonstrated in communal rituals, work and pray, and decision making. Many Native American tribes consider generosity, helpfulness to others, and respect for age and experience as highly valued virtues which defined them as one tribal community.

Another of the most important theme in Native American fiction is that of alienation and re-orientation; that is, an individual once removed from his tribal base by war, the lure of the city, or other causes, must suffer extreme alienation as a third worlder within so-called mainstream America. If he or she somehow survives this disclocation and alienation, and if the protagonist desires re-entry into his previous world, he must go through the process of a gradual reaffirmation of his tribal values (Fleck 3).

Another important aspect of Native American literature is Magical Realism. Magical realists like Vizenor and Silko create fiction which is filled "with mythic realities so forceful that they reshape both protagonist's and readers' understanding of the limitations of mere linear reality; a reality that attempts to force one into believing that a state cop is indeed an officer of the law and not an agent of some more powerful force" (Owens 225). The spirit world is a constant element in the narratives of Native Americans and the Nagas oral tradition. There is parallel existence of the spiritual and human world. For them, the supernatural or the spirit world is real and not something out of the extraordinary. Magic realism therefore has been a part of the narrations of indigenous cultures.Native American writers believe in the magical or surreal things that happen and they strongly believe in the most supernatural stories as those stories are passed to them from one generation to another by their elders. In many Native American beliefs, the 'magic' is part of the natural world, an expected attribute of

people gifted with the touch. The Ojibwa viewed magic as part of their culture and society- magic could heal or harm, but with magical abilities come power.

Another important feature is that Native Americans hold thought and word in great reverence because of their symbolic power to alter the universe for good and evil. The power of the word is combined with the power of silence. In the American oral tradition, "silence is the sanctuary of sound. Words are wholly alive in the hold of silence; there they are sacred" (Ruoff 8). Native Americans desire for harmony is also reflected in their deep reverence for the land, another recurrent theme in their oral and written literatures.

James Phillip Welch Jr. was a Native American poet, novelist, essayist, film producer, scriptwriter and instructor. Born on November 14, 1940 on the browning, Montana, reservation, Welch spent most of his childhood on the Blackfeet and Fort Belknap reservations, a lifestyle that provided him with an insider's perspective and gave his voice authenticity. He was an enrolled member of the Blackfeet nation, but also had Gros Ventre and Irish blood on his mother's side of the family. Although his father's work periodically demanded that the family relocate, most of Welch's early life was spent in and around browning area. When he was young, he would often go into town and listen as the elders told stories in Blackfeet; even though he could not speak the language fluently himself, he could understand it (Nelson 2260).

Welch was one of the first contemporary Indian writers to introduce the Native Voice into American Literature. As an Indian writer, he looked to his Blackfeet past, discovering both meaning and identity in the culture of Northwestern Montana. He was proud of his Indian heritage. In a taped interview he had stated, "I have always considered myself an Indian" (Farland 1). Native cultural influences figure into his life through oral traditions carried on in English. When asked in an interview about the shaping influence on his life, Welch replied:

> I consider myself lucky having been born up their on the Blackfeet reservation and spent time on the Ft, Belknap Reservation. …So I just got to meet so many different Indian people and hear so many stories from various tribal groups. So all of that I think is kind of luck of the draw that I was there then and listened to those stories. And later, maybe they didn't exactly enter my

writing verbatim but they would have influenced my writing (Porter and Roemer 234).

Welch began writing poems in the late 1960s, and published his first volume of poetry*Riding the Earthboy 40* in 1971. For the most part, the poems grew from his experiences in the small towns along U.S. Highway, the surrounding, the countryside, and the ranch where his father was leashing a forty-acre tract of land from the Earthboy family. The poems tell stories of what it means to live in that barren, cold part of the country, what it means to be Indian and what it means to face a future with limited possibilities for prospering. Welch then moved into the world of fiction writing with his first novel *Winter in the Blood* (1974), then *The Death of Jim Loney*(1979), *Fools Crow* (1986), and *The Indian Lawyer* (1990). His most recent work, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000) is a historical novel. His non-fiction, *Killing Cluster: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*, was published, in collaboration with Paul Stekler, in 1994 and *Sweet Medicines: Sites of Indian Massacres and Battles* (1995) is another non-fiction collaboration. His novel established his place in the Native American Renaissance literary movement. They were translated into nine foreign languages. Welch was the winner of the 1997 Lifetime Achievement Award of the Native Writer's Circle of the Americas. In 1995, he was given the *Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des lettres* (Knight of the order of the Arts and Letters) by the French cultural Ministry. Welch died at the age of sixty-two in Missoula, Montana, on Monday, August 4, 2003. His death, preceded by a struggle with lung cancer, marked the end of his career.

Welch's life and work have been informed by several basic things: his tribal heritage and experience; his sense of belonging to a place (Montana and the west); his insistence on seeing and depicting American Indian people first as human beings refusing to sentimentalize or romanticize them; and, last, his preoccupation with creating a portraiture of American Indian men's individual lives and struggles, a glimpse into their psyches and their souls. The questions he poses for the protagonists of his five novels entails dilemmas arising from place-centered values and from the political as well as cultural designation of American Indian identity. Tensions between the pursuit of individual happiness and the hope of communal and/or familial well-being grip all five men. A consistent motif in Welch's work, the contested "right

to be Indian," pairs off with the idea that Indians are dealt a double injustice when sentimentality deprives them of being seen as a whole and, therefore, as capable of erring as any other human being. Being "Indian" inherently involves being some things anathema to Euro-American law, and the individual's struggle against being defined by others dovetails with his own foibles. Throughout his works, Welch sought recognition of a basic humanity for his characters, who, even though they may be seen as somehow illegitimate in a particular place, struggle to belong there and to belong with others (Porter and Roemer 235).

The quest pattern is a fundamental aspect of Native American Literature. In Welch's novels, the quest generally focuses on the male hero's search for the father/grandfather or, on a larger scale, for tribal identity. He employs the idea of the departure/quest/return most ironically in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, where the hero, a Lakota Sioux stranded in France, refuses the chance to return to America. The seemingly disjointed structure of Welch's first three novels can be viewed as a reflection of his Blackfeet literary heritage, gleaned from the quest-narratives told to him by his elders. His central characters, all of whom are males, leaves their communities, either to attend law school or to rescue a wolverine or to join up with Buffalo Bill. Their quest leads them back to their ancestral traditions.

Welch uses his background in all his books. Yet in the handling of this material he shows that he is opposing current fashion by not using his Indian-related subject matter as an easy ploy to gain reader's sympathy and interest. Two seemingly opposing features mark most of his writing, and because he is able to make them work in tandem, playing one against the other, his writing gains the tension, playfulness, and intellectual charm of alchemy. Welch balances realism with his whimsical humor and his attraction to absurdity for its own sake, as if he believes that since we live in a world of doomed fools. Adding to his humorous quality is his innate playfulness with words and the related willingness to take risks in his stories' development (Riggs 891).

Welch often expresses bitterness and anger over the events of recent history and their effects upon Native identity, which he sees as devastating. Skeptical of the possibilities of retrieving traditions and history because of these dramatic changes, his writing presents reservation life as a series of pointless attempts to defend a way of

life that cannot be recovered. His settings are often the bar rather than the natural world, and his characters, isolated by their poverty, are unable to connect with their spiritual past amid the bleak surroundings of the modern environment they inhabit (Nelson 1599).

Karen Louise Erdrich, one of the most critically acclaimed Native American writer of the last thirty years, was born on June 7, 1954 in Little Falls, Minnesota. The daughter of a French Ojibwe mother and a German American father, she grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota, where both her parents taught at a Bureau of Indian Affairs school. Her grandfather, Patrick Gourneau, was a beader, story teller, and powwow dancer. Erdrich particularly recalls his stories of the Great Depression and his accounts of his experiences as a Wobbly, a member of the international labor organization called the International Workers of the World. Family stories of life during the hard times of the 1930s made a strong impression on Erdrich. She experienced within her closely knit family circle the strong sense of connection to community that emerges as a theme in each of her novels.

Erdrich is the author of thirteen novels, several volumes of poetry, children's books, and a memoir of early motherhood. Erdrich won the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Nelson Algren Fiction Award in 1982 for "The World's Greatest Fisherman," a short story became part of the novel *Love Medicine*. Her major works include *Jacklight* (1984), *Love Medicine* (1984,1993), *The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), *The Bingo Palace* (1994), *Tales of Burning Love* (1996), *The Antelope Wife* (1998), *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001), *The Master Butchers Singing Club* (2003), *Four Souls* (2004), *The Painted Drum* (2005), *The Plague of Doves* (2008), *Shadow Tag* (2010), and *The Round House* (2012). In 2009, she won the Anisfield-wolf book Award for *The Plague of Doves* and in 2012,the National Book Award for Fiction for *The Round House*. In 2014, she received the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award as well as PEN/ Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction.

Drawing on her Chippewa and German American heritage, she produced a body of work whose pervasive mythical landscape and the cast of interconnected characters has been credited with bringing Native American literature to the literary mainstream and inspiring an entire generation of Native American writing. "She admits that she

writes with an Indian audience in mind, a pan-Indian audience that is able to feel a special affinity for the situations she presents in her novels" (Sawhney 1-2). Her recurrent themes concern the ties between people and geographical locations, the importance of community among all living beings, the complexities of individual and cultural identity, and the exigencies of marginalization, dispossession, and cultural survival. Family and motherhood, storytelling, healing, environmental issues, and historical consciousness are likewise central, thematic emphases that thread Erdrich's works into the expanding web of contemporary American Indian literature (Porter and Roemer 271).

Erdrich was raised a catholic, and this tradition too is reflected in her work, where many of her Native American characters are portrayed as missionized Catholics who also participate in the religious belief systems of their traditional culture. Her characters live within two religious traditions. Not only does Erdrich figure into her novels the landscape she knew as a child, she also writes about the people who live there. The names of her characters represent ethnic identities and roots (Stookey 69). Her literary art has roots in both Euro-American and Native American narrative traditions. She not only works from and experiments with the Euro-American tradition of the novel, but also incorporates within that genre features of other genres and elements of an oral storytelling tradition. Her own experiences with both family narrative and the Ojibwa oral tradition have shaped her desire to present her stories in the voices of storytellers, and through her representation of characters as storytellers, she transforms her readers into listeners. Her plots, comprised of multiple, interconnected stories, do not necessarily unfold through a chronologically linear progression but rather serve as the threads whereby characters' stories are woven together (Stookey 13-14). Homing is a central theme throughout Erdrich's work, one that is repeatedly expressed in characters' quests to find or to return to the place where they belong, the place that is home. Her treatment of homecoming theme draws upon a tradition shaped by other Native American writers.

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CHAPTER II

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY IN KONYAK FOLKTALES AND LOUISE ERDRICH'S *LOVE MEDICINE* AND *THE ANTELOPE WIFE*

"Identity as a concept is fully as elusive as is everyone's sense of his own personal identity" (Rosenthall 7).Identity is an all-pervasive and fundamental aspect of human life, and yet identity as a concept is one of the most hotly debated, contested, and defended concepts of our time.

In *The GreenwoodEncyclopedia of Multiethnic American Literature*, Identity, seen in general terms, relates to the specifics of who, what, and where about of the person(s) and includes a series of markers that identify that person in terms of race, class, culture, gender, religion, ethnicity, and/or nationality. According to this, one's identity is an important aspect of self, but its varied representations in all forms of literature, in different genres as well as different time periods ranging from ancient to contemporary settings delineates how identity reflects and marks up one's culture (Nelson 1042).

Stuart Hall in his article, "*Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,"* argues that, "Identities are never completed, never finished; that they are always as subjectivity itself is, in process. Identity is always in the process of formation." "Identity means, or connotes, the process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together, in this respect" (King 47). Identity formation in this sense is not only about altering beliefs and practices but also questioning the self in relation to the larger society.

In *"Introduction: Who needs Identity?"* StuartHall explains about identification as "drawing meanings from both the discursive and the psychoanalytic repertoire, without being limited to either" (Hall and Du Gay 2). He states that "in common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed - always 'in process.' It is

not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost,' sustained or abandoned (Hall and Du Gay 2).

The questions, then, of "Who I am?" and "Who we are?" becomes very closely related in human identity. Sartre defined the word existence as a technical philosophical term that applied only to the kind of reality human beings have. "Existence precedes essence," meant that the choices we make in the situations we find ourselves determine our essence, that we exist first and thereafter define our essence by the way in which we live. An essence is what something is; it is the character, nature, or function of something; it is what defines the thing and distinguishes it from other kinds of things. In the case of a human being, the essence is who he or she is (Patrik 24).

According to the Existential philosophy, humans are not born with a pre-scripted personality or a preordained purpose or plan or a prefabricated essence conferred by God or nature or history. Human beings do not have fixed, full-fledged essences at birth but are free. Instead it is our actions that define our identity, and it is our values that inform our acts. What a person is rather the result of *how* he or she chooses to exist, the sum of his or her actions and decisions. Human beings are like artists who creatively fashion the projects that constitute the meanings of their existence. We create our own individual essence-our character- through the way we exist as human beings, choosing and then freely acting on our choices. We are also capable of revising or reinventing our essence if we change the course of our actions. This means that each individual creates his or her own personality, habits, tendencies, preferences, talents, and character flaws (Patrik 24).

Rather than having a given make-up that determines our actions, we make our own essences. It is an active process that is not reducible to external or biological factors. Instead of being *given* meaning, we *create* meaning ourselves. No matter what the arguments or evidence for or against an action, it is ultimately the result of an ineffable decision that we make only on the basis of reasons; our decisions are not *caused* by them. The decision is our responsibility and involves our being-in-the-world: consciousness is always consciousness *of* something and is intentional. A

decision implies an intuitive experience which involves phenomenology and not physical reality (Joseph et al 87).

For the existentialists, there is no intrinsic human nature. Whatever our identities, they are formed by our interactions with the outside world. We are our choices. We are judged by actions and not intentions. Sartre tends to regard action as determinative of a person's identity. "Each man is responsible for choosing freedom for himself, one is committed to believing also that he is responsible for choosing freedom for himself" (Sartre, *BN* xvii). A person is defined by what he or she does more than by what he or she says, believes, or wishes, and thoughts, wishes and beliefs often reflect what one would like to be, or to have others believe, more than what one is. He also maintained that behaviors that do not appear to be within conscious control, in the sense that we are normally not aware of choosing them are nonetheless actions for which we are responsible. They are, or stem from, basic existential attitudes that each of us chooses to assume (Michelman 29).

"Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it impossible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom…Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently…" (Sartre, *BN* 49). Sartre suggested that human existence is notable for the fact that we are always ahead of ourselves, and "on the way", with various projects, intentions and aspirations for the future. Rather than our identity being determined by our biological or social status, existentialism insists that our identity must be continually created, and there is a resultant emphasis on our freedom or, in the preferred philosophical vocabulary of the existentialists, our transcendence (Reynolds 3). Our sense of identity is confirmed, even defined, to some degree, by the names that others call us. To be occupied with the quest of identity may not be on the surface of every mind, but no one live a day without doing something that advances or retards this search. When the search does not go well, and uneasiness is succeeded by sheer panic or the immobility of depression, even to be accepted blindly, and for what we know well we are not, is better than to be ignored altogether (Harper 134).

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Existence has to be understood in terms of choice, the most fundamental choice of what to do with one's life, what kind of being to make of oneself. It is this insight that Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre directly inherited. "I exist or I do not exist," said Jaspers, "but my Existenz as a philosophy takes a step toward being or away from being, toward nothingness in every choice or decision I make;" " *Existenz* warns me to detach myself from the world lest I become its prey;" " I am possible *Existenz* in existence. "The possibility of *Existenz* is what I live by; it is only in its realization that I am myself"; or, as Heidegger put it more metaphorically, man can win or lose himself, or only seem to win himself. This is existential freedom, not freedom to choose this or that but to choose oneself (Harper 25).

The Archimedean point for existentialism is thus the question, "Who am I?" In order to reply, we must first reject the pre-digested mores, rules, orders, and routines of the modern world, all of which divert our focus from making purposeful choices. Pursuing this thought in his *Journal*, Kierkegaard wrote:

> What I really need is to get clear about *what I must do*, not what I must know, except in so far as knowledge must precede every act. What matters is to find a purpose…the crucial thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die*. Of what use would it be to me to discover a so-called objective truth…constructing a world I did not live in but merely held up for others to see…if it had no deeper meaning *for me and for my life?* (Judaken and Bernasconi 7).

The identity of both the Konyak and the Native American is in contrast to the individual determinism of identity as explicated by the existential philosophy. For

both the tribals, identity is connected to the community and the people. As Esther Konyak writes, "The very identity of a Naga is rooted to land and culture. The loss of land is seen as loss of identity, an alienation from nature. With this strong sense of connection, the protection of land and forest was both conscious and culturally internalized. Therefore, the belief that as "land belonged to the human, the human belonged to the land" was a strong ethical and moral foundation of everyday Konyak life" (*FNR* 53). People and place are inseparable in the tribal societies of both the Konyak and the Native Americans. The longing for the tribal land or to be 'home' is present in tribal societies. Everything is connected to their land they call home and revolves around it - spiritual, social, religious, cultural and physical. Life of the Individual is an integrated whole. To them home is of great importance as it is the past, values and place that define their tribal identity. For the Konyak, home is not marginally the people in a family or people who are related by blood by "home" is their tribal clan, community and village, their mother land where they belong to. The Konyak consider their village as their home, their 'motherland'. And as William Bevis stated, "Identity for a Native American is not a matter of finding 'one's self' but of finding a self that is transpersonal and includes a society, a past, and a place. To be separated from that transpersonal time and space is to lose identity" (Fleck 19). Thus the tribal identity of both the tribal is considered to be derived from a meaningful sense of self which evolves from connections to family, place, community and language. A person is not fully satisfied until and unless they are connected to the tribal land.

Colonization by the British and later by the Indian government has resulted in shaping the ethnic identity of the Konyak Nagas. The Konyak like the rest of the other Naga tribes in Nagaland face the challenge of identifying with their ancient tribal heritage and at the same time identifying with the Indian nation. The colonial administrators, ethnographers and anthropologists have often associated them with racial labels and tags such as 'wild people,' 'savage,' 'primitive,' 'uncivilized,' 'fierce headhunters,' 'Chinese,' 'chinky' etc., and even within Nagaland referred to as one of the 'backward tribe.'

The tribal identity of the Konyak is connected to their tribal land, to the community and to their people. The land reforms introduced by the British administration made

the Konyak to strongly defend and fought against the British administration when the Britishers tried to annexe part of the Konyak areas. They raided the plain areas under the British administration in Assam as they felt threatened that their annexation would mean living under alien land reforms. Their sense of security regarding their self-governance and administration was disturbed. They fought to protect themselves from any coercive external forces that might endanger their identity. Even when the Britishers left India, and the state of Nagaland was created as India's 16th state under the Union of India in 1963, Konyak were not willing to be integrated to a state under India. It threatened their intact socio-political administration under the *Angh*. It is because of this that even when the other Naga tribes went for general Election to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in 1964, the Konyak and the Eastern Nagaland people, then under Tuensang Hills district refused to go for election. It was only in 1974 after a decade that they finally decided to have the General Election. This has greatly disintegrated the *Angh* system of the Konyak Nagas to which they identify themselves with socially and politically. Power has shifted from the *Angh* to legislators and administrators.

Orally transmitted tales or written texts are the ways through which meaning is shared. As N. Scott Momaday writes, "Storytelling is imaginative and creative in nature. It is an act by which man strives to realize his capacity for wonder, meaning and delight. It is also a process in which man invests and preserves himself in the context of ideas. Man tells stories in order to understand his experience, whatever it maybe. The possibilities of storytelling are precisely those of understanding the human experience" (Lundquist 204).

The migration stories form an integral part of their rhetoric for constructing a collective Naga identity and for claiming an independent Naga nation. Like the other Naga Tribes, the Konyaks do not have a written history of their origin and migration. The Konyaks of all villages had similar traditions regarding their origin and migration of their forefathers. However their oral history narrates their migration and origin to '*Longphang Veenyu,*' According to A. Peihwang wangsa, *'Longphang*' means 'under the rock,' and '*Phinyu'* means 'wide-open or open-up.' His view indicates that the Konyak originated from 'stone caves' or 'valley beneath the stone'(Wangsa 3).

According to Reverend Y. Chingang, "*Longphang Phinyu/Veenyu*" may have connection with the story of the Tower of Babel mentioned in Genesis 11: 1-9 of the *Bible*. This view is strengthened by the way people invoke blessings, "*Longphang Veenyu, Shemnyu Hamnyu mepu moiman yahkei,"* (Grant us blessing from Shem and Ham of Longphang Veenyu) (Konyak Union 26-30). Both T. Honlong and Reverend Pongsing opine that the mention of Shem and Ham, children of Noah, and the use of names such as Yona or Jona, Mosa, Aaron, Hosea and Abram from time immemorial even before they became Christians might suggest that they were one of the groups of Noah's descendants. Another tradition points to a mountain called *Yengnyudang*, situated to the south of the present Konyak territory (Furer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas* 5). Thanglong Yanlem opined that *Longphang Phinyu* and *Yengnyudang* suggests the Konyaks as "Children of rock and vegetation," as the terms, 'Long' means 'rock' and 'yeng' means 'river' in Konyak (Konyak Union 26). A. Yanang Konyakalso gives similar view about *Longphang Phinyu* and *Yengnyudang.* However, *Yengnyudang* is considered as the place of settlement of the Konyaks and not as the place of origin (Konyak Union 27). Both these traditions were found to have uphold that the Konyak ancestors came across a huge gate during their migration known as *'Alemkaphen,'* which is interpreted as 'the gate of the Sun' by A. Yanang and as the 'gate of everything' by Thanglong Yanlem (Konyak Union 27). It makes clear that Konyak origin myth is related to earth. It attributes human existence to natural elements created by the Supreme Creator. This intrinsic attachment to land/earth shows how the Konyaks like the other Nagas consider "land as the "Mother Earth" from which people emanated" (Imsong 7) and as Hutton writes, "Interestingly, all the ethnic groups point to a place in the south as a cave, rock, or mountain as their place of origin and attribute their beginning to the land" (Imsong 23).

Land for the Konyak is not just a place of origin but it also encompasses all the rocks, trees, water, stones, clouds, sky, forests, animals, spirits, etc., that exists on land. Human world is interconnected with the natural and the supernatural worlds. Human beings associated with inanimate objects and even have personal and marriage relationships with spirits and animals. The folktales also tell us of their belief in the Supreme Creator who created all beings and things of the Universe. Land is their mother land, territory, culture, religion and spirituality. Several folktales of the Konyak associate their sacred relationship to land and how land is basic to the ethos

of their culture, and to the identity formation as an indigenous people of the land. The diverse folktales describe the integration of the spiritual, social, cultural, political and economic aspects of the life of the Konyaks. Some of which are narrated and interpreted in detail below,

Folktale One: Jeilok and Naoman

According to Konyak myth, the first human being on the earth was Jeilok and Naoman who were also brothers. Among them, Jeilok was the eldest. Both Jeilok and Naoman lived contented and happy life until one day, misunderstanding broke out between the two, which could not be resolved. As days passed, the quarrel became more frequent and relationship turned more severe and bitter.

When both the brothers could not tolerate the fights anymore, they decided to part ways. Jeilok decided to go up to the sky while Noaman decided to stay back on earth. But though the brothers now lived in different places, the bitter feelings continued and there was contestation for power and supremacy. Both wanted to display their power by experimenting with the strengths they had. Phenomenon like lightning, thunder and storm is believed to be an attribute of Jeilok and his anger, while earthquake is believed to have been started by Naoman (Wangjin, Konyak and Konyak 67).

In this folk narrative, there is an apparent use of diffusionist approach to the formation of clans or subclans. The Konyaks identify themselves as Thendu and Thenkoh based on whether they tattooed their face and bodies or not, and Wang (Chiefs) and Pen (Commoners), the clan system which indicates their socio-political status. Even today, the Konyaks in different villages or areas/ranges declare themselves to either belong to Jeilok or Naoman's descendants. One of the important elements of Konyak identity is clan. A Naga clan is a collection of families, subject to a single chieftain, commonly bearing the same surname and supposed to have a common ancestor. Clan is a kinship group or a distinct family based on actual descent from a common ancestor, as traced through the male (patriclan) or the female (matriclan) line. Clans normally require their members to marry outside the group (exogamous), and marriage within the clan is regarded as incest. Clans may segment into sub-clans or lineages, and genealogical records and myths may be altered to incorporate new members who lack kinship ties with the clan. Clan membership may be useful in ensuring mutual support and defence as well as in the mediation of disputes over

property rights and the mode of residence after marriage. Bonds of loyalty and joint responsibility among the members of a clan are very stronger. Cooperation between the clan members also extended to the economic activities. A man rebuilding his house would get free voluntary labour from his clans' men.

The collective life took precedence over the individual life. The obligation of a Naga was first to his family, clan and then to his village. This in due course of time required a total submission to the village community. The village community looked after the individual needs that were common to the entire community, and for the satisfaction of such needs the entire village was responsible. The history of the Naga villages was enshrined in custom and tradition, through the celebration of feasts in honour of heroes, through songs about the valour of the brave and through the fine cloth woven by the women for the noble. Each village was like a small republic having almost everything what they required at that time.In the past, the name of the village from where a person comes from was very important, and the village name, rather than the tribe name, was extensively used in almost all matters till very recently.

The village system plays an important role in the Naga society and by tradition the Village chief is the nominal head of the village. The village chief is not chosen but hereditary passing down to the eldest son of the family. Under the village chief a village council or village authority are nonnally formed. The members of this council are equal representatives from each clan who are either elected or nominated by their respective clans. The people rely on their village authorities to settle cases and disputes. They don't take the lengthy recourse of going to the courts.Customary laws which are traditional and used since generations are applied.People abide by the rulings of these village bodies which are generally in the form of penalties to the guilty in accordance with the nature of the crime. This traditional leadership of the chiefs and village council is still a formidable force even today among the Naga society

The political life of the tribal of India reflects a paradoxical situation in which democracy and monarchy co-exist. Every head of a community at different levels like clan, village and territory is generally honoured, obeyed and accepted as the head of the group. Every tribal has a share in the political ties of the village and the region. The tribal leader governs the community only because he is backed by the majority or the whole of the group. There

seem to be no society where political activities are non-existent. Even the smallest community requires some form of government. The tribals have clearly demarcated territorial boundaries. As a rule the tribals, living in small groups, are united by kinship, marriage and frequent individual contact, and with them it is difficult to distinguish political affairs from domestic affairs. Tribal political associations are of various kinds and incorporate individuals, elders, families, a clan group, a village and a tribal territory. Still they are micro-political in nature. Every tribal village has some type of political machinery to look after the village affairs. After the independence political structure in the village changing and with democracy they also started participating in the present political structure. The villagers are engaged in mainstream politics in terms of participating in the general elections. The mainstream political party also has influence in the village.

Folktale Two: The Rooster and the Sun

Once upon a time, the sun was shining so brightly and scorchingly that every creature started to complain. This hurt the sun that he went into hiding and refused to come out. The creatures were very happy but only for a while for the earth became dark and the creatures began to face many problems. Every kind of creature requested the sun to come out but in vain. At last it was the rooster's turn. He persuaded in every way he can but the sun was adamant. The rooster was almost about to give up but then it came upon an idea. The rooster asked if the sun can come out and help him if it is attacked by a jungle cat on his way back. The sun gave his promise. After going a short distance, the rooster gave a false cry and crowed. The sun kept its promise and came out to help the rooster. From that day onwards, the sun comes out every morning when the rooster crows (Konyak MS).

This folktale tells us about the Konyaks' intrinsic attachment to the natural elements of the universe. On one level, it may imply to the kind of socio-political structure and administration of the Konyak society. The Konyaks are ruled by the *Angh* who are sometimes tyrannical as everyone has to pay tributes to him. The complaint against the sun indicates the people's protest against the chief or their ruler whenever he turns out to be oppressive and demanding. The request of the creatures' maybe the realization of the people to let themselves be governed by a ruler in order to have a balanced society as in those days people had to live together and work together and defend themselves against any kind of troubles from outside forces. On another level,

the tale is similar to the Ao Naga story that traced the earliest period when human beings, gods (spirits), animals, trees, rivers, mountains and celestial bodies lived together in harmony and communicated with each other. As Imsong writes, "This story indicates that the Nagas perceived the process of identity formation not merely as a "social construct" but rather as a socio-economic and integrated terrestrial-celestial event" (Imsong 8).

Folktale Three: The Origin of Tattoo

Tale (a):*Once upon a time, a group of young men from a certain Konyak village went to the forest for hunting. After a long and tiring day, they killed an animal that nobody knew or has ever seen a similar kind of animal in the past. It was a strange and mysterious animal to them. Since nobody knew or has ever seen this kind of animal, the young men debated among themselves whether to eat the meat or to discard it. An old man sitting in the corner, noticing the event unfolding rushed to the spot and exclaimed 'this is an animal with four legs'!. The old man than suggested that it was wise for them to butcher and distribute the meat among themselves. Heeding the old man's advice, they carried the animal to the village, butchered and distributed the meat to all the households and members of the village. But meanwhile, they forget to distribute the meat to an old widow who lived at the edge of the village.*

Within the next few days and months, an unusual sign and calamity began to creep into the village. The Rooster stopped crowing, the rice beer did not turn effective, sickness and diseases increased, the land grew barren and the harvest was poor and so forth. This phenomenon was new and unusual to them. Suddenly, becoming victim to these misfortunes which was alien to them, the villagers decided to summon a shaman to investigate and find the reason for these misfortunes. After a long period of ritual performance and prayer, the shaman conveyed the message that they had killed an animal which belonged to the Supreme Being and that Supreme Being was angry with them. The shaman also warned the villagers that they would not be able to live and prosper anymore in the same village they had lived and prospered for ages. Having received this message of condemnation, the villagers dispersed and scattered to different places. When the inhabitant of another village heard about these misfortunes, they decided to tattoo themselves on their face as a reverence and also to restrain the wrath of Supreme Being and find its favor. The news of this village

getting tattooed on their face spread to another village. Not willing to perform similar tattoo, the village then decided to get tattooed themselves on their shoulder. This chain of tattoo continued in different villages with each opting for different patterns and designs.

Therefore, to this day, among the Konyaks, the forms of tattoos are different in pattern and in style (Wangjin, Konyak and Konyak 85-86).

Tale (b):*In those days of headhunting, a community happened to go for the raid of their enemy's community. Unfortunately the Ahng, warriors and the elders could not take the enemy's head. It was an orphan boy who managed to take it. As per the norm of the society, the orphan deserved the honor as a warrior in their community. It aroused jealousy of the people. The leaders decided to punish the poor boy by pricking his body and face with black marks. Later, the boy grew up with the mark, which looked more attractive. It rather became a kind of identification for his bravery. From then on others also competed to go for hunting in order to get the same mark to identify their maturity and bravery. And thus tattoo became a permanent cultural pride in Konyak society* (Konyak Union 74).

Tattoo is an important practice of the Konyaks. In Konyak language, it is '*tatu*' or *'huhtu.*' *'ta'* or '*tangta*' which refers to body and *'tu'* means 'prick.' The latter '*huhtu*,' where '*huh*' means 'thorn,' is more commonly used among the Konyaks (Konyak Union 73). Tattoo was also a pattern of dressing and a symbol of identity. Tattoos are the permanent cultural and social signs systems of the Konyaks. Tattoo are marked on different parts of the human body like chest, face, hand, back and leg and varies from village to village. In Konyak society, tattoos act as the social and cultural reflection of the lives of both men and women. Tattoos on man indicate their political and social status based on their achievements and groups. A man gets tattooed on his back and chest only if he is considered as a warrior. He becomes a man of high social and political respect not only by his community and village but also by other villagers. At the same time, his peer groups' also gets tattoed with him on their willingness but on the face and arms only. Whereas, female tattoos' indicate a totally different signification from that of male,their bodies do not carry any social or political achievements unlike the male. Their tattoo is based on the life cycle of female body from a girl to womanhood and marriage. Tattoos indicate their gendered status. The first tattoo is

done on the calf of a girl when she reaches the age of 7 or 8 years. She gets her second tattoo on her arm and elbow indicating her marriageable age. The third tattoo completes the full circle started in the first stage around her calf and also on the thigh to mark her engagement for marriage. She gets the final tattoo on her chest after she has married. Thus, tattoos signify for the Konyak's sign system, order, self-determination, culture, society, polity and identity. Their actions of tattooing define their identity and the values attributed to them inform their acts. They create their own individual essence through the way they exist as human beings different from each other, choosing and then freely acting on their choices.

Tale (a) explicates the Konyak as non-vegetarians who also hunted and feasted on animal meat for their sustenance. It also shows how the community shares their foods equally with each other irrespective of who has hunted the meat. The unforeseen calamity overwhelming them indicates how the killing of an animal leads to the disturbance of the cosmic universe and their performance of rituals and prayers, their penance of disturbing the universe brings out their indigenous belief system. The only solution to ward off this calamity was to perform tattoo which spread and became a part of their life and identity.

Tale (b) tells us about the practice of headtaking and how it raised the prestige and status of a person who is able to take heads. He is called as '*naomei*,' meaning 'warrior.' Society at that time was structured as chief clans, commoners and intermediates. It shows how people looked up to social mobility by earning name and honour that it aroused jealousy in those who could not attain so as in the case of the orphan who is punished and not rewarded and recognized for his bravery. We also see how everyone yearns for belonging to a social group '*ai,*' in Konyak a peer group and '*naomeilan*' or 'warriors.'Tattooing is associated with headtaking but headtaking has often been described as headhunting by the colonial writers and has been internalized by the Konyaks as well. The Konyak regarded the man who collected more heads as 'naomei' which means warrior, the highest social status accorded to a person. They place the security of their village in the hands of their '*naomei lan'* who could protect them their enemies and defend the village from raids and wars. Furer-Haimendorf writes that,

> "the wish to capture heads seems to have been the cause of many feuds between villages which had otherwise no conflicting interests…Konyaks did

> not normally go to war to enlarge their territory or to loot their opponents" (*The Konyak Nagas* 95).

Headhunting by the Konyak Nagas cannot be termed in its literal sense because the Konyaks did not go for hunting just for the love of it. It was not a game to them where they had to 'chase' and 'hunt'. It was a war. It was a defence mechanism for the well-being of a village and the community as M. Imsong, in *God-Land-People: An Ethnic Naga Identity* (2009) writes,

> For the Nagas 'headhunting' was one of the main necessary mechanisms for 'defence,' 'offence' and regulation of life in a sovereign setting just like the modern warfare. It is also seen as a mechanism for survival itself. In order to maintain and sustain sovereign entity of village republic and/or monarchy, there is bound to be some mechanism, measures and regulations. 'Headhunting' fulfills one of these criteria or requirements of existence and maintenance (91).

For the Konyaks, losing of the lives of their loved ones' mounted to taking revenge. Indeed, the practice of taking enemies' head was a direct retaliation for the killing of a kinsman or co-villager. Konyaks considered it as war if a person belonging to a particular clan or village is killed relating to matters of land disputes, if the peaceful co-existence of the village is disrupted and when disputes arises over the breakup of a marriage if one of the party has been wrongly dealt with. Encroachment of land and territory meant challenging the villages and stealing of grains and livestocks meant cutting off their survival. This clearly shows that the practice of headhunting was to protect their village and their community which is their identity as it is attached to the village/place/land.

On another level, headtaking is associated with fertility factor. Verrier Elwin writes about headtaking that, "The practice is probably based on a belief in a soul-matter or vital essence of great power which resides in the human head. By taking a head from another village, therefore, it was believed that a new injection of vital and creative energy would come to the aggressor's village when he brought a head home. This was valuable for human and animal fertility. It stimulated the crops to grow

better…Indeed, it is said that a youth who had not taken a head found considerable difficulty in obtaining a wife at all" (11).Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf also writes in *The Naked Nagas* that "the bringing in of a head not only furthers in a magical way the fertility of the village, but also in a more concrete manner acts an incentive to trade and production" (178). And further in *The Konyak Nagas: An Indian Frontier Tribe* (1968), Haimendorf explicates that "the only motivation of so widespread a practice as headhunting was the desire to acquire the fertility-promoting force of human blood and the power emanating from human skulls….The quest for prestige gained by successful head-hunters and the desire to avenge the losses of one's own clan or village by killing enemies and capturing their heads were certainly additional motives" (95). He further states that "neither vengeance nor animosity had inspired the killing of such victims, and that the only motive had been the desire to acquire the magical virtue attached to a human head, and with it also the right to the insignia of a head-hunter" (Fuhrer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas* 97).

However, with the entry of the British in the Naga Hills, headhunting was banned and villages involved in such practices were punished severely by imposing huge fines, ravaged and burnt. As a result, headhunting practices stopped in the 1950s. Though the government through its various agencies and policies could stop the headhunting practices to a considerable extent, it is also true that Christianity played an important role in curbing headtaking and tattoo system. Christianity, through its principles, could convince people that murder is a sin and, therefore, anyone committing murder would face the wrath of God (Exodus 20:13). Besides this, the Christian missionaries and church workers taught people how to reconcile and forgive one another.

Folktale Four: "HOW A KING CAME INTO BEING"

Tale (a):*The first belief is that as they migrated from Longphang phinyu they led a nomadic life for a very long time in search of a suitable place, where there was fertility and abundance of water. But they could not find good water and continued to wander into many places for a long time. They came across many thorny bushes and leeches which made them bleed. As they went on, some people could not bear their thirst and began to suck their own blood to quench their thirst. Some of them could bear their thirst and did not drink their blood; they offered sacrifices to Kahwang and asked for help from the superior one. Then they were blessed with a stream of water*

from where all the people drank to their satisfaction. They all decided to settle down there. Oneday as they sat down to eat, the group of people who did not drink their blood hesitated to eat with the other group of people who drink their own blood.They claimed themselves to be clean and considered the other group to be unclean. As they were clean they considered themselves superior and in the long run they became to be known as the Ahng clan; that is, people of higher class, and to date they do not eat together with the common people on the same plate and drink from a cup (Wangjin, Konyak and Konyak 81).

Tale (b):*After the migration and having settled down, the Konyaks began to plough their land and domesticate livestock. But of all those people who cultivated their lands, there was a particular man who was exceptionally wealthy. His harvest continued to fill the granary and his livestock continued to multiply and flourish. One day, the people came to him to enquire the source and reason for his property. They pleaded with him to share the wealth and his prosperity to which he asked them to bring a portion of their harvest and meat. Once this demand was fulfilled, the same prosperity and wealth was guaranteed to them. As years passed, the people began to flourish and prosper in rice, cattle and vegetables. Then, the man called the people to his presence and demanded them to continue to offer and give tributes to him as he was the source of their wealth and prosperity. He also demanded that he would be king and rule over them. The people had no other option but to bow and accept his demand. This then gave birth to the practice of Chief system which continues as a tradition even today* (Wangjin, Konyak and Konyak 83).

The Konyaks are known for their *'Angh-Wanglam'* which means '*Angh*'s rule or system' (Konyak Union 60). The *Angh* is the Supreme head of the community. He belongs to the royal clan by birth and so his status is also inherited by birth. He is believed to possess the spirit of the tiger and were also regarded as the son of god, the divine being known as '*Kahhu Wangha*.' He has the political power to rule the people or shoulder the responsibility of keeping his territory powerful, peaceful and prosperous. Destined to be the *Angh,* he is believed to have the gift of wisdom by nature. But he is also required to have knowledge about his ancestry and the customs and traditions, norms of his kingdom and his people. He appoints the Deputy *Anghs* to assist him in the administration. The *Angh* maintains good relationship with his public

as well as the neighbouring villages. He visits his subject villages or sends emissaries from time to time to get information of their current affairs and to keep close contact with them. The subject villages had to pay tributes to the *Angh* in return for his service and protection.

Any problem that arises in a community is brought before the *Angh's* court or the Council, *'angh-gho'* (Wangsa 8). The chief *Angh* is the head of the court and his assistants are the Deputy *Anghs* from the royal clan itself. The members of the court are the representatives from different clans and *paans* (morung) known as *'ngeangpalan'* or *'ngeangpa'* (Wangsa 9). This council has the responsibility for social, political, religious and economic affairs of the entire territory. Religious and secular role cannot be separated in Konyak tribal society. This council adjudicates disputes and punishes offences and breaches of taboos concerning the community as a whole. The council also decides matter of rituals and ceremony and fixes date; for communal agricultural rites. The *Ahnggho* covers both internal and external affairs of its community. The representatives are selected on the basis of their merit. In the council the decision of the *Angh* is final and honoured by all. The council enforces customary rites, and adjudicates all disputes. The punishment of the council is varied according to the nature of the crime committed by the individual. The punishment is generally imposed in the form of fine, in kind or cash, which is not paid by the aggrieved party, but it shared by the representatives.

The first oral narrative states that Konyak had led migratory life and in the process of their search for a settlement, the system of division among the people sipped in. It notes how the lineage system of being 'pure' and 'unclean' evolved during their migration. The purer group is seen to be those who did not give in to their drastic circumstance but patiently waited for God's providence to quench their thirst. They later dissociated themselves from those they considered as polluted, whereas, the unclean group gave in to their circumstances and sucked their own blood. This leads to the notion that the pure blood lineage system evolved on the basis of their consistency and endurance while the unclean blood lineage on the basis of their weak and vulnerable tendency. This must have elevated or diminished the dispositions of these two different groups of people who later organized themselves as chief and commoner clans.

The second tale tells us about life after their settlement. In this folktale, we see how a man became exceptionally wealthy among others. When the people asked him the reason for his prosperity, he tells them to pay him tributes in the form of crops after their harvest, portion of the meat whenever an animal is killed and its head when it is hunted. Year after year, people brought him their tributes which might have increased his wealth and thereby made him feel superior and powerful. He must have accumulated so much tribute that it must have been sufficient enough to feed his whole community in times of hunger and stravation. And so when he called himself their *Angh*, no one could object or oppose his claim, and he had power over the rest of the people**.** His intelligent decision at the appropriate time enables him to be a ruler, the '*Angh,*' is the centre of authority in Konyak society. He holds the high position in the society and is highly respected. The choice to accept the prosperous man as their *Angh* by the people and the man assuming the position of ruler is based on the freedom of choice. But they cannot escape the freedom as they have to bear full responsibility for their actions. The people continue to pay tribute to their *Angh* and the *Angh* has to deliver his duties to his subject, maintains their social and political power, provides protection to his subjects, and looks after them in times of famine, hunger, sickness, disputes, conflicts and war; What seems rather to be the result of how he has chosen to exist. He seems to be a "Man…..the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself in the future" (Michelman 141) as commented by Sartre. He does not seem to be born with a pre-scripted personality purpose or plan or a prefabricated essence conferred by God or nature or history. Instead it is his actions that define his identity, and his values that inform his acts. As stated by the existentialists, "What a person is rather the result of *how* he or she chooses to exist, the sum of his or her actions and decisions. We create our own individual essence-our character- through the way we exist as human beings, choosing and then freely acting on our choices. We are also capable of revising or reinventing our essence if we change the course of our actions" (Patrik 24).

However, at present the *Angh*'s power is declining due to the direct impact of modern political institutions such as Gaonbura, Dobashi and Village Council and other administrative system. Christianity was also indirectly responsible for the decline of *Angh*'s power through its preaching about love, brotherhood, forgiveness and equality among its followers. This somehow gradually changed the attitude of the *Angh* and

his subjects. In the past, the *Anghs* were authoritarian and their words are considered final and binding. Anyone who tresspassed or violated such laws was given death penalty or severe punishment. As a result, the *Angh* is feared and obeyed by all. It was told that no one dared to look straight at the *Angh* or bypassed him. Such was the power and status of the *Angh*. But with Christianity, the *Angh* also learnt to be compassionate and loving to his subjects.

Folktale Five: How Human Tricked the Tiger

Tale (a): *In the very beginning, 'Yamoinyu' (supreme mother) gave birth to all the living creatures. After some time, she finally gave birth to the first human 'Peyu.' When other creatures saw the human, they began to make fun of him as he possessed a neck which was different from all of them. The days passed, the creatures would not stop mocking and bullying the human. One day, 'Yamoinyu' called all the creatures to her presence and proclaimed that someday, the human will have command and authority over all of them. After that day, the human began to grow stronger and more intelligent.*

As time passed, all the creatures began to bear grudges against the human. Of all the creatures, the tiger felt more threatened and humiliated and therefore decided to draw a plan to kill the human. One day, the tiger set a trap, called his two cubs and asked them to keep watch over it. He told them to alert him by beating a wooden drum, the moment the human was trapped. Meanwhile, the human saw the trap that had been laid by the tiger. The human waited for a while until the tiger had left the place. Being a clever creature, the human then lured the two cubs with bananas. The cubs not realizing the intention of the human stepped forward and instead got themselves trapped and killed. Meanwhile, when the tiger came back and realized that his cubs had been killed, he was so annoyed that he chased the human to kill him. The human ran until he found a tree and claimed on its branches. When the tiger chased him, the human then advised the tiger to skin the bark of the tree if he wanted to catch him. Once the tiger skinned the bark, it became more slippery and difficult for him to climb the tree. Later when the human saw a hollow trunk, he called the tiger to push and rolled down the trunk for which in return, he could eat him. The tiger once again fell for the humans crafty trap. Once the tiger had rolled the trunk, the human jumped

and run to safety inside the trunk. The tiger not giving up took a stick and started poking the human to annoy him to which the human asked the tiger to use a cane splits instead, if he really wanted to eat him. Once again the tiger inserted the cane splits into the trunk to which the human encircled on his waist as belt. Finally, the tiger realized he was no match for the human wit and intelligence and therefore gave up. To this day, the Konyak men use the cane splits as belt (Wangjin, Konyak and Konyak 5-6).

The story tells us about how the Konyaks maintain the distinctiveness of human beings even though they are intrinsically related to the tiger, Earth and spirit. It shows how the Supreme Mother made every creature distinct from each other and disrespecting His creation led to given intelligence, authority and command to the man. And though the other creatures try to defeat this power they are at their wit's end, as the man had been already ordained by the creator. The spirit takes the side of the mocked and the weak.

Tale (b): Spirit, man and Tiger

Once, there were three brothers- spirit, man and tiger lived together with their mother. The spirit always took great care of their mother. The spirit and man always protected their mother from their brother, Tiger who wanted to eat her. One day, the mother became very ill and was about to die. So spirit and man sent the tiger away from home as they feared that the tiger would eat her up if she died in his presence. They quickly buried the mother's body beneath the hearth, made a fire on top of it and were having their meals. When the tiger returned, he enquired of their mother and her burial place. The man and the tiger had a heated argument over the issue. The tiger parted his way from his two brothers and fled to the jungle. The man decided to stay back home and the spirit decide to watch over them (Konyak MS).

This story is similar to other Naga groups with little variations. But the central theme of the story is that the human being, tiger, spirits and the Earth are all relatives. The tale narrates how the three sons were separated and became the ancestors of three different Konyak groups. It also talks about how a human being tries to maintain a distinct place from the animal kingdom. The spirit relies how man and animals, creatures depends on the Earth. As Imsong writes, "Human identity is distinct from,

yet retains close relationships with nature and other created beings. Humans do this without domination and subjugation" (Imsong 153).

Folktale Six: The Heavenly Princess

Once upon a time, in Wakching Village, there lived a man named Ngampa. He had an orchard beside his house where he planted Canna lily (Aw-iy) which was dark red in colour and was extremely beautiful and bloomed in all seasons. Every day, Ngampa would water the flower and would take extraordinary care of it. But as days passed, Ngampa found that someone had been plucking the bloomed-Canna lily at night from his orchard.

One night, Ngampa decided to wait in the garden and catch the responsible person. As he waited throughout the night, nothing seemed to happen. Finally at dawn, he saw a small thread roll down from the sky. As he waited, Ngampa saw a girl descending on the thread and plucking the full bloomed flower. He spared no time and ran to the spot and caught the girl. As he got hold of the girl, he saw that she was exceptionally beautiful resembling an Angelic being. She had a very beautiful and attractive body. Ngampa named the girl 'Helem' and they were soon married.

Like any other human, Helem learned all types of work and duties. One day, they purchased a plot of land to cultivate crops. However, the land was filled with big trees and it was difficult for them to grow any crops. They decided to approach the Supreme Being for a favor and assistance to which the Supreme Being sent a cyclone and the entire trees in the field was uprooted. But Ngampa and Helem did not know what to do with the debris to which the Supreme Being again sent cyclone and all the debris from the field was cleared. With the passage of time, as the crops began to grow, the field was also filled with weeds overshadowing the crops. When Ngampa and Helem again asked the Supreme Being, Helem was advised to run around the hut three times and proclaimed "Aswüilong - Ahüngphüt." When she obeyed and returned to the hut, she found the field cleared from the thick weeds. The cyclone had cleared and carried the weeds to all over the land of the Konyaks. To this day, some village called one type of weed as "Achan Hing" or 'Wakching's weed.'

The following year, when the time for harvest came, the surplus of paddy was so much that they did not know what to do with it. There was no more space in the hut to store the grains. Besides, it was too much for them to carry back home. Helem once again seek the advice of the Supreme Being to which she was told to untie her hair and ran around the hut. But when she ran around the hut and came back, she found all the paddy had vanished. She felt so bad and once again approached the Supreme Being asking to restore her back the lost paddy. The Supreme Being then advised her to slaughter a completely red and big rooster and perform sacrifice. When the sacrifice was performed, all the grains came raining down from underneath the python's scale sleeping on the roof of the hut. It is for this reason that even today, before the harvest, a statement is proclaimed to give them all the grains hidden on the snake's scale or the grains that have stuck on an elephant toes or in the teeth of wild boar. It is also believed that, during the harvest, women were supposed to tie their hairs or lest the grains would disappear.

Once the grains were restored, Ngampa and Helem carried all the grains to the village. As an acknowledgement to the Supreme Being for the blessings and for the great harvest, they threw great celebration known as 'Lao Mo' or 'Harvest celebration' which the Konyaks continue to practise as tradition thereafter.

As months and years passed, Helem grew old and aged. All the wealth she had accumulated and stored over the years was drained out. By now, she had not much to eat and drink. She did not have anyone to ask for or to bank and to rely on. She could not bear the pain of living in this desperate condition and therefore wanted to die but instead she continued to live more and more years.

One day, Helem decided to end her own life and therefore sought the advice of the Supreme Being then advised Helem to cover herself with a winnower and wait in the path of Mithun (Bos frontalis) and Buffaloes. As she waited, the animals passed through and killed her instantly. Her body was crushed into many pieces and some piece became Muyak, some became Gong-gong while other became Sokphat. It is said that even today, when we hear the singing of three different birds 'Muyak – Muyak' 'Shokphat – Shokphat' and 'Gonggong – Gonggong', it is actually the cry and weeping of Helem's spirit. On the other hand, Wakching myth says that the plot of

land Ngampa and Helem cultivated still exist with the name 'WANGAHNG KAH' at 'Hoiphan' field or yem (Wangjin, Konyak and Konyak 60-62).

Through this tale, we know that during the time of harvest, a woman should not untie her lock of hairs or carry the paddy through the backdoor of the hut. Also, before harvest starts, a sacrifice should be performed by slaughtering a big red rooster. Finally, when all the grains from the field are carried home, a ceremony called – *Lao mo* – (Harvest festival) was to be celebrated as acknowledgement and offerings for the blessing.

The story describes the intimate spiritual relationships that existed with the Heavenly Beings and the humans. They had strong communications and even to the extent of marital relationship. Human being was able to communicate with the spirit effectively through the help of his angelic wife on earth expressing his weaknesses and strength and needs, thus receiving favor from the spirit. It also re-affirms the feminine power of fertility and procreation that transcends to the other natural world. The Konyak Naga traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices are closely related. Prior to Christianisation, the Konyaks believed in the existence of many gods and spirits such as god of heaven, earth, forest, river, fertility, etc. For most of the tribal communities, cultural practices and norms are closely interwoven with their religious beliefs. These practices and beliefs shape their life-worlds and their relationship with one another. The interconnectedness makes it difficult to strictly differentiate between tribal culture and religious beliefs.

The indigenous Konyak people believe in the Supreme Being called '*Youngwan Kahwang*,' where '*Kahwang'* means 'God of heaven and earth,' and '*Youngwan'* means 'Lord, the Almighty' (Wangsa 11). They believe this supreme deity created the firmament and who caused the thunder to roll and the lightning to flash. For them this Supreme Being is invisible, "omnipotent and omniscient" (Singh, Das and Imchen 108). He is believed to be the Creator of the whole creation. Yanang Konyak also writes that the Konyaks believe "*Youngwan Kahwang*" as the father of all and human beings as his children (*From Darkness to Light* 16).

Furer-Haimendorf writes that *kahwang* is invoked in most cardinal events in the life of the Konyaks. These events include daily life activities, festivals, hunting, marriage, construction of house, etc. (*The Konyak Nagas* 100). The Konyaks also believe that the *Kahwang "*fulfilled the role of a guardian of the moral order" (Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas* 100). Hesees and hears everything, and as such angered by violations of moral code of conduct. He was also believed to be the upholder of justice as well as the punisher of wrong doers. Thus, he punishes those people committing moral breaches such as lying, stealing, inciting quarrels, unfaithful husbands and wives, etc. The Konyaks believe that punishments often come in the form of premature death, sickness as well as barreness or deprivation of male offspring. At the same time, the *Kahwang* is believed to be the rewarder of those people who practise social virtues such as hospitability and generosity.

The world of the Konyak was populated by spirits, gods and ancestors with whom they had to interact. The relations between the immanent and the transcendental world were clearly defined on the local level, but differed strongly from one group to another. The complex rituals and a comparison of the religious beliefs between neighbouring groups allow us to sense just how strongly oral traditions were connected in Naga religion with the belief in an ensouled nature. Along with *Kahwang,* the Konyak Nagas also believe in the existence of 'yaha,' or 'spirits', both benevolent and malevolent. The spirits are called '*Kahshih' or 'evil spirits'.* These spirits are believed to live in places like thick forest, rocks, mountains, rivers, etc. The Konyaks often appeased these malevolent spirits and offered sacrifices such as fowls, dogs, pigs, buffaloes and *mithuns.* These sacrifices are offered to appease the spirits so as to prevent the outbreak of epidemics and death.

The question of identity and ethnicity, culture and history, are the main issues in the Indo-Naga struggle as Nagas continue to feel that they "do not fit in with imposed identity within the caste-driven hierarchy of India" (Imsong 36). The political struggle of the Nagas for a 'Greater Nagaland' has also become a part of the Konyak Nagas indigenous tribal identity. It has always been a part of their lives for self-determination. The Naga nationalist groups such as the Naga National Council (NNC) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) want a complete separation from India and Myanmar. The struggle to integrate Konyaks in Assam, Myanmar and

Arunachal Pradesh has long been a political struggle for a common tribal identity of the Konyaks.

The Konyak Nagas during this time of conflicts has accepted Christianity as their religion and tend to identify themselves as Christians. In the process, they have abandoned the practice of headhunting in integrating Christianity in their lives. Christianity is the only religion in Mon which they associate as a unifying factor of all the Konyaks. History tells us that they had denied Hinduism as they feared that another religion apart from Baptist Christianity would tear apart their society thereby bringing in disintegration and conflicts. They have also fought against the cult of the *Heraka* in Mon. This cultural transformation resulted in profound destabilization of the traditional Naga institutions during the colonial rule as well as at present.

Though the Konyaks had unique cultural practices and peculiar beliefs, these have gone through tremendous change with the advent of the British in the Naga Hills followed by the introduction of Christianity, western education and western system of governance. Their primitive religion had a strong control over its follower for centuries. Initially the early converts were opposed, ostracised and ex-communicated from the village for going against such status quo of religion. However, with the entry of Christianity in this village, the tight grip of traditional religion began to lose its hold. As compared to the old religion which was cumbered with numerous taboos, rites and rituals and sacrifices, people found Christianity to be simpler and easy to follow. Today most of the Konyaks have converted to Christianity, which has emerged as a symbol of identity. At present, identity crisis is brought about by their coming into contact with the outside world, the mainland India who stresses on Hindutva, their assimilation of Christianity and adapting to the popular culture and modernized ways of life which have infused in them new cultural ideas or awakening. Konyaks are trying to affirm their identity in the midst of enthusiasm and the face of the cultural pressures from these forces and the radical changes of globalization. To quote Tumpak Ete in this context, “The old tales are losing their appeal because of ignorance of their real purpose and new ideals of social order and function. So there is every reason to fear that if these are not written down now, they will be lost forever. Soon there would be none who know these lengthy narratives” (qtd. in Dawar 82).

Therefore, understanding of their indigenous traditions, cultures and folkways is a necessity to preserve and recovering their identity which is embedded in folktales. This is the apprehension of the Konyaks today that with the conditions coming in and the cracking of the old structure of the society, the indigenous identity of the Konyaks are likely to either get modified or lose their validity.

Karen Kilcup describes North America as "peopled by diverse groups of tribal cultures dazzling in their variety of their language, religion, social and political organization and means of livelihood" (Coulombe 19). According to Richard T. Schaefer, prior to European colonization, there is no such thing as Native American identity. That "Native Identity exists in opposition to a White identity" (955). In line with the existential philosophy, Native Americans make their own essences rather than having a given make-up that determines their actions, not reducible to external or biological factors. "Instead of being *given* meaning, we *create* meaning ourselves. No matter what the arguments or evidence for or against an action, it is ultimately the result of an ineffable decision that we make only on the basis of reasons; our decisions are not *caused* by them. The decision is our responsibility and involves our being-in-the-world: consciousness is always consciousness *of* something and is intentional" (Joseph et al 87). They refuse to accept a prefabricated identity conferred by external forces, the Europeans or by the history. And thus, Innes Hernandez writes in the *Foreword* to *Growing up Native American,*

> Native people know that the term "Indian" is a misnomer, but we have made it our own just as we have made "American Indian" and more recently "Native American" our own, even though in our original languages, each of our people had (or have) their own name for themselves and for this part of the earth that is now name for themselves and for this part of this earth that is now known as "America." We refer to each other by the tribe or nation that we are from- that is one of the first questions we ask each "Who are your people?" and "Where are you from?" (Riley 8-9).

Hernandez further states that there are two major components of Native American identity. The first is their identification with their original land base articulated through their oral traditions in the sacrednesss of their beginnings as well as in the

stories they tell about their sacred relationship to the earth, and all of life. An important belief of all native writers is the importance of memory. The second denominator is the historical experience of colonization that was imposed on them five hundred years ago which is marked by the arrival of the explorer, Christopher Columbus (Riley 9-10).

Native Americans are given a tribal identity rather than an individual definition of "being." According to William Bevis, "The tribal "being" has three components: society, past and place. The "society" of the tribe is not just company; it is law. The individual is completed only in relation to others, that man is a political animal, and the group which must complete his "being" is organized in some meaningful way" (Fleck 19-20). "The second component of tribalism is its respect for the past. The tribe, which makes meaning possible, endures through time and appeals to the past for authority" (Fleck 20). Thus the source of respect for the past in Indian life and novels is respect for the authority which is therefore a part of identity. "The third component of tribalism is place….the reservation is not just a place where people are stuck; it is the home" (Fleck 24). "Each tribe has a unique political history and therefore unique relations with the earth, particularly because each tribe is place based: That is, it has developed within a specific ecological space" and they "culturally identifies with a specific place and the ecological elements of that place" (Schaefer 967-968).

One of the recurring themes of recent Native American literature is the issue of Native American identity. What is sometimes hard to grasp is that "identity," correctly speaking, is not an attribute of either the individual or of the context- the environment, including cultural traditions in which the individual is embedded. Rather, identity is an event that takes place in the creation of the *relationship* between individual and context. In recent Native American literature, as in many of the cultural traditions this body of literature refers and defers to, identity, like life itself, derives from the land. Whoever wishes either to recover or to sustain a healthy state of existence, then, must enter into some working identity not only with a cultural tradition but also with a particular landscape (Nelson, 2013.https://facultystaff. richmond.edu /~rnelson/ pvi. html).

In her groundbreaking collection of critical essays *The Sacred Hoop* (1986), one of the first large-scale attempts to apply Native American cultural (and literary) values to modern Native American writing, Paula Gunn Allen puts it this way:

> We are the land. To the best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea embedded in Native American life and culture in the Southwest. . . . The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. . . . It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is ourself, in as real a sense as such notions as "ego," "libido" or social network. . . . Nor is this relationship one of mere "affinity" for the Earth. It is not a matter of being "close to nature." The relationship is more one of identity, in the mathematical sense, than of affinity. The Earth is, in a very real sense, the same as ourself (or selves), and it is this primary point that is made in the fiction and poetry of the Native American writers of the Southwest (Nelson, 2013. https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~rnelson/pvi.html).

As Sartre suggested, human existence is notable for the fact that we are always ahead of ourselves, and "on the way", with various projects, intentions and aspirations for the future. Rather than our identity being determined by our biological or social status, existentialism insists that our identity must be continually created, and there is a resultant emphasis on our freedom or, in the preferred philosophical vocabulary of the existentialists, our transcendence (Reynolds 3).

There is a deep connection between home and identity for the Native Americans and the Konyaks. In *Letters from an American Farmer*, St. Jean de Crevecoeur writes that, "The home we leave is not only a place; it is a past, a set of values and parents, an "Ancient regime" (Fleck 16). According to William Bevis, "leaving" plots embody quite clearly the basic premise of success in our mobile society. The individual advances, sometimes at all cost, with little or no regard for family, society, past, or place. The individual is the ultimate reality, hence individual consciousness is the medium, repository, and arbiter of knowledge; "freedom," our primary value, is a matter of distance between oneself and the smoke from another's chimney. Isolation is the poison in this mobile plot, and romantic love seems to be its primary antidote." He further states that, "most Native American novels are "incentric," centripetal,

converging, contracting. The hero comes home….Coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call "regressing" to a place, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good" (Fleck 16). Home to the Indians is a society.

Louise Erdrich's narrative organization "aims at a complex rendering of the intricate and far-reaching minglings and conflicts and interlocking fates among the people of differing races and culture groups, all of whom feel a deep sense of their ties to the land and to the history upon it" (Lundquist 101). Indeed, the life stories of her characters are inextricably tied to place. Place supports, informs, mediates, and alerts human experience in her works. As Erdrich says,

> In our own beginnings, we are formed out of the body's interior landscape. For a short while, our mother's bodies are the boundaries and personal geography which are all that we know of the world. Once we emerge we have no natural limit, no assurance, no grandmotherly guidance…for technology allows us to reach even beyond the layers of air that blanket earth. We can escape gravity itself, and every semblance of geography, by moving into sheer space, and yet we cannot abandon our need for reference, identity, or our pull to landscapes that mirro our most intense feelings" (Lundquist 102).

In her powerful novel, *Love Medicine (1984)*, the first of her Native American series, Louise Erdrich introduces several generations in the interrelated families living in and around a Chippewa or Ojibwa reservation in North Dakota. Often, the conflict in the novel arises out of the Native American concern for connectedness with the land and the interrelatedness of all life. When the Indian American moves off the reservation and begins life in a culture essentially different from his own, the results can be disastrous. The typical Native American story has a "homing" plot which emphasizes family, community, and culture rather than the classic American "leaving" plot which emphasizes individual plot. In these stories, the hero finds fulfillment, personal growth, and value in returning home, and finding himself in his cultural past among his own people. "To Indians, tribe means family, not just bloodlines but extended family, clan, community, ceremonial exchanges with nature, and an animate regard for all creation as sensible and powerful" (Fleck 19).

Love Medicine looks at Indian American reservation life in a less optimistic light. In this novel, the returning Indian finds that the tribe has disintegrated, the past has been forgotten, and the reservation lands no longer support a livelihood. The first generation of the novel's Kashpaw kinship, Nector and Marie Kashpaw attempt to authorize their distinct Native American belonging by reflecting on the Euro-American constructions of their cultural identity.Erdrich challenges the essentialist concepts of identity and difference. Leaving home is the road to fulfillment. In the "The Impossibility of Native American Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," Andrea P. Baloghrevisits Erdrich's *Love Medicine* in order to explore the novel's hybrid character and Erdrich's construction of the specificity of the Native American experience. Although *Love Medicine* is generally considered in terms of the relationship between the categories of post-modern and Native American, she argues that Erdrich emphasizes the postcolonial aspect of the Native American experience in this novel. Firstly, the characters in the novel are most concerned with identity-formation and self-representation. The notion of identity emerging from Erdrich's fiction partly rehearses Stuart Hall's reconsideration of the concept of identity in terms of the relationship between identity and identification and as a strategic and positional construction process. Secondly, Erdrich's characters make sense of their Native American roots and themselves as Native Americans through the identity politics of colonial subjects as theorized by Homi Bhabha in "Interrogating Identity" (Balogh 2008. http://americanaejournal.hu/vol4no2/pbalog). Erdrich explains that identity does not depend on one's ability to isolate the self, but on a capacity to surpass physical boundaries and join in communion with others. Her characters build identity on transpersonal connections to community, to landscape and to myth.

The story is not one of continuity, relatedness, and harmony with the land and nature, with culture and tradition which are ideas that shape much Native American fiction. Instead, Louise Erdrich depicts a cultural mileau where the sacred ceremonies, tribal rituals, and Indian cultural identity have disappeared. The connectedness to the land has disappeared, the means to make a living is gone, and the younger generation must find work off the reservation or stay there and flounder. While the novel is untraditional in many ways, it gives a compassionate humanistic account of the lives of reservation Indians without glorifying their culture yet without demeaning them in their weakness and failure. Erdrich is able to present realistically their unique

characters and situations, focusing upon the Indian American as a race with definite problems but with the same enduring nature as all Americans.

Nector and Marie Kashpaw's life-stories tell us of their adventures outside of the reservation, in the non-Indian, white, Euro-American world. In Marie Kashpaw's chapter, Erdrich depicts the Native American strategic appropriation of the Euro-American (re-) presentation of the Indian as the Evil Beast while Nector Kashpaw's part it is devoted to the Romantic reflection of the Native American figure. In these chapters Erdrich (re)uses a typical theme, or even the trademark of, contemporary Native American literature. As Owens sums it up, "[i]n literature by contemporary Indian authors, we find characters who constantly face this dilemma of an identity constructed within the authoritative discourse of the non-Indian world. In order to be recognized, to claim authenticity in the world – in order to be seen at all – the Indian must conform to an identity imposed from the outside" (Balogh 2008).

In the chapter entitled "The Plunge of the Brave," Erdrich re-works the Euro-American romantic idea of the (dying) noble savage from an angle which identifies with the Native American point of view. Erdrich explores the contradictions inherent in the Romantic representations imagining the Indian exclusively in terms of his death, the conception of the Indian as the one who is noble but whose only alternative is to exist as a heroically dying warrior. The title of the chapter cites the title of a painting entitled the *Plunge of the Brave*. The painting was made by a rich, white woman who employed Nector Kashpaw as a model to pose for this particular painting. The painting shows a naked Indian who is jumping off a cliff, down into a rocky river. As Pittman points out, the "painting shows the Western ideal of the naked, noble savage" (Balogh 2008). Here, Erdrich manages to simultaneously depict the construction of the dying Indian in the Euro-American cultural imagination and the Native American ironic reflection on the Euro-American representation. She achieves this by forming Nector's conception of the relationship between art and reality as the one which confuses fiction and reality. This confusion results in a specific self-perception that conceives the Euro-American received image of the Indian as being identical with his actual self. Erdrich explores this confusion through Nector Kashpaw's telling of the story of how he made a career as an actor playing the dying Indian in a Hollywood movie.

Here Nector Kashpaw fashions his Native American identity in accordance with a differential model of identity formation where the self makes sense out of himself/herself in opposition to the other. Erdrich exposes this model in Nector Kashpaw's strategic use of the rhetoric of "othering," his references to the film-makers as "they," as a faceless and nameless group of "them," that is in terms of the film-makers' otherness. Erdrich here (re-)defines the romantic Euro-American representation of Native Americans by representing the film-makers as being ignorant of Nector's Kashpaw's identity. Their lack of knowledge about his belonging and personal history culminates in their imposition of a false identity and a mistaken life-narrative through assigning to him, Nector Kashpaw, the role of the dying Indian in the film. Erdich's character does not take their identity as given by their situation but identity as being continually created in their actions and formed by their interactions with the world outside and not in some fact of their circumstances.

In *The Antelope Wife,* Erdrich includes many of the elements, symbols, and viewpoints of the processes of cultural renewal occurring throughout the Native American world today. These characters, symbols, and events are mythically shaped to reflect lives, concerns, events, and dichotomies felt by many contemporary Native Americans who struggle to integrate various cultural components and heritages into a coherent and successful identity. The major images and characters involve a perceived split between Native American and non-Native American cultures. Most of the characters in *The Antelope Wife* are mixed-blood, like Erdrich herself (whose ancestry includes German and Chippewa heritage). In foregrounding the realities and confusion of being "mixed" or "split" throughout the story, Erdrich considers identity in terms of being Indian, American, and human today. Her novel reveals feelings that are typical of mixed-bloods searching for identity and a culture undergoing a renaissance. She represents this complex process by images and the word (in Ojibwa) for splitting: *daashkiika*. Although Ojibwe language is included in non-distinct type style, its distinctness is clear (Ojibwe words look very different from English).Similarly, these characters and the story are part of America, yet their Indian identity, language, and character imbue them with a unique quality. The characters that Erdrich creates, like many Native Americans, feel and often experience painfully or positively, a split between cultures, languages, and identities. Erdrich gives the images of splitting and duality primacy in this novel, implicitly and explicitly.

The split between cultures and between past and present is best represented by characters, like the title character who represents a bridge to the past and between human and animal worlds, as both antelope and woman / wife. Identical twins run in the female line of the principal family (the Roys, whom we later see are also the Shawanos and Whiteheart Beads). Identical twins represent a split or duality inherently, and also the potential of reconciling extremes (or halves of a whole), or of producing balance. A traditional word / name which plays a crucial role in the novel is "*Dashkikaa*," which in Ojibwa means "splitting apart,"or "cracked apart," as Cally's grandmother finally defines it (Erdrich, *AW* 213). The "cracking apart" (*daashkikaa*) the dying old woman foresees / predicts, refers not only to life and death, but also foretells other powerful dualities of this story and of Native American life. These universal dualities of human existence reveal a world apparently cracked apart, but not broken (i.e., functioning). Learning to see such a cracked apart reality as whole becomes the central focus of characters, determining their ability to survive or flourish. There is a persistent image of a double world split in two, but simultaneously (at times only by implication) there is an image of wholeness. As potential and reality, a world woven together, affirming life, ultimately prevails.

The opening passage / image substantiates the duality and splitting of the world:

> Ever since the beginning these twins are sewing. One sews with light and one with dark. The first twin's beads are cut-glass whites and pales, and the other twin's beads are glittering deep red and blue-black indigo. One twin uses an awl made of an otter's sharpened penis bone, the other uses that of a bear. They sew with a single sinew thread, in, out, fast and furious, each trying to set one more bead into the pattern than her sister, each trying to upset the balance of the world (Erdrich, *AW* 1).

Identical twins are the most obvious symbol of the split-apart world represented in *The Antelope Wife*. Twins represent two halves of a whole, especially here, where they sew one pattern, with one thread. But they also represent a whole which is split, and in this case working against wholeness, i.e. themselves. Mixed blood Indians and "mixed culture Indians" also represent a split, and they struggle to make of their lives a whole. Just as these twins keep creation whole in spite of themselves, out of a struggle born of being split, so the struggle for identity may keep many Native

Americans whole or balanced. They too may be confused over which heritage informs their lives and actions, which part of their split selves or contrasting ethnicities is at play. And sometimes the struggle may produce disasters (as in the case of some characters like Richard Whiteheart Beads in the novel). The potential for a whole and balanced pattern seems to require the opposition of impulses and elements.

In spite of Blue Prairie Woman's new name and twin babies whom she feels inside her, "forming, creating themselves just as the first twin gods did at the beginning," her lost daughter's fate torments her (Erdrich, *AW* 15). Other Side of the Earth cannot accept her daughter being on the "other side of the earth" she gazes toward every evening. Even with the birth of her new children, she cannot accept being split from her daughter, because she cannot accept losing her to the other world. Her agony represents the emotions of many families whose children were "lost" to the white world. From her perspective, Scranton has not really "saved" the baby, but kidnaped her. This too represents typical relations and misunderstandings between Indians and whites historically. As historian Debo notes in regard to such white adoptions and education of Indian children: "No other tragedy of frontier life brought such anguish, no other phase of Indian warfare aroused such hatred as this capture of children. White men... never understood the desperation of the bereaved parents. Even the Apache prisoners crowded within stockades found ways to hide some of their children from the Carlisle kidnapers" (Magoulick. http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/custom-website/mary-magoulick/antwife.html).Like so many Indian parents, Other Side of the Earth is bereaved to have lost a daughter to this alien culture of the whites. The loss of this daughter "cracks apart" her world, so she leaves her twins and walks west until she finds her first daughter.

The needs and longings of most characters in this novel are similarly overwhelming. Most of those needs and longings likewise revolve around crucial choices the characters must make. They all face practical and cultural dichotomies and make choices that shape their lives. They battle the "split" of cultures, and those who succeed (as Rozina eventually does – though only after great pain) are true to themselves and make good choices.

In recent Native American literature, as in many of the cultural traditions this body of literature refers and defers to, identity, like life itself, derives from the land. Whoever

wishes either to recover or to sustain a healthy state of existence, then, must enter into some working identity not only with a cultural tradition but also with a particular landscape. Thus Native Americans have a strong sense of sacredness to the land as they believed that the earth nurtured them and their tribal origins and histories are associated with the tribal land. Scott B. Vickers, in "Native American Identities: From Stereotypes to Archetype in Art and Literature, writes,

> …in the world of the modern Indian, issues of identity are becoming more flexible and less and less dependent on the bipolar opposition between black and white, or between white and red. The stereotypical sameness of the 'red man' as constructed by the racist ideology of white American appears to be giving way to new dimensions of Indian authenticity, as more and more Indians seek to rediscover their human complexities and potentialities and to redefine their identities in order to continue to live as *Indians*. Recognizing the perilous prospects of total assimilation into the white hegemony, modern Indians have insisted, for instance, on the teaching of their native language in reservations schools and are busy trying to recapitulate their traditional religions and customs in a process that Vine Deloria Jr. calls 'retribalization' (Lundquist 266).

Existentialists object to philosophical theories, organized religions, and political movements that treat human beings solely in terms of what is common to them. What makes each individual unique is important to them because each individual regards her own life as central and valuable, who she is cannot be captured by theories that treat individuals as just so many members of a larger group or economic class. Such theories reduce the individual to a replaceable part of a larger whole and ignore the subjective, self-conscious sense an individual has of herself. In contrast, existentialism treats individuals as valuable in their own right (Patrik 11).

Individuality is not only a matter of an individual's uniqueness but also a function of an individual's volition. Individuals who are truly individualistic make their own choices instead of conforming to society. Each individual is who she is as a result of her freely chosen actions; an individual's identity is nothing other than her choices (Patrik 11).

But for both the Konyaks and the Native Americans, an individual identity is of little importance. “Severed from the past, the present is meaningless, outcast, homeless….The individual alone has no meaning” (Fleck 22-23). For them home is the tribal land and family is the tribal community. A person’s identity is never individual or personal but it is with the community. “Tribe means family, not just bloodlines but extended family, clan, community, ceremonial exchanges with nature, and an animate regard for all creation as sensible and powerful” (Fleck 19). A man is nothing without his family, his clan and his community in both the society. Without family, clan, village and tribe he has no identity. The Konyak tribe is composed of many villages which are further divided into clans. Each clan is a family in itself with its distinct lineages and names. An individual in Konyak society is identified by his village, then by his respective clan and specifically by his name. A new born child in Konyak society is named by his family and clan lineage. This gives the child his identity, the place where he belongs and the place where he comes from. Thus the tribal identity of Native Americans and the Konyaks is decided by the land they inhabit and the tribal space to which they belong.

Land is sacred to both the tribals. It gives them their identity. People, animals and nature are considered their relations which are given to them by the Giver of Life, the Creator. People and the land and the stories are inseparable to both the tribals. They both speak of their relationship to the Earth and all the living and non-living things in it in terms of family as Leslie Marmon Silko remarks in, “Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native Life Today,” “It begins with the land; think of the land, the earth, as the center of a spider’s web. Human identity, imagination, and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land, to Mother Earth, just as strands of the spider’s web radiate from the center of the web” (Harjo and Bird 194-195).

Joseph Bruchac writes, “The Earth is not something to be bought and sold, something to be used and mistreated. It is, quite simply, the source of our lives- our Mother. The rest of Creation, all around us, shares in that family relationship” (Lundquist 214). In these societies, today land is being sold as a commodity, sacred mountains are secularized and tribal burial grounds are becoming cornfields. Losing their land means destroying their religious communities and forsaking individual identities. It is crucial therefore that native children and youth be given correct information about

where they came from and who they are. This can be done by transmitting words and wisdom through the stories from the long tradition of their people to a successive generation which will give them a deep and abiding sense of belonging to the place where they live. They need to rebuild and reclaim their identity and thus heal their community. What both the tribals need to do in the wake of the losses and devastation experienced by the tribals as a consequence of colonization and modernization is as Erdrich posits in, "Where I ought to be," "In the light of enormous loss, they must tell the stories of contemporary survivors while protecting and celebrating the cores of cultures left in the wake of the catastrophe" (Lundquist 105).

The Konyak and the Native Americans need to consider an array of searching problems: Who am I? What is my purpose in existing? What does human existence mean? How should I live? How should I relate to others? Is there a God? Is there a relation between God's existence (or not) and how one lives? Why is there evil in the world? These are questions that can unsettle individuals to the core of their being, awaken them from the somnambulism of their lives, and direct us all to assume responsibility to create meaning from our situation in the world. In responding to these questions, existentialism starts with the problem of subjectivity: the question of human nature and the critical examination of how selfhood is constructed (Judaken and Bernasconi 6).

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CHAPTER III

THEME OF ANXIETY REGARDING LIFE, DEATH, CONTINGENCIES, ANDEXTREME SITUATIONS IN THE FOLKSONGS OF THE KONYAKS AND LOUISE ERDRICH'S *THE ANTELOPE WIFE* AND JAMES WELCH'S *THE DEATH OF JIM LONEY*

Anxiety is a central concept of existential philosophy, alternately rendered as "dread" as "anguish." Anxiety is not merely a psychological state that reflects the personality of the individual but an ontological or metaphysical phenomenon that reveals a deep truth about the nature of human beings. The core of the idea is that anxiety is a reckoning of the self with its essential freedom to choose what it shall be, and in the face of its radical responsibility for that choice. The idea is expressed well by Jean-Paul Sartre: "In anxiety I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself" (Sartre, *BN* 63).

Anxiety is an index of human freedom, a metaphysically positive phenomenon expressive of a deep truth about human beings, and as such it cannot be reduces to a "negative" emotion. Anxiety confirms that the human being lives in a mode of deep-seated existential concern for the self, and not solely as a knowing subject or a pleasure-seeking animal (Michelman 35-36). In anxiety, everyday concerns and involvement with others, through which an average, standardized understanding of the world is sustained, "sink away," for "anxiety… takes away from *Dasein* the possibility of understanding itself… in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted." In other words, in anxiety it is brought home to me that it is I, not "they" or "anyone," who am responsible for interpreting the world, and that I cannot avoid the freedom of choosing certain possibilities over others (Michelman 36). Anxiety is a "fundamental mood," one that discloses deep truth about human being in its relation to the world.

For Kierkegaard, angst (sometimes translated as dread or anxiety) is not an emotion, but a deep-seated strife at the heart of human being over its existence. Angst is a reaction to the fundamental choices we have to make in the face of our mortality. For

Sartre, angst (translated as anguish) is the human awareness of not just our inherent freedom, but also our responsibility for our own free choices. Sartre argues that for the most part, we evade this responsibility, since we are devoted instead to the 'bad faith' that denies the freedom of an engaged existence (Joseph et al 327-328).

Heidegger maintains that in anxiety, the everyday world "withdraws," and one is left with an indeterminate apprehensiveness and uneasiness, a sense of uncanniness. The source of this uneasiness, however, is no specific thing or state of affairs. Ultimately, it is an apprehension of the groundlessness of one's own being, that one is essentially a thrown, finite, "being of possibility," a "being-in-the-world" and not a substantial thing in any traditional sense. Anxiety reveals the "nothingness" of human beings hand in hand with the "nothingness" of the world. It allows us to be moved by the "wonder" and "strangeness" of beings themselves, and ultimately provokes us to ask "why." Far from being illusory and nonexistent, the nothing lies at the root of all human inquiry, for without an apprehension of nothingness we would not be moved to inquire into why things are as they are (Michelman 323-324).

The experience of pervasive anxiety existentially and dramatically reveals to us that social roles can never offer a complete, all-encompassing account of identity. We are confronted with the recognition that social mores and customs are not sufficient to make life meaningful for the individual in question, and in the process Heidegger argues that anxiety thereby intimates the potential for an individual and distinctive disclosure of the world. In the experience of anxiety the familiar world loses its normal significance; all of our habitual and everyday ways of relating to the world drop away and sink into insignificance. According to Sartre, an individual not only establishes what is valuable for herself by choosing which actions to perform, but also sets an example for others, because her actions occur in the public domain. Others regard her actions and may even imitate them, because our human tendency is to fall into conformity to others. Thus an individual's responsibility extends to others, because she not only chooses for herself but also choose for others in so far as her actions are publicly available as potential examples for others (Patrik 42).

Anxiety interrupts the very habit of abandoning ourselves to a specific region of entities: "In anxiety, we say, "one feels at ease." What is "it" that makes "one" feel ill

at ease? We cannot say what it is before which one feels ill at ease. As a whole it is so for him. All things and we ourselves sink into indifference. We can get no hold on things. In the slipping away of beings only this "no hold on things" comes over us and remains. Anxiety makes manifest the nothing" (Judaken and Bernasconi 78).

Heidegger found in anxiety an instrument of both destruction and revelation. Anxiety does destroy the meaningfulness of the everyday world and compels the individual to recognize that the world is not truly a home. Yet this experience is also revelatory in that its rendering is total. Anxiety is not merely a flight from particular entities but rather a "bewildered calm" in the face of complete meaninglessness. It "leaves us hanging because it induces the slipping away of beings as a whole" (Staehler 181). Hence there is quite literally *nothing* that has meaning, and we are reduced to a state of "hovering" in a meaningless void. In such a situation, one can no longer speak coherently of an individuated selfhood because the integrity of the self was conditional upon the integrity of its world. "This implies that we ourselves- we who are in being- in the midst of beings slip away from ourselves. At bottom therefore it is not as though 'you' or 'I' feel at ease; rather it is this way for some 'one.' In the altogether unsettling experience of this hovering where there is nothing to hold onto, pure Dasein is all that is still there" (Judaken and Bernasconi 79).

As Sartre points out, anguish as the consciousness of freedom, is not something that human beings welcome; rather, we seek stability, identity, and adopt the language of freedom only when it suits us: those acts are considered by me to be my free acts which exactly match the self I want others to take me to be. We are "condemned to be free," which means that we can never simply *be* who we are but are separated from ourselves by the nothingness of having perpetually to re-choose, or re-commit, ourselves to what we do. Characteristic of the existential outlook is the idea that we spend much of our lives devising strategies for denying or evading the anguish of freedom like bad faith or the appeal to values (Staehler 32).

Folk songs and dances are essential ingredients of the traditional Konyak Naga culture. The oral tradition is kept alive through the media of folk tales and songs. Naga folk songs are both romantic and historical, with songs narrating entire stories of famous ancestors and incidents. There are also seasonal songs which describe various

activities done in a particular agricultural season. Tribal dances of the Nagas give an insight into the inborn Naga reticence of the people. War dances and other dances belonging to distinctive Naga tribes are a major art form in Nagaland.

Konyak folksongs are life-cycle songs sung at different occasions like birth, marriage and death; moral songs, teaching morals; thoughtful songs, teaching the philosophy of human life; simple songs, dealing with different seasons like the spring, the rains, etc., occasional songs, associated with the festivals and religious songs at the time of offering to deities.Again there are songs sung during work, which helps in overcoming the monotony and drudgery of the work done. There are songs of historical importance, which through their simple tunes can enlighten the tender minds with the tough subject of history, in the easiest manner, narrating small stories, the heroic deeds of great heroes, especially the heroes of the past. There are also songs for games, the riddle songs, etc., The singing goes on endlessly, one song leading to another, and as it continues it gathers momentum till it reaches the crescendo and crashes into a hectic finale. All the tunes are flexible and elastic enough to accommodate varying verbal rhythms.

Naga songs are events usually topical, for they speak of events, sad events, joyous events, memorable events are all translated into and preserved in songs. Since they had no written culture, folk songs were much authoritative than the oral tradition. Thus, the past events were recollected and sung through songs and transmitted from one generation to another. Folksongs have grown up among the people as an important part of their daily life. Much of it is very old and was never written or printed until recent years. Each generation handed it down to the next. The language and customs of each country or geographical area are reflected in its music. Folk songs belong to an entire community, but they were initially composed by individuals and not by groups of people as was believed in the 19th century. Because a folksong is not written down, it must be accepted and performed by others in the community or it will be forgotten and lost. Once a folk song or tune is created, it tends to be changed or re-created by others who learn and perform it, a process known as a communal re-creation. A folk song or tune may be accidentally changed by faulty memory, or it may be creatively changed to fit the circumstances, to fit better the group's style, or to include ideas from outside the group. The term folk songs or folk music is used most

often to distinguish it from art, or classical music in culture in which the two exist side by side (Jamir and Longkumer 61-62).

The Konyaks made poems for many reasons just as the Native Americans as A. Grove Day writes:

> "…To praise gods and ask their help in life; to speak to the gods through dramatic performances at seasonal celebrations or initiations or other rites; to work magical cures or enlist supernatural aid in hunting, plant-growing,…to hymn the praises of the gods or pray to them; to chronicle tribal history; to explain the origins of the world; to teach right conduct; to mourn the dead; to arouse warlike feelings; to compel love; to arouse laughter; to ridicule a rival or bewitch an enemy; to praise famous men to communicate the poet's private experience; to mark the beauties of nature; to boast of one's personal greatness; to record a vision scene; to characterize the actors in a folk tale; to quiet children; to lighten the burdens of work; to brighten up tribal games; and, sometimes, to express simply joy and a spirit of fun" (Swann 20).

Love Song is practiced when young men and women come together for exchange of their romance. Traditionally the young people invite the opposite sex group (Ai) for get-together in places like resting place on their way back home from fieldwork, *Paan* (Boy's dormitory) *Ywo* (Girl's dormitory). The content of the song is mainly romantic messages exchanging between boys and girls. While singing this song, they get a chance to share love and concern for one's boy friend or girlfriend. There is also a deeper social meaning attributes to their songs and dances often culminating in the intimate communion between lovers, which can take place in the morung or anywhere and if it does take place in the village granary, it is always better (Barua 33). Even younger ones who had not yet made friendship, would get chance to make friendship. The following song talks about a man who went for raid to an enemy's village but his plan is thwarted as he sees his ex-girlfriend who had married one of his enemy:

Pongdhi vit thrang anup ko kaa lah suu ma
Waan ching te pao ashim e
E nao puh o yanting saavi e nao puh
Yei longlhak fei pothraat hah lam ley mang drei

Lingpe ngamlu te wanglah pe nang a
Waan te tem yaya eh o
Shim e waan te tem yaya eh.

Translation:

When I the warrior went this morning
Went to enemy's village my friend
Was carrying her child with *yanting saavi*
With *longlhak* she was searching for firewood
Went back to the proud village
The sympathy for the enemy's village
The sympathy for the friend and the enemy (Konyak MS).

The song expresses the love and sympathy for the enemy because the chief happened to come across his old friend and lover there. He had to take responsibility of his past actions and is faced with the dilemma of attacking his enemy's village due to the presence of his old lover. He knows his actions will have consequences and he will be looked down by his lover. Nothing compels him to act one way rather than another and because the future is open, nothingness confronts him as he looks into the future. Consciousness moves all the time, and it sees itself continually as a nihilation of its own past being. The characteristic experience of consciousness is to choose: and to elect one possibility is to nihilate the possibilities we reject" (Scriven 47). The song explicates morality of wider scope- morality of sympathy and personal devotion.

Girls':

Fhihdhen taapsa me vun khuh
Bong vei otoi hah me naam en pe zu to
Laanyai nyi su mai jen je nah yong le ah
Bong laam en pe he wan o
Hin laam bong hai en pe he wan.

Boys':

Yu pu yumpang lam ja teh
Mai vei nang ja nga dhi nah yan ong lah hah
Wum len te ka, mai len lon ei nang pu eh
Mai naa pa men sang eh oh
Ju toi mai na pa men sang eh.

Translation:

Girls':

There is fire's smoke in the field's hut
My heart is growing in my married home
Heartily laughing let my lover stop and wait awhile
Not knowing that my heart have resigned
Not knowing that my love and my heart have resigned

Boys':

Is the way to the field's only one?
My lover cannot be just you alone
Let it be that we separate
I can go to new fields
New love will be renewed
Take me not to be one who does not have lovers
Take me not to be one who is poor in friends and lovers (Konyak MS).

The above song is sung by both men and women. The girl's utterance is about her lonely state in the melancholic field of her married family. She had loved a man for a long time but the man never proposed to her. Fearing that she might not get married at all if she keeps on waiting for him, she marries another man. She then with a resigned heart talks of how the man did not even care about her and that she now knows his true intention and wants the man to keep on waiting just as she had. The man on the

other hand replies to the lady that he has many options in life. Just as the roads to the fields are varied and a new field is cultivated every different year, he feels that there are many women whom he can love. He is not worried at to lose the woman but instead boast of himself as a man who is not poor in friends and not desperate enough to not get new lovers.

As with the Native Americans, the Konyaks also believe in dream songs. “The spirit world and the natural world interpenetrate through dreams, most intense in the traditional vision quest. As Kenneth Lincoln remarks in his article, “Native American Literatures,” “Dreams relay visions from the spirit world; sacramental songs ritualize the dream myths, bearing visions into the world” (Swann 27). The following song of Konyaks show how the spirits and ancestors speak to the living in dreams, giving their daily lives a sacred strangeness:

Tah yip pong ei, ashim lu ei mai lu ei.
Aya ko yip shih bang pe mu e ei nang
Puhpe zuho kho me pai,
Yan le ong pe shim fei ji lee je bang tong.
Koni opupu te teinang tong shi oh?
Osa jelah lah a, khu gum wai ong ei
Vuntoh shi bang pu ah oh.

Translation:

Sleep not but awake my friend, my love.
Tonight’s dream I dream will I tell you
Coddled in my mother’s lap,
Last beloved of mine, on her I lean.
Of us, who is to have the doom?
Take the chicken, sacrifice and save the doom
Of the bad dream I had, away (Konyak MS).

Aya Vuntuh si bang me
Yipzu chingjak ngampa luh pun bang ong tong

Kolim opang juyan mai ngom nang le eh
Othra je lah lah e khu gum vai ong ei
Waan ling faotuh vuhle hamnang

Translation:

Tonight in my nightmare
The village burned and the house was broken down
Of us who might break up with their lovers
Take the chicken and claim our heads
That we can walk fearlessly in enemy's land (Konyak MS).

"Dreams heighten the people's awareness, as does fear positively regarded, proving medicinal, therapeutic, because they cleanse and energize the tribal spirit" (Swann 28). Death is always a traumatic experience for a community, but as a transition it was also understood to produce anxiety and other problems for the individuals. In the first dream song, the husband awakens his wife to listen to impending danger at hand. He fears that something bad may happen as he dreamt of his mother and his last beloved who were long past dead. Much of the anxiety stem from the belief that the departed, now alone, would remain in the village, in his home, perhaps even take one of them with them for companionship. Again, in the second dream song, the speaker dreams of a house being burnt and destroyed. He feels that an unforeseen death may be lurking around and they might be separated from each other. He wants to transform the way that he views and experiences life by genuinely recognizing the impending death. The prospect of death occasions anxiety in relation to his general manner of being-in-the –world. As Heidegger maintains, "an authentic apprehension of death tends to result in (or be motivated by) anxiety, bearing in mind that anxiety must be distinguished from fear, as fear relates to the possibility of external things harming us, whereas anxiety is a trepidation before our many and varied possibilities" (Reynolds 44). He therefore wants to be saved from the doom by performing a sacred ritual to externalize an inner vision of order and stability, and so to confront successfully the apparently arbitrary exercise of power manifested clearly in death, birth, epidemic

illness, famine, and catastrophic change in order to escape "the terror of history"" (Wiget 43).

Songs about the temporality of life is also found in abundance:

Yeli pa ao ngohnang shi
Yemah pa jin jin te ao ngoh lak
Hakpa longpa ha yeman oh yengoh
Pon hah shai peipu lwng hei ahng o
Li pu yimching te ta nana
Li phei me ji yong e muh hah sha sha

Translation:

Who is there who dies not?
Who can stay forever without dying?
Oh! The wealthy and the rich fails and dies too
Even the mighty King who collects tributes
Go to the land of the dead
All gets eaten by worms after death (Konyak MS).

All the living creatures are mortals except for non-living things as indicated by another song:

He li pe vei long ja shi oh
Song pum yak he wang pe letzu O wanghan
Ali pe vei ko nga lom tong lumching zuh
Lowang fham pak naomei nei le laam a yang
Konga ome la hah hum jui ya ma yui
Thram waan o pum he wong pe ning o
O pum he wong pe ning

Translation:

What dies not is the stone only
Worms that do not enter is Moon and Sun
To die only I tarry to the land of the dead
The rich's *fham* breaks, the warriors*nei* uproots
Where shall I go? Melts away like salt
Oh! As if health and body did not struggle
Oh! As if body did not struggle (Konyak MS).

The words, 'fam' refers to a big shady banyan tree and 'nei' refers to rubber plant. *'Fam'* refers to the rich man and '*nei*' to the warrior. Both the songs convey the message that everyone on this earth faces mortality; the rich and the poor, the king and the subjects, the warrior and the common man. Our future possibilities become more focused by genuinely facing the prospect of our own death. As Heidegger remarks, "Death is an existential structure that defines human subjectivity and this means that the possibility of dying is part of the structure of our world as we experience it now, not just something that is deferred until later" (Reynolds 43).

Both the songs illuminate that death is not chosen by us, but is thrown or forced upon us. Death deals the fate to all alike. Death is not seen as a physical event or biological process but the awareness that one is going to die. It brings home the fact that we are all going to die. The only difference is that we do not know exactly when we are going to die, we do not know when it is going to happen. Heidegger comments that, "no one else can die for me," in the sense of living in anticipation of death for me. This idea of anticipating death is crucial to his account of an authentic and resolute apprehension of death, as well as meaningfully organizing our lives and imbuing them with an individual significance beyond "average everydayness" (Reynolds 45).

Watzu li nyih kaat in kaa
Himlo shunyak maan zu hin nyih laa im nyai
Li nyih wuk shu yaa me nak shok fe ja le u
Sak puih kumthra me tuh
Kha-o zu bongmei

Zu bong nga vei jing mei Oh
Kha ozu bong nga vei jing mei.

Translation:

On heavily rainy days, I will not go to the field
On days when people carry things, I will not show interest
For when I die, pour not, it shall be upon my grave
Only handful of grains will be kept aside on the basket
And make the crow happy
Only the crow will be happy
Only the crow will be happy (Konyak MS).

Here, the song talks about the awareness of human mortality which makes her think of transcending death by acting on the decision to not work. But this action of hers appears illusive due to the inevitable sense of the lurking death itself. "No people were ever more conscious of the transient nature of life, as vibrant yet as frail as the flowers they so loved…On this earth there was no truth save that of the fleeting moment" (Wiget 30). Death sharpens her sensations of the difficulties she faces in life. She realises in the face of death that the whole of her past life, her hard labour and sacrifices for her family is meaningless because she will die one day. And she will not be taking all the products of her hardwork with her when she dies. The speaker is free to choose a way of life but this freedom is also a cause of 'angst' because it constitutes a great responsibility. Thus nothingness reveals freedom and also our anguish as Sartre says, "It is in anguish that man becomes conscious of his freedom…that freedom is in its being in question for itself" (Natanson 28).

Ko puh nup nang ah nyu-e
Pongdi vithrang mufa imsang e yangle
Puh li tong le zu a shoak
Pai li tong le pa-a longvit kho khum shu
Shoakmei wonglu le ley imwang en fe poih
Shoakpe jei bong yo-e oh
Shoak a shai pe jei bong yo-e.

Translation:

The day I was born, mother said
Not meant for armour, arrow and headgear
Cursed that I have been mother cursed
That I have been born, father beat on the drum of *longvit*
I won't even grow strong and healthy
By the unhappy curse of brothers
The unhappy curse of brothers (Konyak MS).

This song expresses the anguish of being born a girl. She is cursed by both the parents as well as the brothers, i.e., the society in general as it is only the man who takes all the important decisions in life. She feels anguished from the day itself when she is born that all the curses directed towards her will not give her the chance to grow and prosper well in her society as compared to men. She gives voice to the experience of pain, suppression, inferior status and the sacrifices every girl has to make to keep her family and society happy. In Konyak society, women are treated secondary to men by both men and women. The birth of a girl is not considered a favour. Men get all the privileges in the society from being cared, nurtured, fed, and provided, given an heir all at the expense of women.

Kopuh fotzu zi ma bui
Katyu faasham long ya ti ma ka-a
O tem toi yu lum ka pe mu i en tong
Me wun toi tap shu ma yongju wan ma ngo
Yong ju wan a ma ngoi o
Nao yong ying ju a ma ngoi.

Translation:

The cloth used to carry me has not yet worn-out
The water used to bathe me, on my naming day, has not yet cleansed
Oh, Then why talk about marriage and death!
It's still not the time for me to stand at the marriage threshold

Not yet time for me to stand
Not yet time for me to stand upright (Konyak MS).

This song expresses the continual fight against traditional family and social rules of conduct particularly against early marriage. The speaker, a woman, talks about how women in Konyak society had to sacrifice their inclinations for a love marriage. She takes the decision to express her worries at the exact moment at which she is no longer able to stand the fact that she is to marry at an early age. She validates her point that she is still a child who is not yet matured enough to enter the threshold of a responsible family life. She is angry at her parents and at her society for being indifferent to her pain and anguish. Apart from the household chores, she had to attend to the field, nurture her children and fulfilled the demands of her husband and her family. For even if she marries, she will be blamed if she does not bear any child. This anguish bears her down and therefore, she does not want to be chained down by marriage.

Koh puh nap nang anyu ve
Ju shihpe luh fha me puh
Wan baa likzu lhan fei faasham en drei yang
Pong mei te drao kuh ong pojong ya me jaa
Ya nyah te shu kuh ong peazu long me lieak
Subaa pa tem ja drei yang
Yakuh subaa pa tem ja drei yang.

Translation:

When I was born to my mother
Born at a difficult home
Being bad times, I had been claimed with a plain necklace
When I spear at my hunt, it lands on the tree
When I fish, it slips on the stone
I was not meant for good luck
I was meant to be unlucky (Konyak MS).

This song clearly tells us how the speaker attributes the circumstances of his birth to be the cause of his failure in life. He considers himself to be an unlucky man as even his born day augured his life with rain and storm. He also gives the blame to his parents for claiming him with only a plain necklace. Born in a society where every man had to fish and hunt for survival, the social function of being a man awaits his future. He is expected by his peers, his equals to achieve and be successful at the appropriate time and contribute to his community. He might have wanted to be a successful man like others but he fails to hunt animals and catch fishes. He is overwhelmed by shame and despair while others are successful and considers his life to be ""much ado about nothing"...For nothing: this life had been given to him for nothing, he was nothing and yet he would never change…He yawned: he had ended his day's work, his youth was over" (Natanson 47). The speaker thus becomes disillusioned with his life never realising that it is his own deeds that will permit him to have life.

Longte vaat kung long bong me wangva long
Pozu bong vaat kaat la ong kok-e-ken ley ley
Chempa/chemzu bong shon imsing kha-o ton imwan
Jem-e yong ong be su oh
Jempe jem-e yong ong kuh be su.

Translation:

When the stone is deeply cut inside, it is filled with white stone
When the big tree is cut inside, it is all crooked with different layers
A friend's mind and the crow's gender cannot be known
Though they stand together as one
Though they stand together and look as one (Konyak MS).

The unpredictable nature of human minds and therein the inherent insecurity is brought out in the above lines. The speaker uses the metaphor of the insides of the 'stone,' the 'tree' and the 'crow' to explain about the inner workings of a human mind. Each individual man has his own thoughts and feelings different from the other. He lives a life quite different from others and unique to himself. The speaker brings out the idea that each of us fails to understand what is going on in the minds of

another person and how this wall of human mind cannot be scaled. This leads to isolation and lack of mutual understanding which characterizes human relationships. According to Sartre, "Man's relationship with the Other is always one of combat, for each person is perpetually trying to use other people in order to realize his own being" (Thody 28).

Zha nao toi thrum ching long ma
Su wong pe lei fom nga jain
Sie ngoi nyah drong pe lei pin wang poo nyan long
Ening pe me o tem wangwa yot lu ah
Yanja ma sei pe ning o
Ase yanja ma sei pe ning.

Translation:

In a village that a girl married
There's misty fog in place of white rice
The tree's yellowish blossoms instead of millet and fish aplenty
In this state, Oh! What life can be lived!
As if it's only for a moment
As if it's only for now and for a moment (Konyak MS).

The speaker here is a girl who had married to a man from another village. She experiences bad weather conditions with no sunshine for many days. She is being 'thrown-into-the-world' and can never 'just exist' in the present moment because the past, present and future are deeply enmeshed in her decisions to act (Tidd 24). She is disheartened as she is unable to have a good harvest and sustain herself and her family. Everything seems to be dull and weathered like the presence of the 'yellowish blossoms' of the tree. This makes her worried about how she can go on living her life as if it is only for now. As Sartre explains "there is a nothingness at the core of human reality; only human beings have the power to negate imaginatively their surroundings…This power to negate entails that human beings are free to determine themselves; there is no divine being that is responsible for directing their lives…We are constantly free to choose how we live, but not free not to choose. For not to choose how to live is still to choose not to choose! However, anguish results from this

apprehension of 'nothingness' and of the necessity to 'make oneself' and therein lies the temptation of 'bad faith'" (Tidd 25-26).

He shu pe te shim zai fa
He la pe te aling longya lho rhong ei
He ka pe te ajak pozu ha wang ei
Shimshu heman khahthra ko trhi vai nang oh
Khahtrha ko trhi vai nang.

He shu kuh ong shim men zai
He la kuh e aling longya lho imrhong
He ka kuh ong ajak pozu ha men wang
Nyok e he nyieh kuh ong ta pu ling men wing
Kuh e lam men shon drei
He ham kuh e lam men shon drei.

Translation:

Without grinding, grains be pounded
Without fetching, spring forth water
Without going to fields, fire wood tarry home
For poor me, who is unable to grind, let my name be praised
Let my name be praised.

Without grinding, grains pounded not
Without fetching, water springs forth not
Without going to fields, firewood tarries not, to be burned
Without movement, the tied bell chimes not
Turning and roads nears not
Without walking, turnings and roads nears not (Konyak MS).

The song talks about the work culture of the Konyak women among the Konyak. Though the Konyaks' feel that there is gender complementarity when it comes to work among men and women, women's chores are more enormous and laborious than men's. Usually, women are responsible for doing all the domestic household chores

like husking and grinding paddy, fetching water, carrying firewood from the forest, going to the field and nurturing children. This song is sung while pounding rice to remove the boredom and drudgery of their work and quicken their pounding. Whenever, the need of husking large quantity of rice arises, ladies come together to do their job. They husk with singing melodious song in order to draw interest of all. A leader would bring some meaningful melodies and sing together with them while still working. The first part speaks about the common wishes of human that expected to come without hardship and difficulty. But the second challenges that a human should work hard to let every creature enjoy at the products of one's work, which will bring more blessing from God.

Zuve winpu, pa a saipe kah ne nga
Chingkhei taapzu noa me yak baat en drei yang
Chingkho tok tu ham kai pe me lak a yang
Shimfei lea pe khao ja me yang yipli si vei
Beth dhring thrang dhrong wan impan drei o
Yip ong be she he lai pe vei a mikghid
Thrah ong be she mei a he muh pe jin la
Ahuh pelim te se gele tei te yang
Ati hum thrah fangleak ya ling pe nying le
Meitong pang kaap li te nyah li yo.

Translation:

What mother taught, what father said
Were scattered and lost in the nook and corners of my home
Were forgotten while going over the fence outside
Once I sleep parallel with my love
Cannot even think of the fights and fines that can arise
Though I spent with my love, a new thought arises again
Even though I sleep, this sleepiness never end
Though we eat the meat, this mouth is never full
It must be so to the thieves' too
Like drinking water after eating the sweet gooseberry with salt

It must have tasted good to everyone's tongue (Konyak MS).

The songs talk about the moral codes of conduct and the organised social ways and norms of life expected to be adhered by the children. In Konyak society, young people are often advised by the elders to take great caution in mingling with the opposite sex. Parents always tell their children to not spoil their life by marrying the wrong person. They therefore live in a world which they have had no power to shape. It simply appears to be a given state of affairs, regulated by fixed adult values. In this way, the situation of the child is metaphysically privileged, for he or she is usually protected from experiencing existential anguish and is mostly able to avoid any serious consequences of his or her actions. The speaker, on the contrary, defies these regulated social values. He forgets the advice and teachings of his parents once he goes out of his home. The speaker becomes oblivious of his situation and forgets about the consequences of his actions. He could not resist the temptation of being with a loved one even though she might not be the one he will marry. Indeed, he gives an insight into how he changes his mind when it comes to loving and marrying a girl. He compares his never satisfying urge to that of a thief who is called a thief even on his death-bed, to the food and sleep that man need for survival. He creates his own values. The experience of pervasive anxiety existentially and dramatically reveals to him that social roles can never offer a complete, all-encompassing account of identity. He is confronted with the recognition that social mores and customs are not sufficient to make life meaningful for him.

Oh kam ong pu si-pe mongken ying wam puzu
Yei teih yingli e tuh omme li ong fa ong
Esih himjong nao ning ja lei lah nang
Po khai en drei sei lah e
Ying wam pu khai en drei sei lah i.

Translation:
Oh my love who was meant to be mine
As he has been taken away by hail and storm
In exchange of him I stay back with just a mere child
For my tree has been plucked
That the tall tree has been plucked (Konyak MS).

The song presents the predicament of a woman who has lost her husband to the natural forces of the universe or maybe to the loss of life at the enemy's hand. This sense of loss often obscures any vague benefit that might accrue to a particular community through war, and this loss is borne especially by women. She compares the untimely death and short-lived life of her husband to that of the tall tree that has been uprooted before time. Her husband must have been a well-known and noteworthy person in his community or a warrior who had achieved great feats in life. After the death of her husband she seems to have stayed put in her husband's home and must have remarried a relative of lesser titles or a young person as is the custom of the Konyak to let a woman remarry with someone from her husband's relative or clans. The wife realises that death is not chosen by her husband but is thrown or forced upon him. As the Netsilik Eskimo poet Orpingalik reflected,

> "Songs are thoughts, sung out with the breath when people are moved by great forces and ordinary speech no longer suffices. Man is moved just like the ice floe sailing here and there out in the current. His thoughts are driven by a flowing force when he feels joy, when he feels sorrow. Thoughts can wash over him like a flood, making his blood come in gasps and his heart throb" (Wiget 28).

Suyan khahthra o ku to
Bihzu lah kuh ong sheko puh
Hahkuh thrin kuh ong wang nga khum
Him lei jo jei lumoi sha pei kuh be su
Apa nak zahk fe ja le
Bin om drao le nga zak drei o.

Translation:

Oh! Woe to me an orphan.
Though I married a woman yet she bore daughters
Though I burnt a log, yet it still felt cold
Though I bring a child as heir
There's no hope to be called father
But only calls me adding along my name (Konyak MS).

The song talks about the anguish of a man who has no heir. He considers himself an orphan as he has no sons just as children become orphans with no parents. It also brings out how the opposite sex is looked upon by the Konyak society. Women are considered as procreators and nurturer of generations and expected to give male heir. In this song, the man has no sons though he married a woman. She gave him only daughters. He is deeply anguished by the fact that he will not be called 'father,' a biological father by anyone. Though he may adopt a male child from his relatives or clans to be his son and heir, he does not hope to be called as a real father. He knew that his name will always be tagged along with being called a father. In this way, he faces 'anguish in the face of the future' (Reynolds 71).

Momo koji tuh pe shimthra ai su yuh
Paoshum yazu nyih, hamkhu yi mei to
Chuva ozu lea nyih munyak va okoi
Ge nga ku thra leifah bele he I lah
Teipe ku fhi nang drong nang
Kenshep tei pe ku fhi nang drong nang

Translation:

Mine those days lovers' son entices friends
While hunting and fishing, he is there near the trap fence and river's end
Wears mu and ova on his head during *olea* days
Could not ask back for that son of mine
Oh! Only to bring forth my tears
Filled with sorrow, only to bring forth my tears (Konyak MS).

In the above song, we see a man who regrets his past decisions. However, his regret is not because he has not married his beloved in the past, impregnated by him and left alone. His regret is about his present state, his inability in not having a son who can be his heir. He cannot avoid choosing and so he chooses to not marry the woman he loved and later in every respect he bears the brunt of his decision. He bears the responsibility of his past actions. He is pained to see his son, who is no more his son now, doing every activity as becoming of a man. He cannot avoid seeing him in every aspect of the community's social life, achieving great feats in life. And even if he

longs to get back his son, he can now no longer confront his past beloved for she had already married another man. Both she and their son had become another's and to claim for his son would lead to a fight with her husband and his clan. He had not honestly confronted his own past actions and responsibilities towards his beloved. He could have dismissed all his past mistakes and begin a new life with her but is consumed by his past actions. Though he had loved her yet he let her go bowing to family and societal pressures and thus he slays the possibility of having an heir. He married other women; they do not have any son. In choosing the law, he loses both his love and his son. The song brings out how man is desirous of following the law of the community, the law of his people, his clan and family because he feels the 'gaze' of the 'other.' As Simone de Beauvoir remarks, "It is always on the basis of the past that an individual makes choices regarding future behaviour. Although the 'original choice'- or synthesising thread of a range of life choices- made by an individual can be reversed or remade, it is not without significance because the world reflects back to us our earlier choices" (Tidd 40).

Ulipe pan pongmae
Oh genpa lang
Angoi ngoi pu genpa lang
Yogei chingteh nokthum
Ongjang taipu mong
Chingyang ngongkah
Shongwangsha choga pue
Hama henhai mongyong lam rei-o

Translation:

When I think of my mortal being,
I would have killed the guests
Whoever comes to me,
I have desire to destroy the mass
And raid the communities
Yet with the fear of the council
And the verdict of the great *Angh*
It has tampered my desire (Wangsa 8).

The song explains how a man desires to avenge and take the head of his enemy. He feels his desire tampered by the village system of administration and justice, the *Angh-gho* and its head the *Angh*. The taking of a life in an unsanctioned manner violated higher laws and could mean famine and starvation for the community. If the dead was an enemy slain in battle, pollution contaminated the victor, who needed to be purified of the disposition that produced violence. This makes the man in the song to be aware of not just his own free choices but also the responsibility that comes along with his own inherent freedom. If they evade this responsibility, then they will fall into bad faith. The Konyaks maintain a court/ council where the Chief *Angh* is the head of the court and the representatives from different clans and different Baans (morungs). This council has the responsibility for social, political, religious and economic affairs of the entire village. They adjudicate disputes and punish offences and breaches of taboos concerning the community as a whole. However, the verdict of the Angh is associated with the social ethics which makes people disciplined and enhance certain mobility of conduct in the Konyak society (Wangsa 7-8). If a dispute occurring in a tributary village could not be resolved by the local chief and his council, the paramount chief of the domain was invited to give judgement and his verdict was final. The verdict of the *Ahng* what is maintained in the *Ahnggo* (council) is associated with the social ethics which make people disciplined and enhance standard of morality of conduct in the Konyak society.

Yinglong and Lihwai
Dearly loved each other
Loving they lay together
Red as the leaf of the ou-bou tree
Flamed love and desire
On the paths to the village
The two lit fires
Skywards, upward curling
The smoke of the fire united
And mingled, never to part (Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas* 190)

This is a legendary song about two lovers, Yinglong and Lihwai perpetuating the memory of the passionate love of a brother and a sister, and a song telling of their fate

reflects not altogether unsympathetic attitude to their tragic plight. In this poem, the love of Yinglong and her brother, Lihwai is about the incestuous passion condemned but gets idealized. Lihwai had physical attraction for his sister. He could not bear his pangs of love for her for long and came to visit her under the cloak of night at the girls' *Ywo.* He thought that he could leave unrecognized as the dark throws no betraying shadow. But dark did not favour him, and people came to know their incestuous relation. To have an incestuous relation was a taboo and against their social and moral custom. So as per the law of the land, they were burnt alive near the entrance of the village gate. It is said that even death could not separate them as the smoke from their flames mingled together and curled up high in the sky uniting them once again never to part.

Our everyday concerns and involvement with others and our struggle to find meaningful connections to family and community may "sink away" for our anxiety before others, our human awareness of not just our inherent freedom, but also our responsibility for our own free choices and apprehension about what will happen in the future takes away the possibility of understanding ourselves. This happens if we are unable to fit in with others or if we cannot identify with our surrounding cultural milieu or if we are unable to overcome the social forces that marginalize us. And we are reduced to a state of "hovering" in a meaningless void. In such a situation, one can no longer speak coherently of an individuated selfhood because the integrity of the self was conditional upon the integrity of its world.

Louise Erdrich's sixth novel*, The Antelope Wife* (1998)spans a number of generations of twins and weaves together beading, animals, human connections, and naming practices into the stories of two powerful and possessive love affairs, neither of which are untainted by sorrow (Porter and Roemer 183). *The Antelope Wife*'s twenty-three chapters are divided among four sections, each of which opens with a reference to the haunting myth that frames the tale. The myth, like that of the Greek Moirai (the Fates), accounts for the spinning out of destiny. In this myth, twin sisters compete with one another as they stitch the patterns of fate. As readers are told in the introduction to Part One, "Ever since the beginning these twins are sewing. One sews with light and one with dark . . . each trying to set one more bead into the pattern than her sister, each trying to upset the balance of the world" (Erdrich, *AW* 1). In this short

passage Erdrich introduces two of the motifs that recur throughout the novel: *The Antelope Wife* tells the stories of several sets of twins, and it draws upon the metaphor of beading to link together the many strands of its plot.

The scenes in the novel that occur in the present are mainly set in Minneapolis (Gakahbekong in Ojibwa), and those that occur in the past take place in the wide-skied prairie lands that lie to the west of Minnesota. The plot features no central protagonist but rather weaves together the lots and lives of three families- the Roy family, starting in this novel with a Pennsylvania Quaker named Scranton Roy who joins the U.S. Cavalry and takes part in a bloody raid on an Ojibwa village; the Shawano family, descended from Everlasting and his daughter, Magid, an Ojibwa girl who receives an unexpected visit from an Ivory Coast slave; and the Whiteheart Beads family, starting when the grandson of Scranton Roy trades for a wife some red whiteheart beads that give their name to an Indian child. At the heart of the plot lie two cautionary tales that unfold the tragic consequences of characters' entrapment within the form of love that is essentially obsessive and possessive. As these stories show, this kind of love inspires its own quality of madness, wherein sense of selfhood assumes the condition of a perpetual state of longing. As the stories further show, loss of identity is not the only price paid by someone who would willfully possess another, for the obsessive lover also has a will to cause injury to others.

The central consciousness of *The Antelope Wife* begins the narration with the account of a cavalry soldier who, following a dog with a baby strapped to its back, disappears onto the western prairie: "What happened to him lives on, though fading in the larger memory, and I relate it here in order that it not be lost" (Erdrich, *AW* 3). The "I," though not identified here, is probably Cally (Whiteheart Beads) Roy, the greatgreat-granddaughter of that cavalry soldier. Cally later reports that "I am a Roy, a Whiteheart Beads, a Shawano by way of the Roy and Shawano proximity—all in all, we make a huge old family lumped together like a can of those mixed party nuts" (Erdrich, *AW* 110). Cally believes that "I was sent here to understand and to report" (Erdrich, *AW* 220) these families' intermingled histories. She appears at the bottom of each of the charts below, though the family relationships that explain her being there are sometimes vague and tangled.

Essentially a comic writer, Erdrich balances her accounts of tragedy and loss against the stories of the survivors, the characters who find ways to live with their grievous losses and, indeed, to celebrate renewal of their capacities to love. In *The Antelope Wife*, the occasions for renewal often take the form of family celebrations; in scenes of a wedding party, a Christmas dinner, and a surprise anniversary celebration, characters gather together to affirm the bonds of love and friendship that knit their lives to one another. The family celebrations are the occasions for feasting, and in Erdrich's detailed descriptions of various dishes and their preparation, readers find variations played out on yet another of the novel's central images—that of cookery and food.

Lorena Stookey agrees that one of her central themes is an ability to endure even apparent incompatibility: "*The Antelope Wife* relates stories of characters' survival of catastrophe, and, as one of its central themes, it celebrates the life-affirming power of the will to survive. . . . [it] celebrates the endurance of Ojibwa cultural tradition"(Stookey 138). Erdrich brings to life the reality and some of the symbols (the language, powwows, beading, etc.) of the cultural revitalization movement. Her use of Ojibwe language – even in her personal preface – and ideas expressed within the novel help demonstrates her awareness of the importance and beauty of Ojibwe culture. In this novel many characters' lives are crafted as examples of the revival of culture and its consequent confusions and rewards.It is, of course, out of some fierce instinct for survival that Scranton Roy produces ''father's milk'' when he must; Erdrich uses this startling occurrence to create a fable that offers an extraordinary measure of the human will to survive. Almost Soup demonstrates his will to survive by exercising guile and cunning when he faces the threat of the stewpot; to avoid being eaten, he must win the heart of a little girl by exhibiting all the irresistible charms of a puppy—floppy ears, big feet, ''puppy drool, joy . . . the head cock and puppy grin'' (Erdrich, *AW* 78). Through his resourcefulness, Almost Soup averts imminent disaster, and his story echoes that of Klaus the German soldier, whose strong survival instinct tells him that to save his own life, he must draw upon the special magic of his baker's art.

Among the several stories of characters who indeed suffer catastrophic loss, those that tell of Rozin's and Klaus's survival are perhaps the most poignant. Rozin's desire to

endure is severely tested during her ten days of solitary communion with the dead, and the appearance of the *windigo* represents her great temptation to succumb to the hunger of her grief. In the last days of her vigil she indeed waits for the *windigo*'s return. On the tenth day, when she thinks that he has come, she sees instead the image of Frank, the man whom she loves. After she falls into his arms, she realizes that he is only a figure in a dream, but she also understands that he has given her the ''gift'' of his strong body as her protection and that she can ''hide'' in the warmth of that body ''from now on as she walks forward in the world'' (Erdrich, *AW* 191). It is when she chooses to accept the gift of Frank's love that Rozin finds a way to survive her despair. Ironically, Klaus's survival too depends upon the giving and acceptance of a gift, for if he and Sweetheart Calico are to break the spells cast over them by their longing, he must give and she must take the gift of her freedom.

The Antelope Wife celebrates the endurance of Ojibwa cultural tradition. Like Erdrich'sother novels, this one traces the cultural legacy that is passed from onegeneration to another. *The Antelope Wife* preserves the Ojibwa tongue, for not only do the eldersspeak the old language, but so too does Cally, the figure who representsthe sixth generation of characters in the novel. Traditional names, too,are passed along by families, and when Zosie tells Cally that her spiritname is Blue Prairie Woman, she notes that this is a ''stubborn'' and''long-lasting'' (Erdrich, *AW* 217) name, one that will not disappear. Indeed, Cally's name is as ''long-lasting'' as the stories that are also passed down through the ages, for through the voice of its storyteller and the tales its characters tell, the novel invokes the Ojibwa's oral tradition. Needless to say, Indian survival humor, the Indian's ''seventh sense'' (Erdrich, *AW* 115), is yet another of the legacies important in the novel, and when Frank temporarily loses his funny bone, readers are informed that he is the only Indian alive who has no sense of humor.

The Antelope Wife departs from the fictional North Dakota community that centered Erdrich's earlier novels for a new set of characters and concerns in Minnesota. This new work spans generations and ethnicities, but circles around three complicated, multi-generationally inter-connected, extended families – the Roys, the Whiteheart Beads, and the Shawanos. The most notably heroic character, Cally, is a member of all three families. She is a modern, Native, young woman who successfully, delicately

mediates between worlds to create a new meaning, or pattern (in fact she emerges as the pattern maker – or storyteller). In contrast to Cally, those characters who fail existentially in this story either cannot let go of the past (nor see it properly), or are too entrenched in the negative aspects of the modern, Western society. The characters and how they live represent poignantly the struggle for cultural identity among Native Americans today.

Erdrich's novel reveals feelings that are typical of mixed-bloods searching for identity and a culture undergoing a renaissance. She represents this complex process by images and the word (in Ojibwa) for splitting: *daashkiika*. Although Ojibwe language is included in non-distinct type style, its distinctness is clear (Ojibwe words look very different from English). Similarly, these characters and the story are part of America, yet their Indian identity, language, and character imbue them with a unique quality. The characters that Erdrich creates, like many Native Americans, feel and often experience painfully or positively, a split between cultures, languages, and identities. Erdrich gives the images of splitting and duality primacy in this novel, implicitly and explicitly.

The split between cultures and between past and present is best represented by characters, like the title character who represents a bridge to the past and between human and animal worlds, as both antelope and woman / wife. Identical twins run in the female line of the principal family (the Roys, whom we later see are also the Shawanos and Whiteheart Beads). Identical twins represent a split or duality inherently, and also the potential of reconciling extremes (or halves of a whole), or of producing balance. A traditional word / name which plays a crucial role in the novel is "*Dashkikaa*," which in Ojibwa means "splitting apart,"or "cracked apart," as Cally's grandmother finally defines it (Erdrich, *AW* 213). There is a persistent image of a double world split in two, but simultaneously (at times only by implication) there is an image of wholeness. As potential and reality, a world woven together, affirming life, ultimately prevails.

The opening passage / image substantiatesthe duality and splitting of the world:

> Ever since the beginning these twins are sewing. One sews with light and one with dark. The first twin's beads are cut-glass whites and pales, and the other twin's beads are glittering deep red and blue-black indigo. One twin uses an awl made of an otter's sharpened penis bone, the other uses that of a bear. They sew with a single sinew thread, in, out, fast and furious, each trying to set one more bead into the pattern than her sister, each trying to upset the balance of the world (Erdrich, *AW* 1).

The struggle between balance and splitting are clearly signaled as major themes of the novel right from the outset. "Fast and furious" work on an intricate pattern of "light and dark" is obvious indicator of the duality of the pattern of life. The mythic dimension of twins necessarily invokes basic social problems of struggle or splitting, but also of mediation, which Lévi-Strauss illuminates as basic and universal aspects of myth in *The Raw and the Cooked* (Magoulick. http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/custom-website/mary-magoulick/antwife.html). The struggle between opposites, the race to reconcile realities perceived as separate, in fact necessitates mediation, or maintenance of a delicate balance, even if achieved unwittingly, as in the case of these twins.

Identical twins are the most obvious symbol of the split-apart world represented in *The Antelope Wife*. Typically twins are the heroes of myths. Lévi-Strauss writes that "this division between two individuals who are at the beginning presented as twins, either real twins or equivalents to twins, is a basic characteristic of all the myths in South America or North America" (Magoulick. http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/custom-website/mary-magoulick/antwife.html). Though the twin hero Cally loses her twin sister Deanna early on, she finds a replacement in the title character the antelope wife (known variably as Sweetheart Calico and Aunty Klaus), who manifests a split between woman and hooved one. Incipient twinhood, as in something that appears about to split apart because of its physical traits (such as a cleft palate, cloven hooves, etc.), plays as crucial a role as actual twins in representing inherent duality typical of myth, according to Lévi-Strauss. Erdrich recognizes that the significant feature of antelope and deer is their split hooves, as seen in her frequent references to

"hooved ones" rather than just deer or antelope. Furthermore, when So Hungry takes a deer as husband, this communion links her with all hooved ones. So it is acceptable when antelope (the hooved ones of the Plains where she is trapped) take charge of Matilda, daughter of their cousin hooved ones, the deer, and ancestor of the antelope wife. Incipient or actual twinhood always involves and represents inherent dualities which must be symbolically resolved, or mediated, says Lévi-Strauss (Magoulick.http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/customwebsite/marymagoulick/antwife.html). Many characters in *The Antelope Wife* suffer crises which must be resolved or mediated. Such crises comprise climatic moments of the novel.

Twins represent symbolically many other fundamental "splits" apparent in Erdrich's work. Seeing the world as "cracked apart" represents feelings typical of people searching for identity and a culture undergoing a renaissance, in a world they see as split inherently and which splinters their own sense of identity. Depending on perceptual focus, one may dwell upon such dichotomies or take up a challenge to find unity, to blend and make coherent various cultural impulses. The following images represent duality throughout the novel: identical twins, Native and non-Native cultures, bloodlines, and heritages, past and present time frames, male and female sexes, English and Ojibwe languages, human and animal nature (the "antelope wife"), wilderness and urban worlds,and existential realities. The novel as well emphasizes the interconnections between a plurality of lives and cultures. Native and non-Native, human and inhuman, as in primordial beings or animals, city and wilderness, past and present, all combine. Erdrich begins the novel with a multiplicity of voices and points of view, but eventually settles upon the voice of Cally as the principal actor.

Private Scranton Teodorus Roy, in *The Antelope Wife*, represents the non-Native, dominant culture in historical encounters with Indians. He experiences the conflicting emotions and responses which were typical of whites and their relations with Indians for many years. Scranton Roy's parents were religious intellectuals (Quakers). His upbringing recalls that of the idealized early American settler. Nevertheless, he leaves his parents and the Quakers to go off on an adventure – another typical American story. He thus chooses to act on his own freedom of action and not be casually determined by circumstances. Spurned by the lover he follows, he joins the army, where he brutally kills an innocent old Indian woman during a massacre. This

undeniable and from a Native American perspective, unforgettable part of our history strikes Scranton and the reader very harshly in the image of the dying old woman, who speaks to Scranton: "There was a word she uttered in her language. Daashkikaa.Daashkikaa.A groan of heat and blood. He saw his mother, yanked the bayonet out with a huge cry, and began to run" (Erdrich, *AW* 4). The "cracking apart" (daashkikaa) the dying old woman foresees / predicts refers not only to life and death, but also foretells other powerful dualities of this story and of Native American life. These universal dualities of human existence reveal a world apparently cracked apart, but not broken (i.e., functioning). Learning to see such a cracked apart reality as whole becomes the central focus of characters, determining their ability to survive or flourish.

Scranton Roy is changed, "cracked," by his murderous deed, but not broken. Perhaps he sees his mother in this old woman simply because his mother represents goodness to him, and so as he realizes the brutality of his deed, he thinks of her. Perhaps too, Erdrich is evoking the "Old Indian Woman" as mother to all Americans symbolically. This mother figure speaks to Scranton Roy a word which is central to the novel, though he cannot understand it. She recognizes that he, representative of all whites, is the means by which the world is cracked apart. Literally his bloodline and culture will dilute or split hers. Apparently only after this event do twins become part of the family line. Simultaneously, the split also impacts his life and culture. Though Roy does not understand the word "dashkikaa" and its significance, his descendants will. American culture may be considered cracked apart by its deeds toward Native Americans, but, like Roy's descendants, capable of healing. Ultimately, all of us are split or cracked apart, but not doomed to insanity and unhappiness as a result (as the old woman will confirm to Roy in a vision).

Running from his own brutal deed in killing the woman and cracking apart her world and his own, Scranton finds a lost Indian child strapped to a cradle board, tied to a dog, which the mother, forewarned by deer, had sent to safety away from the massacre. Scranton must rid himself of the smell of his world before the dog lets him approach. Symbolically, he baptizes / cleanses himself by stripping and washing in a stream. He cannot feed the starving baby until her persistent sucking on his breast (which he offers in a desperate attempt to comfort her) draws milk from him,

miraculously (Erdrich, *AW* 5-8).This life-giving is a kind of salvation for Scranton Roy. After the flurry of war and desertion, Scranton Roy lives deep in the wilderness, "bathes each morning at the river, and keeps feeding the baby" (Erdrich, *AW* 7). Seeking wilderness was historically a typical response of many men whose lives interconnected with Native Americans. It is not only nature which heals Scranton Roy. His ultimate salvation stems from taking charge of life. Though "the situation [of nursing her] was confusing" to him, "It occurred to him one slow dusk as he looked down at her, upon his breast, that she was teaching him something" (Erdrich, *AW* 7). When he choose to feed the baby, his individual act of volition does not happen in a self-enclosed space but it opens into the world- a world shared by others. He interprets his lesson according to the worldview in which he was raised, and sees that the baby has taught him the meaning of faith (Erdrich, *AW* 7-8). Symbolically, giving back life to Indians may be is equally necessary for healing and salvation for America.

The needs and longings of most characters in this novel are similarly overwhelming. Most of those needs and longings likewise revolve around crucial choices the characters must make. They all face practical and cultural dichotomies and make choices that shape their lives. They battle the "split" of cultures, and those who succeed (as Rozina eventually does – though only after great pain) are true to themselves and make good choices. Rozina accepts true love with the help of her community. Frank learns to laugh with the help of Roz and family. Cally learns to understand her heritage and visions and thereby fulfills one of her quests – to discover who her biological grandmother is. Sweetheart Calico is freed to return to her home once she releases the beads (thereby symbolically discarding the "sentence" that bound her to this world). Even Scranton Roy finds some fulfillment once he realizes the fruits (faith) taught to him by two cultures. Success seems dependant upon existential realization, but also a willingness to act within the world as it is, learning from the past, but looking to the future. Those characters who fail to weave a satisfying pattern for their lives – notably Richard and Klaus – fail existentially and culturally. When the characters overcome their various fears, as wise grandmother Zosie suggests, then they find balance. Everyone hungers and thirsts, but some hungers are deeper than usual, and much harder to fulfill. Healing, fate, and identity

are issues Erdrich considers from various angles, finally encouraging a more humanistic perspective.

Scranton Roy is plagued by visions of the old woman he killed because he is inescapably linked with others because "a human being does not exist statically among others without affecting them or being affected by them" (Patrik 85). In his fever she visits him, offering a message not of unbridled anger, but of reconciliation and hope:

> His body would endure anything to get rid of the soul riding in it, Scranton thought, violently dreaming. His fever built and Scranton saw her again. The old woman came to stand beside his bed this time and gestured flat-handed at the bloody hole his bayonet had made in her stomach. Her voice was oddly young, high and lilting, and she spoke to him in her language for a long time. He did not understand the words, but knew the meaning.
>
> *Who knows whose blood sins we are paying for? What murder committed in another country, another time? The black-robe priests believe that Christ allowed himself to be nailed high on the cross in order to pay. Shawanos think different. Why should an innocent god, a manitou spirit, have to settle for our bad drunks, our rage, our heart-sown angers and mistakes*? (Erdrich, *AW* 237-238).

His ability to comprehend her meaning suggests a connection with her family and culture at this point. She absolves him, but not according to his Christian beliefs, which may explain why he doesn't understand or accept her message. She rejects the sacrificial philosophy of redemption at the core of Christianity. If there are sins of the past ("who knows?" she asks), she doesn't blame their descendants. By putting this philosophy in the mouth of this representative and authority (an elder) of the old culture, Erdrich reveals her belief that this is an American Indian worldview. The woman he murdered, like Christ (even with a gaping wound in her side), offers forgiveness, but also points out each person's responsibility. She asks not for sacrifice, but for taking responsibility for our own lives and actions: "*Those things should come down on us*" (Erdrich, *AW* 238).

Scranton is consumed by guilt, so according to his beliefs he must atone for his sins:

> Yet, though her heard her out, he still thought that he could make amends. . . . [He sees her] the old woman, stumbling toward him with a grandmotherly anxiety, her face not ferocious but pleading, hopeless, satisfied to divert his attention, shot, pistol, from the running children. She threw herself toward him, a sacrifice. With shame, he saw again her sight rush inward to meet her death.
>
> Where were her people now? She wondered, at last. Where did her bones lie? How had she found him? (Erdrich, *AW* 238).

Scranton's culture leaves him unequipped to forgive himself or accept her words, revealing a gulf between Natives and non-Natives. Instead he is left with the "shame" (a strong force in Catholicism visited in earlier Erdrich novels, most notably *Tracks*). But Roy does recognize here the old woman's deed as a sacrifice for the future – children. He wonders about those children. After a hundred nights of such visitations, Roy promises to redress his wrongs and takes his grandson Augustus with him on a journey to find the village of her people, at which point his fevers and delirium finally ease. Through his own religious worldview, he manages to understand some measure of her message and tries to shape his own actions responsibly. This may not be what the old woman's beliefs implied, but it is an interesting compromise between cultures, setting off a further cracking apart of cultures and bloodlines. For according to Sartre, "an individual not only establishes what is valuable for herself by choosing which actions to perform, but also sets an example for others, because her actions occur in the public domain….An individual's responsibility extends to others, because she not only chooses for herself but also chooses for others in so far as her actions are publicly available as potential examples for others" (Patrik 42).

James Welch's second novel, *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979) takes place in a small-town Montana. It is a bleaker tale about a half-breed/mixed-blood character, Jim Loney, a down-and-out Indian, with no sense of past or hope for the future and no place in the white or the Indian world. It is a story of alienation, the search for identity, and a quest for a place, not to live but to die. A part-time agricultural worker, he spends much of his time in an alcoholic daze, sorting through his fractured past. He

struggles to come to terms with his identity. He has the knowledge of his Native American heritage, but with it just outside his reach, he drifts toward self-destruction. Rejected by his white father and worshipped by his white girlfriend for his exotic stereotypical Indian features, Loney is unable to resolve his identity crisis. "He thinks white, would not mind being white, but he seems to have Indianness visited upon him. He is the reluctant victim of a vision without quest, of vague yearnings for family, past and place that halfway yield to white interpretation-this individual has a problem, "he will not allow himself to be found," and "it had everything to do with himself"; and halfway yield to tribal analysis- Loney needs to come home" (Fleck 40). He walks in both the Indian and White worlds yet belongs truly to neither. His isolation and lack of control over his true place in the world drive him to desperation, and he takes control in the only way he can- he instigates his own suicide. Loney's thwarted efforts to fit into the dominant culture-mingled chillingly with the racial prejudice Loney has faced his entire life as reflected in General Sheridan's oft-quoted words, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," played into Loney's decision (Nelson 2261).

Contemporary Native American novels tell the story of a certain kind of homing; that the natural world is part of tribe both as a oneness and as a cast of characters; and that traditional violence still plays an accepted part in these novels. In *The Death of Jim Loney*, white values are more severely rejected, the third person narration hides Loney's mind, and the "homing" plot is harder to find (Fleck 38). Loney seems to be experiencing that state of spiritual malaise that in existential thought goes by the name of *anomie*--the inability to identify with the surrounding cultural milieu. Loney's friends believe he should try "leaving behind all his ancient prejudices and manners." He is bright, has performed well in school, and seems to lack only the motivation to do something with himself. Rhea, an idealistic English teacher from a wealthy Texas family, Jim's white lover comes to the Montana plains for "a complete break with my past" (Welch, *TDJL* 86). She next wants to go to Seattle: "Don't ask me why I chose Seattle. I guess it just seems a place to escape" (Welch, *TDJL* 87). Rhea wants Loney to escape with her. Ironically, she is in competition with another escape artist, Loney's beautiful and upwardly mobile sister, Kate Loney, who works for the government in Washington, D.C. She also offers Loney the white way of novelty, mobility, and meaning through individual experience and possession of things. Leave, she says, and "you would have things worthwhile…beautiful country, the North, the

South, the ocean…You need that. You need things to be different, things that would arouse your curiosity, give you some purpose" (Welch, *TDJL* 76). However, Loney never attributes his alienation to others' perception or treatment of him as a "half-breed." He does not "fit in" both because some quality he has is lacking in those around him, and because something others possess he lacks. To say he does not fit in because he is a halfbreed simplifies his dilemma erroneously. He offers little conscious criticism of others. When he does think of others' motivations, their behavior causes him to reflect negatively on himself (Porter and Roemer 239).

Loney struggles to find meaningful connections to family and community, but seems unable to overcome the social forces that marginalize him. Twice in the book, Loney analyses himself. In each case, he draws much of his vocabulary and values, his conscious knowledge from the white world, but then like a sheepdog keeps trotting back to family, past, and place as the source of identity:

> I can't leave," he said, and he almost knew why. He thought of his earlier attempts to create a past, a background, an ancestry-something that would tell him who he was…He had always admired Kate's ability to live in the present, but he had also wondered at her lack of need to understand the past. Maybe she had the right idea; maybe it was the present that mattered, only the present. (Welch, *TDJL* 88).

Loney returns to thoughts of his surrogate mother for a year, Aunt "S," hardly known, now dead; the only real family he has had. Kate has chosen change through knowledge, "learning as a kind of salvation, a way to get up and out of being what they were" (Welch, *TDJL* 90). Later when rhea asks, "What is it that troubles you?" Loney visibly tiptoes the line between individual psychology and tribal consciousness: "I don't even know myself. It has to do with the past….I know it has to do with my mother and father…an aunt I lived with…who she really was and how she died." Then he suddenly tells her of the extraordinary white bird that appears "when I'm awake, but late at night when I'm tired-or drunk….Sometimes I think it is a vision sent by my mother's people. I must interpret it, but I don't know how." The question of whether he will go to Seattle suddenly becomes, quite clearly, a choice between two cultures, two plots. Rhea asks, "'Did it ever occur to you that if you left you would leave these…visions behind? You might become so involved with a new

life that your past would fade away-that bird would fade away for good.' 'I don't know that I want that to happen' " (Welch, *TDJL* 104-106).

Jim Loney is a person distant or alienated from his culture, a "stranger," a word that appears several times in *The Death of Jim Loney.* The one sympathetic tribal cop thinks that they have been "hunting a total stranger, a faceless stranger" (Welch, *TDJL* 178). When Loney visits his father, he doesn't come as a son but as a "stranger to a stranger" (Welch, *TDJL* 146). Loney's certainty in his fallen world comes from booze, which eases his pain and makes him warm as he plans and awaits his execution. The fainthearted protagonist encounters an emptiness that makes death the only reasonable choice in an absurd or irrational universe. According to Welch, Loney chose to accept death as a deliberate thing because he wanted to do something with his life. It would get him out of his routine of sitting around and drinking Wine. The last sentence of *The Death of Jim Loney* begins: "And he fell, and as he was falling he felt a harsh wind where there was none"; the sentence concludes with the reference to the distant wings of a "dark bird" (*TDJL* 179).

Loney is haunted by his past and mired in meaninglessness that he has trouble understanding. Loney does "ask himself who he is- his life is riddled with an abundance of questions-but more importantly, he asks himself what he knows that is worth asking. Who he is floats on the surface of the story, but the essential question that plagues him is how to love and be loved for who he is" (Porter and Roemer 239). For Jim Loney, "the right light [in which] to see the world [is] between dark and dawn"; the world seen that way allows one "the quiet pleasure of deciding whether the things were there or not" (Welch, *TDJL* 167). Loney does not perceive the world as being the problem so much as his way of looking in. In the end, Loney cannot escape being a man caught between historical epochs and cultures, between "dark and dawn." Through a set of circumstances, many of them beyond his control, he has gone down the path of alcoholism. He has gone so far down that path that when the "other world" beckons to him, he can only respond by orchestrating his own death, an honourable way for an Atsina man to die when he has committed an egregious offense. Significantly, in terms of the criminalization of American Indian men, Loney's choice has to do with his not wanting to go to prison (Porter and Roemer 240).

“From the white point of view, the change of interests offered by a wandering plot might lay to rest Loney’s troubling hallucination. From the Native American point of view, his vision-knowledge is inextricably tied to past and place, although he lacks the tribe to interpret it. That knowledge would be entirely lost if he moved away” (Fleck 39). Throughout Loney yearns for family, with dreams of a mother long dead, aching memories of one Christmas with the kind aunt, the tracking of a worthless father at last brought to bay in his trailer. He tries to understand his past and takes control of his life by orchestrating his death but his decisiveness is almost gratuitously self-destructive. His individuality, his “existence,” and most of his conscious knowledge may be isolated but his dreams and desires and finally his resolution are not. These aspects of Loney constitute a loyalty to a tribe and tribalism he never knew individually. Loney takes us realistically to the blurred edge of consc iousness of a High Line Indian who knows there must be something good in his people, past, amd place, but who doesn’t even know why he knows that. He is unable to choose between a white realism that seems to offer at best lonely success or intelligent despair, and an Indian pride in tradition that must seem a dream. Loney dies two deaths: His white suicide is certainly a “return of desire upon itself,” which “makes a kind of frustration inevitable.” Yet his loyalty to Amos, the dog, his past and plasce is a transfer of energy “outward, away from itself…into public activity,” the history of tribe. Thus the articulation os his dream is also a “liberation of it from the dreamer’s self; Loney dies watching his past, “the beating wings of a dark bird as it climbed to a distant place” (Fleck 42-43).

As Brian Swann remarks in *Smoothening the Ground*, “What is revealed in Native American societies is, then, a sense of the seriousness of man’s existence. The meaningfulness of life, not its meaninglessness” (xv). The stories and poems are a record of vital, vigorous peoples, confident in their achievements and abilities, proud of their civization. “Everything in this civilization had a place, and its order was not so much imposed as proven to be good by its being *lived*. Man himself discovers what is best. There is no divine fiat which he is forced to obey. Everything is ‘fitted’…Man is not the conqueror in these stories, for the conqueror role is ultimately self-defeating…man is a triumphant survivor, always adequate to the task, ready to take risks and learn” (Swann xv). Erdrich moves beyond the need merely to address familiar injustices; her work calls on us to develop a new historical consciousness. Her postmodernist thought emphasize questions about history-not only about what

happened in the past, but also about how different groups of human beings perceive and record experience from diverse, subjective points of view. Rootlessnesss troubles Indian and white alike. Loney's tragedy is a loss of place, simply designated "home"- the Indian heritage of land, family, clan, tribe, and spirit turned nightmare.

The protagonists in Native American novels seeks a meaningful relation to a meaningful structure. They accomplish self-realization in life not by themselves nor by romantic bonding but only when they accept social ritual that they become a healthy man and through deeds traditional to their people and their need that they become a self-respecting man. "That an individual exists is not contested, and Native American life and novels present all the variety of personality expected in our species; but the individual alone has no meaning…The free individual without context is utterly lost…" (Fleck 23).

Konyak Naga life has a different rhythm; it is not the rhythm of the seasons or of agriculture, it reflects a ritualistic pattern of life and faith the sense of the sacral tradition handed down from generation to generation. But underneath these manifestations one finds insight into the philosophy of life. One discovers their deeper human emotions which find expression in the poetry. Their poetry reveals and unveils by heightening a man's sensitivity, by opening to him the treasures of the imagination, it increases his powers of sympathy and understanding.

The spirit of singing is the source of folk poetry and music is its very soul. The intensity of emotion which the oral tradition imparts to the folk songs is its heartbeat, and this a statement which is to be at the end of one's mind if he or she wants to understand the myths and religious beliefs and to gain an insight into the psychological and emotional relations between individuals in the Konyak society. However, in collecting, documenting and translating the Konyak folk poetry, it is almost impossible to ascertain the exact meaning of a word or a phrase. This is because the language that the people speak varies from village to village and also because their poetical language is very different from the idiom in daily use. But the fact remains that the rich oral poetry of the Konyaks can be read as literature and thus much work has to be done in this area.

Folk songs play a very significant role in the socio-cultural life of the Konyak people. It is the sources of pleasure and also the way to express sorrow and always bring fresh inspiration, spirits and enthusiasm to the eternal soul of the society. These folk songs are never learnt through any established institutions, but they are narrated from memory and verbally transmitted from one generation to another. But it is unfortunate to say that folk songs are gradually losing its identity due to inflow of many undesirable elements in their society in respect of changing socio-political conditions as well as the invasion of modernity. As Julius L. R. Marak reflects, " The old tunes and folk songs are forgotten as the younger generations are not inclined to learn the old folk tunes as they feel they are all outdated…As a result, they are slowly dying out for want of preservation and promotion amongst the folk singers and musicians" (Sen and Kharmawphlang 86). The present generation should therefore be encouraged to preserve, learn, protect and promote their old and traditional folksongs and tunes for generations to come and mould them to adapt with the modern songs.

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CHAPTER IV

EXISTENTIAL PROJECTION OF FAITH IN THE RIDDLES, PROVERBS AND METAPHORS OF THE KONYAKS AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN WRITINGS OF ERDRICH AND WELCH

A central tenet of existentialism is that selfhood is not naturally given but must be "won over" from a state of complacency, conformity and self-forgetfulness. Winning oneself, or authenticity, amounts to accepting one's essential finitude, freedom and responsibility and applying this insight in one's actions. Losing oneself, or inauthenticity, amounts to "fleeing from" one's freedom and continuing to regard one's existence impersonally, as something for which one is not ultimately responsible (Michelman 43).

Jean Paul Sartre provides the most detailed account of the psychology of inauthenticity, which he analyses in terms of the phenomenon of *bad faith.* Bad faith (dishonesty, deception, hypocrisy) is employed by Sartre to designate various strategies of avoidance and self-deception that at the root of inauthentic existence. Pursued by diverse strategies, the goal of bad faith is to "escape oneself", to avoid acknowledging one's freedom and responsibility as a self-determining being, most commonly by construing oneself as casually determined by heredity, temperament, or social circumstances or by conforming oneself to social norms and the opinions of others. The project of bad faith, however, remains for Sartre highly unstable and ultimately unrealizable, because consciousness always transcends its objectifications, that is, each false self-interpretation deployed is at the same time held at arm's length and called into question as an object of consciousness (Michelman 47).

Bad faith is a form of existential self-deception theorized by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. According to him, most of our lives are spent in bad faith because we can never be fully sincere or even sure about who we are. The paradox of bad faith is stated most boldly in his famous claim that "I am what I am not, and I am not what I am" (Patrik 86). In Sartre's claim that "I am not what I am," the phrase "what I am not" refers to what I shall be in the future (though I am not that in the present), because my existence is freedom' what I shall be in the future, as a result of my own

free actions, is as important to who I am as anything I have done in the past. In his second claim that "I am not what I am," the phrase "what I am" refers to the essence I have already created for myself out of my past actions. But because I am free, I am not merely my essence; I am also existence, the ever forward moving upsurge of my own freedom. The reason why we cannot be fully sincere or sure about who we are is that we are always in the process of becoming who we are; we are not finished as long as we live. We have the freedom to create ourselves and the freedom to change ourselves at any time (Patrik 86-87).

Sartre usually uses the notion of bad faith to characterize individuals who are more self-deceived than they should be, even though none of us can escape self-deception entirely. What makes some self-deception so flagrant is an unwillingness to acknowledge either one's own freedom (transcendence) or one's responsibility for one's past actions. Some people are in bad faith because they deny they are free; they think they have a certain fixed character and can never change. Such people believe that their essence cannot be modified by their existence. Others are in bad faith because they deny responsibility for their past actions; they think that their freedom gives them a licence to disavow anything they might have done. That their existence creates no essence at all. Both kinds of self-deceived people fail to understand the full truth about who they are- that they are free to change but they are also responsible for what they have already made of themselves (Patrik 87).

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre describes what he calls "the double property of the human being," two distinct aspects of being-for-itself, namely "facticity" and "transcendence" (Dreyfus and Wrathall 236). These two aspects of human reality are in truth and ought to be capable of a valid coordination. But bad faith does not wish either to coordinate them or to surmount them in a synthesis. Self-deception seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as being facticity, in such a way that in the instant when a person apprehends the one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other (Sartre, *BN* 79).

The two forms of bad faith are generated in our relations with others: crediting others with the ability and responsibility to define me, and completely ignoring what others

think of me. These two forms of bad faith are closely related to the concept of the *Look* and to the inability of others to know one as one know oneself. For Sartre, an individual is the sum total of all his actions. The actions one has already performed can be known by others; others may have even looked at the individual while she was performing them. But the actions the individual would freely choose to perform in the future cannot be known in the same way by others. Their judgement is based upon what the individual has already done and made of herself, but this is only a part of who the individual is. Others' judgement leaves out the future dimension of the individual's freedom, which allows her to transcend whatever she has already done (Patrik 87).

If an individual relies too heavily on what others think of her, she falls into bad faith. She overemphasizes her Being-for-others and deemphasizes her own freedom to interpret her actions and her projects for herself. She resigns herself to being defined by the roles others expect her to play or by the personality traits that others see in her. Her sense of her own identity is placed in the control of others, instead of being counterbalanced by her personal view of herself. If an individual ignores what others think of him and insists upon characterizing himself by his own lights, he falls into a different form of bad faith- the bad faith of denying that he is being-for-others. Such a person will deny that his past actions, as interpreted by others, matter much, and he will define himself instead as a free spirit, unrestricted by others' views of him. He pretends that his existence is a possession that he, as proprietor, alone manages, rather than a movement out into the world, engaged in relations with others (Patrik 87).

Sartre explains bad faith as consciousness that direct its negation towards itself instead of turning it outwards. This is identified with lying. Bad faith then is a lie to oneself, on condition that we distinguish the lie to oneself from lying in general (Sartre, *BN* 71). Lying to others is one thing; it is worse to lie to oneself and conceal it at the same time. This temptation is almost forced on the self by its essential instability and by the necessity to cope with the judgement of others. The easy way out seems to be to select a self that is both completely stable and morally above reproach. But this is in fact impossible, and so the attempt results in bad faith. Lying is a negative attitude, but this negation does not bear on consciousness itself; it aims only at the transcendent. The essence of the lie implies in fact that the liar actually is

in complete possession of the truth which he is hiding. A man does not lie about what he is ignorant of; he does not lie when he spreads an error of which he himself is the dupe; he does not lie when he is mistaken (Sartre, *BN* 71).

The one who practises bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. In bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. It implies in essence the unity of a single consciousness. This does not mean that it cannot be conditioned by the "Mit-sein" (being-with others in the world) like all other phenomena of human reality, but the "Mit-sein" can call forth bad faith only by presenting itself as a situation which bad faith permits surpassing; bad faith does not come from outside to human reality. One does not undergo his bad faith; one is not infected with it; it is not a state. But consciousness affects itself with bad faith (Sartre, *BN* 72).

In Sartre's bad faith, concretely, human beings are prone to a strategy of self-evasion. Bad faith is thus a kind of pre-reflective self-deception. In its most common form, it appears to be a by-product of social expectations and conformism. Sartre has indicated that there is a mode of Being in which the being-for-itself seeks to "unfree" itself- to take leave of its anguish, its responsibility. Our problem, then, is to attempt to discover the relationship between Nothingness and bad faith, and to determine whether it is possible for the being-in-itself to negate its own Nothingness and shun its responsibility.

Bad faith is the attempt of the being-for-itself to deny itself by trying to hide from one aspect of its nature: its "is-was". Although the being-for-itself is not what it is, it does "exist" its "is-was" aspect. Two interpretations of this "is-was" of the being-for-itself are possible: first, the attempt to substantialize the "is-was" into an essence which antecedes man's acts and determines them. The second interpretation of the "is-was" is the conception of it as dialectically bound up with the existence of the being-for-itself. The meaning of the "is-was" is continually in suspension, for man, by his actions redefines and reinterprets his "is-was." Thus, Sartre maintains that the "is-was" of the being-for-itself is that which the being-for-itself is not. And to act in bad faith is to attempt to deny both of these interpretations. The individual who acts in bad faith seeks to negate the "is-was" of his being-for-itself. This negation may be

accomplished either by stopping at a certain period in one's life and refusing to take into consideration or even admit the changes that occur, or by clinging to the fact that changes are always taking place in one's situation, and refusing to be held accountable for what one has done in the past (Natanson 83).

However, all attempts to negate the "is-was" must result in failure, because every effort to flee from anguish and responsibility inevitably takes place under an unintended but unavoidable recognition of anguish and responsibility. "The flight from anguish is only a mode of being conscious of anguish…It can be neither hidden nor avoided" (Sartre, *BN* 67). Here is the paradox of bad faith: to be in bad faith is to attempt to flee from one's anguish, but such flight is accompanied unnecessarily by a recognition of anguish. Sartre states the paradox in the following way:

> "Bad faith flees being by taking refuge in "not-believing-what-one-believes." The first act of bad faith is to flee from what one cannot flee, to flee from what it is. The very project of flight reveals to bad faith an inner disintegration in the heart of being, and it is thisdisintegration which bad faith wishes to be. Bad faith seeks to flee thein-itself by means of the inner disintegration of my being. But it deniesthis very disintegration as it denies that it is itself bad faith. Bad faithseeks by means of "not-being-what-one-is" to escape from thein-itself which I am not in the mode of being what one is not. It deniesitself as bad faith and aims at the in-itself which I am not in themode of "not-being-what-one-is-not" (*BN* 93-94).

Sartre comments on the basic moral conception of the human being: "[T]o be is to choose oneself…entirely abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making [oneself] be – down to the slightest detail" (*BN* 440-441). If, on the other hand, one does not wish to lie to oneself but to speak the truth, then a different kind of temptation appears, namely, to be what one is, whatever that may be. Just as bad faith is a state of mind, so sincerity is a demand that one makes, an impossible demand, since no one can be what he is without being either God or a thing, an In-itself-For-itself or merely an In-itself and consequently is not a state.

As Sartre says, the goals of bad faith and of sincerity are the same, to put oneself out of reach, it is an escape. Only the way is different. To be sincere is to be what one is. "The sincere man constitutes himself as a thing in order to escape the condition of a

thing by the same act of sincerity. The essential structure of sincerity does not differ from that of bad faith since the sincere man constitutes himself as what he is in order not to be it. This explains the truth recognized by all, that one can fall into bad faith through being sincere" (*BN* 88). To him, bad faith is not a "question of a reflective, voluntary decision, but a spontaneous determination of our being" (91):

> One puts oneself in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams. Once this mode of being has been realized, it is as difficult to get out of it as to wake oneself up; bad faith is a type of being in the world, like waking or dreaming, which by itself tends to perpetuate itself…(91-92)

With this "spontaneous determination of our being" goes a weak and uncritical acceptance of the world of bad faith, an initial decision not to make decisions, an initial decision to be indecisive. Bad faith does not maintain the criteria of truth as they are accepted by the critical thought of good faith. Bad faith is resigned in advance not to be transformed into good faith. Through the initial determination of bad faith there will be obstinacy in the face of truth and a willingness to adhere to uncertain evidence:

> "The true problem of bad faith stems evidently from the fact that bad faith is faith. It cannot be either a cynical lie or certainty-if certainty is the intuitive possession of the object. But if we take belief as meaning the adherence of being to its object when the object is not given or is given indistinctly, then bad faith is belief; and the essential problem of bad faith is a problem of belief. the project of bad faith must be itself in bad faith. The decision to be in bad faith does not dare to speak its name; it believes itself and does not believe itself in bad faith; it believes itself and does not believe itself in good faith. Bad faith does not hold the norms and criteria of truth as they are accepted by the critical thought of good faith. What it decides first, in fact, is the nature of truth. Bad faith apprehends evidence but it is resigned in advance to not being fulfilled by this evidence, to not being persuaded and transformed into good faith" (Sartre, *BN* 91).

The conclusion is that bad faith is a constant threat to consciousness: the unavoidable menace which accompanies the Nothingness of the being-for-itself. Sartre remarked in *Being and Nothingness*:

> "If bad faith is possible, it is because it is an immediate, permanent threat to every project of the human being; it is because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. The origin of this risk is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is" (94).

Nevertheless, he adds, it is possible to achieve "authenticity" as "a self recovery of being which was previously corrupted (Dreyfus and Wrathall 237). If bad faith is a permanent threat to all human projects, but why is it not altogether inescapable? If all our projects essentially aim at a contradictory synthesis of the for-itself and the in-itself, how is avoiding bad faith and achieving authenticity even intelligible, let alone feasible? For this authenticity must consist in somehow keeping firmly in view the "double simultaneous aspect of the human project," that is, its transcendence and facticity, and in the end its arbitrariness and futility: a "new, '*authentic*,' way of being oneself, which transcends the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith"(Dreyfus and Wrathall 237). To transcend this is to escape at least one form of the self-defeating paradox seemingly entailed by the account of consciousness as uncompleted action in Being and Nothingness. Although all projects are arbitrary and futile, he insists that in *doing* something we need not aim at *being* anything.

Rather than aspiring to *be* anything, the authentic self aims only at transcending itself in an immediate engagement with the world: The only meaningful project is that of acting on a concrete situation and modifying it in some way." The authentic consciousness no longer strives to be God, then, but commits itself instead to "a radical decision for autonomy." *Being* authentic in this sense will still mean *being* engaged and autonomous, but only as an aspect of one's facticity, not in-itself, not as a finally settled matter of fact to which one aspires self-consciously in transcending oneself oneself toward the world (Dreyfus and Wrathall 238-239).

A proverb mostly begins with, 'it is said…'or 'the old people say…' "Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceedings. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to a recurrent problem. It presents a point of

view and a strategy that is self-sufficient, needing nothing more than an event of communication to bring it into play…Proverbs take a personal circumstance is taken and embodied in impersonal and witty form. Proverbs are nearly always stated in the form of a single sentence. They are among the shortest forms of traditional expression that call attention to themselves as formal artistic entities" (Dorson 119).

The riddle is one of the oldest and most culturally widespread of folklore genres. "The basic structural component of riddles is a descriptive element, which consists of a topic and a *comment*. In every riddle there is at least one object or item that is allegedly described (*topic*) and about which an assertion is made (*comment*). Structurally, a riddle can be defined as a "verbal expression which contains one or more descriptive elements, a pair of which may be in opposition; the referent of the elements [the riddle answer] is to be guessed [emphasis in the original]" (Georges and Jones 98-99).

According to F.A.de Caro, riddling falls into six broad situational areas:

a) Leisure-time riddling, in which the purpose, or atleast ostensible purpose, is entertainment;
b) Riddling in folk narratives;
c) Occasional use as a kind of greeting formula;
d) Use in an educational context in which a teacher poses them to a pupil; or riddles may appear
e) In the context of courting or
f) In rituals, especially those of initiation or death (Oring 180-181).

The functions of riddles, as given by Alan Dundes, are as follows:

(a) The main function of the riddle is as entertainment, and this is consciously recognized, whereas other functions of riddles are often not recognized at all by the people.

(b) The riddle also acts as an exercise of intellectual skills and quickness of wit; it becomes a test of memory with those riddles whose answers have to be learned by heart to be known.

(c) Nakene points out that many riddles are instructive, as they may mention geographical names or contain reference to historical events. Certainly they develop a sense of observation and often contain elaborate and rich linguistic forms (187).

Metaphor is "one of the most effective indicators of proverbiality. It is one of the most devices which helps to achieve figurativeness in proverbs" (Handoo 160). Mieder states that "metaphors comprise an important marker for many proverbs, and it is exactly this vivid imagery of most proverbs which makes them appealing" (Handoo 160).

Many of the Konyak proverbs serve as impersonal vehicles for personal communication that throws light on their overall worldview of the culture. The worldview of the Konyaks when it comes to language and the use of verbal speech is that words or human speech is a powerful weapon. It can either bring peace or create war. Therefore, people are often reprimanded from using "antagonistic speech" as it can "rebound and harm the speaker as well as the person spoken to" (Oring 191). Some of the Konyak proverbs seem to depict speech in a negative light where "Speaking too much is seen as a sign of vulgarity" and "speech can even be harmful to a person who is the subject of the conversation" (Oring 191), as in the case of, *"Wang-e ye ompu, tah ngao,"* (Do not speak things, unreachable in heaven) and *"Na te yeongpu, tah ngao"* (Speak not what cannot go near the ear). Society looks down on people who speak recklessly inconsiderate of other's feelings and emotions and often reprimands them for speaking petulantly which others cannot even want to hear or take. To quote Elliot Oring, "The proverbs do suggest a basic distrust of speech and perhaps strongly emphasize the need to speak carefully" (191).*"Judok nyah yod, mongsa kaikod,"* (Honeyed mouth, *kaikod* heart) explicates the idea that "speech is thought to conceal the truth and to be a cloak for deception" (Oring 191). Here, *kaikod* refers to crooked stinking plant and man's speech can either be sweetly convincing and alluring like the sweet honey or be vulgar and offensive like the stinking *kaikod*. *"Khunak kah jonge jishah"* (Worms do not eat man's words) indicates avoidance of careless use of spoken words which could be particularly disruptive in one's social context. This is applied against loose tongue and it may be called a kind of social warning as the Konyak's believe that words once spoken cannot be recalled back. It passes on from one person to another and rebounds back to the person who has spoken himself. Though a man of oratory skill is much admired by the Konyaks for his art of repartee, he is expected to avoid extremities as indicated by the proverb, *"Kah jee, pak jee, tom me lahlah shai-e lah lah"* (Words and ropes, can be shortened or lengthened). Here, 'rope' refers to the rope of a traditional carry basket which the Konyaks use in their everyday life's activities to carry firewood and

fetch water in bamboo barrels in the villages. According to them, the load they carry in the basket can be too heavy or too light depending on the way they adjust the basket rope. If it is too short, it strains their neck and if it is too long, it strains their back. They had to maintain the correct balance of their basket rope to lessen their load and avoid all the stress and strains. Therefore, when a person speaks with violence and vulgarity to the extent of harming others or themselves, the elders use this proverb admonishing them to adjust the way they speak to others just like they adjust their basket rope. It becomes the responsibility of man to choose whether to be or not to be stubborn or flexible in dealing with others. Man's choice of his faculty of speech can either lead to tight control of human aggression or social disruption.

Another worldview of the Konyaks, when it comes to use of speech is that deeds are given more importance than words. The doer is a character type much admired in Konyak society. Being hardworking people, Konyaks have the tendency to characterize a person/s as one who is well-equipped in everything and who can save a family. Lazy and indolent people are looked down upon by the society. The Konyaks like to project themselves as men and women of action not useless talkers.

Proverbs are usually applied in situations characterized by "conflict, scepticism, or other kinds of oppositionally structured mental dispositions. Invoking the authority of a proverb in such contexts transfers the difficulty from a personal to a conceptual level, thereby restoring equilibrium to the specific occurrence that threatens the community's traditional values" (Bauman 129). Some of the proverbs expresses this idea, "*Kah a laan pei ei ne ga,"* (As if words will accomplish everything) and *"Kah trhah ne ga"* (As if words can be eaten) gives a negative and sceptical view of speech. "If mere talk impedes achievement or substitutes something insubstantial for solid accomplishment, then it is not surprising to find a negative attitude toward speech" (Oring 193). The Konyak's attitude towards life is practical where what a man does become more important than what he promises to do. The proverb, "*Yakpa yah, mongpa wao,"* (Hand takes, heart desires) instructs people to adhere to solid work ethics and not to waste time through idle talk. Thinking or dreaming will not bring any achievements but doing or accomplishing will. Many people lose a great deal of their time by laziness; they loll and yawn in a great chair, tell themselves that they have not time to begin anything then, and that it will do as well another time. It brings

home the idea that wishing for things or speech itself "does not accomplish anything" and that dreaming or wanting can be "an empty substitute for deeds" (Oring 193). However, it cannot be concluded from these proverbs that speech is curtailed, "the general attitude seems to be that speech, used wisely, is good, not something to be deeply suspicious of" (Oring 192). Indeed, speech for the greater good of the community is much encouraged and valued as Scott Momaday writes in "The Native Voice in American Literature,"

> "Words are intrinsically powerful….By means of words one can bring about physical change in the universe. By means of words can one quiet the raging weather, bring forth the harvest, ward off evil, rid the body of sickness and pain, subdue an enemy, capture the heart of a lover, live in the proper way, venture beyond death. Indeed, there is nothing more powerful. When one ventures to speak, when he utters a prayer or tells a story, he is dealing with forces that are supernatural and irresistible" (Lundquist 60).

People are defined by who they are and not what they are. Existentialism proposes that the essence of man is determined by his subjective actions and not some objective standard imposed on him. A person may pretend to himself that he does not have the freedom to make his choices by pursuing pragmatic concerns and adopting social roles and values that are alien to their nature as conscious human beings. However, to do so is in itself to make a choice, and thereby to acknowledge his freedom as conscious human being. Proverbs are "used to call somebody to account for misbehaviour" (Oring 190). For instance in the use of the proverb, "*Kahyeih jiyak, nyanu mok jeyak"* (Lies never stop, mithun's tail never stops wagging), a person in a Konyak society may be defined as a thief for his repeated thieving and his unstoppable actions compared to that a 'mithun' which keeps wagging its tail to shoo away the flies though there is no fly around it. This is a negative judgement by the Konyaks of people who repeats bad behaviour continuously but they are not the ones who force a man to steal. If a thief cannot realise that his values are immutable and that he can change his values and actions, it is his individual choice and ultimately he is the one responsible for his own values and actions and the consequences of being defined as a thief. A man can therefore create his own values and use them to decide which actions are appropriate based on an evaluation of the morality of the possible consequences.

Proverbs are "educationally useful in two ways: as repositories of wisdom to be learned by the young courtier, and (most important) as devices to be learned and used by fledgling orators" (Dorson 118). The Konyaks give importance to the principle of seniority and relative age in their social structure and verbal behaviour. From a young age respect for parents and elders is ingrained in children. The suggestion that age is an almost absolute regulator or indicator of behaviour is made in the proverb, *"Bih mei kahva te tah non/laat" (*Do not lift the chin of the elders). In such instances, "the elder is quite displeased with the youth's discourteous manner, which violates not only norms for respectful treatment of elders. To add to the elder's expression of displeasure he introduces the proverb with "we have a saying that…," implying that either the youth does not know the proverb or that the elder is paying ironic over-courtesy" (Ben-Amos 134-135). Older people are expected to have more wisdom from their years of experience. Respect for elders is one of the good qualities of the Konyaks. Young people are instructed to not reply back to their elders or point fingers at them.

"Riddles have a social and didactic value that clearly transcends the entertainment or amusement function" (Ben-Amos 78). The question *"Nang bong tei beshe, naam bong teisa?"*(Though your heart is there, is there sesame seed?), asks a person indirectly whether the other person will agree to his wish or not or whether what he wants will be available to him or not though he may have his heart set on someone or something. This riddle is asked to a person who speaks hopefully of someone or something which he has not yet acquired or achieved. It is said that a man had wanted to go to a village to have sesame and in another case to propose to a girl from another village. But not knowing whether he will find sesame seeds in that village and if his proposal will be entertained or be accepted or not, he started to make his own plans. People are advised not speak without surety as things might turn out to be quite contrary to what he had hoped for. In order to avoid all the embarrassment, they are usually asked this question, "Is there sesame seed?" This question can put a person in a moral dilemma but choice is dependent on his own will and desire. The anguish then is his inner anguish over moral uncertainty as the anguish demonstrates a personal feeling of responsibility over the choices he makes in this situation or throughout life.

Women in Konyak societies are not free of the multiplicity of stereotypical misrepresentations by their cultural and social construct. The stereotypical images created about women subtly and tangibly leave a deep imprint upon women's self-perception. "The identity formation involves internalization of received values and wisdom implies that the popularly accepted female images play a critical role in crystallization of women's self-perception" (Jamir and Longkumer 79). Several myths, legends and tales and the inherent metaphorical sayings and figurative elements in them show the inherent negative image of women in Konyak society. Whenever a man remarries, he never gets the blame but it is the women who is represented as the 'home-breaker' and given the negative image of a 'wicked and cruel stepmother.' In Konyak society, the second wife never gets all the privileges that she deserves just as the first wife is given even by her husband and family. One of the Konyak proverbs clearly indicates this misogyny, *"Sheko mongnyong, mahao wongshong"* (Woman's crooked heart, cow's crooked horn). The 'cow's horn' is the metaphor used here to indicate the 'frailty of women.' Cow's horn is believed to grow crooked and inward instead of being upright as expected of horned animals. This metaphor is related to a woman's heart. Women are stereotyped to have a weak-willed heart. They are depicted as the betrayer in a relationship. Men often say that they should not believe what women tell them when it comes to keeping promises. They give her the negative qualities of never being true to themselves and to their lovers. They feel that women can easily break their promises when a more suitable and wealthy suitor proposes them. In instances where there is breakup of lovers or divorce in a marriage, it is the woman who becomes the victim to the ostracising of the society. Besides, they are expected to marry wealthy person in the society by her families and give birth to sons by her husband and in-laws.

Another metaphorical representation is given in this saying, "*Sheko lim jie, log jie*" (As women, as *log*/ fish tail palm). The comparison here is to the 'fish tail palm,' a lofty palm tree with smooth cylindrical, shiny, annulate trunk with crown of leaves like fish tail. *Log* is used by the Konyaks to make weaving tools, for entry gate, as beams and to make granary. It is believed that the fish tail palm tree grows rapidly and stunts its growth after bearing fruit. The fish tail palm is contrasted with the fan palm tree which grows slowly taking its sweet time to bear fruits and continues to grow and bear fruits year after year without stunting its growth. The Konyaks

compare the life of man to a fan palm tree. The implication of the use of the metaphor of the 'fish tail palm' to bring in the portrayal of women in Konyak society indicates how the socio-cultural construct of a patriarchal society conditions the psyche of women to occupy and play the weaker and submissive role. This image conditions the women to be hold up inside the house and confine themself to the domestic chores. The Konyak look down upon women who take part in the social aspects of the community after they are married. There are lots of moral ethics for a married woman. They are asked to behave as married woman should and not consider themselves as if they are unmarried. Even today, people look down upon married women, if they dress fashionably or groom themselves. They are mocked at for not wearing traditional dresses in various social functions; to wear clothes at knee length is out of the question. If they visit their friends and spent longer time with them they are rebuked and accused of gossiping and wasting their time. If they do not give birth for two or three years after marriage, their reputation is marred by other women that they were immoral while single and so this happened. They are not supposed to talk aloud or vent out their voice in public places. They have no role in decision making of the community and the family. They are not supposed to feel young at heart once they married and so to confine them to a narrow corner within the four walls of their home, people use the proverb, "*Sheko lim jie, log jie*" to remind them that they are like the fish tail palm that stops growing after bearing fruit.

"The present image of women has been created by men to suit their insecurities and needs, which "spring from a fear of the 'otherness' of woman. Yet, this notion itself presupposes that patriarchy has already been established and the male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject and the referent to which the female is 'other' or 'alien'" (Jamir and Longkumer 92-93). Inspite of this socio-cultural constructs, Konyak women can construct their own identities by dealing with the resulting angst and not giving in to bad faith. They have the choice to either pursue the wondrous deeds of being loyal to their cause, comrades and values; have courage in the face of overwhelming odds and hopeless battle which will allow them to defy the absurdity of existence and define who they are and give meaning to life.

Proverbs and riddles also give an insight into the patriarchal system of the Konyaks. Most of the Konyaks say that gender role is complementary in Konyak society and

women are given more privilege when compared to their counterparts in some other culture. But this gender complementarity is only based on the economic sphere. Men, in Konyak society are given the role to protect the village, community and family from enemies; to protect the forest; to make logdrums; to pull wood meant for pillars; to fish and hunt; to make rice pounding table; basketry, gunmaking and blacksmithing; to cut the jhum land for cultivation; to construct houses; to take all the major decisions of the community. Whereas, Konyak women performs all the activities such as weaving, pottery, pounding of grains and corns, making yarns, fetching water, carrying firewood from the field, weeding the field, sowing and harvesting different types of crops in all the stages of cultivation, and nurturing and upbringing of children. Unlike the men, women had to wake at the early break of dawn, cook for the family and even after coming back tired after a day's long hard work from the field, they had to again cook for the night. Women are considered to be the maker or destroyer of the family and therefore, the Konyaks feel that much importance should be given to the qualities and abilities of a woman while choosing a wife which is indicated by the proverb, *"Shimkhu naak long baa, luku naak lah ba."* It implies that "one should not make a mistake in drilling the rice pounding hole nor in marrying a woman." The proverb does not compare a woman to a rice pounding table but to the act of drilling the table and the act of choosing a woman for marriage. For the Konyaks, rice is the main staple food and agriculture is their livelihood. Mostly, it is the women folk who grind and pound rice and prepare delicious food for the family and the men who drill the table for them. In order to make a pounding table, a single broad wood have to be brought from the forest. All the men folk from a particular clan and family chooses an auspicious day to go to the forest and cut the best tree fit to make the table. The height, weight, thickness and broadness are all looked into before it is brought home from the forest. After bringing it home with great difficulty, they take a day or two to drill slots of holes in the table for pounding rice. They take great care and caution to carve out the slots and avoid mistakes in drilling it sideways; exact accuracy and proportionate measurement had to be kept in mind. Once drilled, it was impossible to reshape or even amend it. This pounding table is to last for generations if carved in the right manner and will save the family from going through the whole process once again because of inaccurate drilling.

Likewise, just as great caution is maintained in making a pounding table, so is it in choosing a wife. Therefore, marriage becomes a serious venerated matter for the Konyaks. Marriage for them is the act of bringing two families, two clans, two villages, two neighbours together and meant to last for lifetime. Young people are often advised to avoid recklessness in choosing a wife. The rule of clan exogamy is strictly imposed on association and its violation leads to excommunication from the village. The pure lineage of the girl's family and clan is also looked into fearing that if they make the mistake then their generation will become unclean through the mother. They are reprimanded from associating with those girls who are reckless themselves and who goes about gossiping around the village freely; to avoid girls who cannot be a homemaker and who know nothing about household chores. They believe that it is the women who can either make the family prosperous or poor, successful or failure. The family and clan of the man observe women in their community and choose the one whom they think is best for their son and their family and clan. It is only after taking into consideration all the qualities, character and personality of the girl that the man's family sends emissaries to ask for her hand in marriage with dao and spear. If accepted by the girl's family and clan it is considered as a formal acceptance and a ritual of engagement is observed. Once engaged both man and women are expected to live by their agreement and not flirt with others. Else it is considered as unfaithfulness and heavy fines are levied on the guilty party depending on their fault committed. If they keep their vows, marriage is then conducted by following all the norms and procedures and with great pomp and show. Marriage celebration is deemed to be a revered occasion since the traditional time amongst the Konyak. Even after marriage great care is taken to keep the family safe and not bring about unwanted quarrels and disputes between husband and wife. Divorce hardly occurs and each of them had to respect each other's family and clans as well. Even when misunderstanding crops up between them, the whole family and clan intervenes and try to sort out their differences amicably. Differences if not solved often lead to conflicts between the families and clans to the extent of paying fines in the form of forest, land, field or animals. This incident will affect other members too even in the future and most of the times their failed marriage and the ill-treatment received is always taken and given as examples to others who wish to marry. And unless the conflict between the two families or clans is resolved, marriage between their clan rarely occurs among others

in the near future also. So in order to avoid all this complications, elders tend to make use of this proverb to avoid making wrong choices in marriage.

Another proverb which relates to the kinship relationship through marriage also holds an importance place in Konyak society. However, blood relation is more valued than all other kinds of relation among the Konyaks. The proverb*"Teinao het, Okoi ket" (*When brothers' quarrel, a feather is torn) tells us about the stronger relation between brothers as compared to marital relations. Here, it implies that whatever conflicts occurs between brothers, they usually reconcile by tearing a bird's feather. Another variation of this proverb is "*Shongling shahzu, jeinao wei throng"* (Marital relatives' tiger, brothers' utility basket). The words '*shahzu*' which means 'tiger' and '*wei throng*' which means 'utility basket' are used figuratively in this proverb. The ties between one's own family blood relations is compared to the utility basket that people in Konyak society always carry with them. This basket is like a bag where they put all the necessary things they need wherever they go. The purpose of this basket/bag is used to bring in the idea that one's own blood relations are the ones who will be with them through thick and thin despite their misunderstandings and conflicts among each other. Whereas, one's relationship with one's in-laws is compared to a 'tiger' considering the fact that offence committed by either the husband or the wife does not go unnoticed or unpunished. The marital relation gets disbanded and their cordial relation is no more maintained in this case. This is why one's relation with the in-laws is compared to the ferocious character of the tiger depending on the situation at hand. Both the proverbs thus give us knowledge about the social and cultural relations among the Konyak. The Konyaks maintain good relations with their in-laws and exchange gifts between the two families for as long as they live.

As Haimendorf writes in *The Konyak Nagas*, "The system of ceremonial gift exchange stabilized the cohesion of a village community by creating numerous economic links between the individual families, clans and morungs, and it also served to strengthen the position of a wife in her husband's family, for gifts received gave her the feeling that she was valued by her natal family and could, if necessary, rely on the support of her agnatic kinsmen" (88). And though the daughter is already married to another clan, she is still considered their daughter and sister. Much respect is given to the maternal uncles by the off-springs' for they believed that if they incur the curse

of their uncles or parents, they will not have a good and prosperous life. Therefore, if any misunderstanding arises between their daughter and her husband, they take all the measures to reconcile them. Any breach of the marital code is considered an offense against the recognized order. In case of ill-treatment by the husband's family and clan or adultery from the husband or divorce, it will lead to punishment of the guilty party. Serious offence by either the wife or the husband incurs paying of heavy compensation by their family and clans in the form of cultivable land, residential sites or forest land as per the decision of the village court. This feuding leads to severing of the two families' cordial ties and unless peace is made between them, there is no chance for any of the families to hope for another marriage between them. On the contrary, the Konyaks believe that though disputes and conflicts may arise between two brothers, it never goes to the extent of paying huge fines from anyone. Instead they reconcile and make peace quickly and all ends well among the brothers. Therefore, the Konyaks give more emphasis to one's relation with one's blood ties more than any relation in their society.

Many of the proverbs of the Konyaks are given its text from their folk tales which presents their philosophy of life. Many of this tales abound in the use of animal character, as the choice of animals and their activities can easily be pointed out to the young listeners. Besides, all the creations of the earth had lived together as one family. Animals are used in order to avoid direct reference to any particular person. "It is always the situation that brings up the context for the advice which seems to be needed, and situations in life differ considerably, as we know…Since the proverb allows phrasing the advice in a culturally recognized form, it comes out not as our own personal opinion but as a cultural norm, with all the authority, antiquity, and stability of that category…The performance and perception of proverbs allow both speaker and audience to exercise culturally comfortable philosophies and to demonstrate in so doing their own hold on tradition, their membership in the group" (Toelken 136). One of the animal tales about "*a dog and a goat*" gives us multiple meanings of the way the Konyaks have lived their lives. The story narrates that "those days both the dog and the goat lived with man. Then, the dog had its horn and it looked so attractive that the goat wanted to possess it. One fine day, the dog was very hungry and when he saw the remains of sesame seed pounded on the rice pounding table, it went ahead to lick it. But his horn got in the way and he had to take it off to

fit his head inside the hole. Meanwhile, the goat which had all along been waiting for an opportunity quickly seized the horn and tried it on its head. It fitted so well that he did not take it off. When the dog had had its fill of the sesame and looked for its horn, he saw it on the goat's head. He asked the goat to give it back but the goat was in no way willing to part with it but ran away with the horn on his head. It is believed that from that day on dogs and goats became enemies." The story besides giving us information about how dogs began to live with man under the same roof, also gives us two proverbs where both the dog and the goat serve as metaphors for humans in general:

a) Kui-e younpong wong waopu kih

Like the dog yearning for goat's horn

b) *Kui hei youn huopu kih*

Like dog and goat's meeting

In Konyak culture, people are criticised not only for attempting to take advantage of others but also for trying to get whatever one notices in others. The elders chide the young people with the use of the first proverb if they compare their state and wealth with others. They feel that one should be contented with the least they have. What matters is not the outward adornment that others have, but the inner beauty that one possesses. Envy and greed is discouraged as it might lead to troubles for the child himself as well as his parents and the community. They believe that whatever one becomes is all because of the efforts of his or her hard-work and sincerity. They consider real achievements to be that which one has earned through his hard work and not otherwise. And therefore, no one should attempt to take away something which belongs to others or should not yearn for someone or something which he does not deserve to get at all else it will invite the community's disapproval, trouble and animosity. The second proverb is used to refer to the meeting between two enemies who are at loggerheads with each other because one of them had cheated or betrayed the other and had brought him sufferings. Young people are often advised not to create troubles in the society through their greed and envy. It also reminds them that human have a deceiving heart. They have the tendency to snatch away the prize of others even when he knows that he has does not have what it takes to possess it. When man act the way the goat acted, he tries to avoid his responsibility of giving it back which in turn makes things worse for him. These proverbs can also be used in such

instances as the political scenario of our present state today, where we see political defections and disloyalties with no securities. Due to people muddying themselves in politics, we see disharmony and rivalries among each other, politicians and voters trying to woo each other with the best of their false promises and the use of all deceitful and corrupted means to come to power. But the fact remains that it is man themselves who understands the nature of man's desire or intentions and still secretly invites it being paralyzed and torn between what they and what they think is right. It depends on the consciousness of man to either create animosity or peace through the way they interact with the world. But the crisis of choosing between them arouses anxiety in them as we see in the use of the 'dog' metaphor which lies to itself and tries to subvert the reality.

Another animal tale about "a dog and a pig" gives the practical worldview of the Konyak that a man paves his way to greatness by dint of his willingness to work hard and not through deception. The tales goes like this:

"Long ago, a dog and a pig lived together with man. They both went to the field to help the man. As soon as they reached the field, the pig wasted no time and started tilling the land while the dog was sleeping the whole in a shady corner. The pig was irked with the dog and warned him that he would report it to the man. When evening came, the pig cleaned and washed himself of all the dirt from the field work and went back home. He reported what had happened that day to the man. Meanwhile, the dog had over dozed and when he woke up, the pig had left already. So fearing the man's wrath, he very cunningly went and walked all over the field and over-stamped the footprints of the pig. Then he ran back home and accused the pig of not doing anything at all the whole day. He also pointed out his dirty feet and the pig's clean feet and told the man that it was the proof and that he could also go to the field and find out which of them had done more work. When the man went to the field the next day along with the dog and the pig, all the footprints that he could see was of the dog. He rebuked the pig for its laziness and as a punishment made the pig live outside the house and allowed the dog to live as his companion under the same roof" (Konyak MS). The story gives us the proverb,

"*Kui-e akshuo yeipu kih"*

Like a dog spoiling the pig's footprint.

It is used when a person takes all the credit of someone's work although he has done nothing at all. Laziness and slackness is reprimanded. People are mostly instructed by the elders to be hardworking and sincere in their endeavour. It is said that the creator has given talents to all alike and one should nurture this given talent and not waste it. One is not to depend on others for doing their work or blame his circumstances, but should try to overcome his weakness and make the best of his situation. The decision taken by the man after seeing the footprints of the dog in place of the pig also tells us about how a rational human being can be deceived by the cunning ways of others in trying to please someone or in retaining his position in life at the expense of others. In that way, man can be either be subjected to faults and weakness and take the wrong decision in life or he can free himself by taking the right decision at the right time, knowing well the true nature of others through their character. The way the man reacted to the situation and the proofs shown by the 'dog' explicates that man as a rational being has objectified himself by not accepting his freedom to choose, to believe or not to believe, to make a decision and thus becomes inert. His good faith "flee the "not-believing-what-one-believes" by finding refuge in being" (Sartre, *BN* 93).

The Konyaks look up to their leaders as role models. Man of high stature, great charismatic personality, undefeatable warrior, man like the *Angh,* and even parents and elders are revered and respected. They are expected to set good examples for others and in turn, they also strive to live up to it. In that way, people's perception conditions of others condition their construction of the self. Yet in lieu of all this social conformities, the Konyaks expect that one must create oneself to be revered as above by finding one's own inner self. The consequence in striving hard to construct themselves as perceived by others and as perceived by one self, it brings about insecurities in their life. The use of 'pangolin' and the 'rooster' as metaphors to 'man' in the proverbs, *"Hahmong witzhu koi hon yao, Tok vei pe zhu long-o bongvei si sa ho"* (Burrowing pangolin, my trick is stony back, though soft and transparent inside) and *"Opong khunthrai ni kaat ka peningle"* (Like the rooster and the wildcat), explicates this construction and the inherent insecurities.

The context of the first proverb is provided by 'the story about a tiger and a pangolin.' The tiger had wanted to prey on the pangolin for its food. But it could not even

scratch the back of the pangolin. The more the tiger tried to get hold of the pangolin, the more the pangolin curled into a ball and showed only its large, sharp scaled body. The tiger felt outwitted by the pangolin's overprotective scales acting as the armour. And just when the tiger was about to give up, the pangolin remarked, "*Hahmong witzhu koi hon yao, Tok vei pe zhu long-o bongvei si sa ho" (*Burrowing pangolin, my trick is stony back, soft and transparent inside). So the tiger once more requested the pangolin to come out and when it did, the tiger wasted no effort and scratched the soft inside part of the pangolin's body and killed it. The 'story about a wild cat and a rooster,' gives us the context of the second proverb. The wild cat is described as being awed by the flamboyant, colorful and majestic appearance of the rooster making distinctive alarm calls in its territory sitting on a high perch. The wild cat wanted to devour the rooster but feared that the rooster might be stronger than it with its strong beak and loud crowing. One day, they decided to go for hunting. The wildcat paying due respect to the rooster offered him the best of the meat. But instead of eating the meat, the rooster asked the wildcat, "With what teeth shall I bite into the meat?" The rooster gives away his weakness by bragging aloud vainly. The wildcat realised that it had all along wrongly feared the might of the grand rooster when it did not even the teeth. His fear was relieved and he attacked the rooster and relished it for his dinner.

The above sayings implies that one should not disclose one's weakness to others less they be overtaken by their enemy easily. Both the 'pangolin' and the 'rooster' play the role determined by their society. Whereas one appears to be charismatic and majestic, the other appears to be undefeatable. But they both seem to have their own inherent weakness. It implies that physical appearance or the outward perception by others is nothing as people will eventually come to know about one's weakness through the way one acts. Both the 'pangolin' and the 'rooster' seem to have their 'inner self,' an unknown or even unknowable to other people or even to themselves, which they protect by keeping it hidden from others. But being pushed to the extreme by the 'tiger' and the 'wildcat,' they give away their most well hidden, secret thoughts and intimate sentiments outside of the relations that they want to establish. Ultimately, they both get devoured by their predators and changes their own identity constructed by the outside world.

The world abounds in intrigues, conspiracies, jealousies, ungratefulness and deception. Anyone endorsing these negativities is looked down upon by the Konyak community. The story about 'a Woodpecker and a crow' gives instance about one of this human frailty. A woodpecker and a crow decided to decorate each other's feathers beautifully. The woodpecker asked to be decorated first which the crow agreed. The crow sincerely gave its best efforts designed the woodpecker beautifully with intricate patterns achieving every perfection. And when the woodpecker's turn came, without any second thoughts, it flushed black colour on the crow and flew away deceiving the crow. Their fate was that the woodpecker though dotted beautifully, could not come out during the day because of her attractive colours as it can be easily hunted and killed. But the crow can come out during daytime and could not even be noticed by other because of its blackness. The story gives us the proverb, *"Tot-oo va ling pe me khawang ko faabah"* (Designing the woodpecker, I, the Crow became poor). The proverb implies that deception can result from jealousy over control, beauty, money, prestige or love. Man fail to realise that human accomplishment and care is transitory and that any endeavour may be futile but they still strive towards it and still fights over it. Man attempts to have control through outward personality just as the 'woodpecker' and 'crow' tried to adorn themselves by changing their colour, despite knowing fully well the futility of fame and fortune. The fact that man has to maintain his prestige and status as defined by society makes him assume the role of an object in the world, not a free agent, but merely at the mercy of circumstance. People may define themself as naïve like the 'crow' by blindly following or imitating others or by taking pity on a poor person or an orphan, or a homeless person and be taken advantage of them or they may define themselves as a 'deceiver' like the woodpecker by refusing to acknowledge their responsibility towards others.. Anyone can be deceived and therefore, people are asked to have caution and be alert while dealing with people less their ignorance leaves them with a permanent mark like the blackened 'crow.' Man cannot force upon others to conform to the role of being grateful to one's provider or guide or teacher, it depends on the individual's choice and responsibility to either be 'grateful or ungrateful,' 'naïve or deceiver'.

Proverbs "tells us about culture and society"... Its "usage tells us about one way in which human beings communicate in certain contexts". Proverbs as a form of art also intrigues people "with the question of what it reveals about a society's morals, values,

and attitudes" (Oring 189). Proverbs about the importance of family ties, love, respect and responsibility towards each other is always stressed in the Konyak society. With regard to the relationship between a child and his siblings, proverbs play a very important role in showing how one child should behave towards others, which is indicated by the following proverb, "*Chuhngam hi sii paam ma,"* (Like Chuhngam, holding dog's intestine). The Konyak parents are very anxious to have unity among their children and believe that a lack of such unity would have a serious disruptive effect upon the family's solidarity. Whenever a situation arises where one of the siblings fails to respect his other siblings or fails to keep his responsibility will admonish the above proverb from others such as in the case of Chuhngam. Chuhngam was one of the three brothers in a family. He never bothered to share any produce from his fields or his hunted prey with his friends. He loved his friends more than his brothers and ignored them in everything that he did. He also did not bother to consult his brothers for he had his friends around him all the time and thought that they will be there with him whatever he may face. Meanwhile, his two brothers always chided him for not treating them as his closed ones saying that it will only be them who will rescue him when he is in danger and not his friends. Chuhngam could not believe them. So, one day, he decided to test whether his brothers or his friends will rescue him when he lands in trouble. That day, he left home early to his field all alone. When he reached the old bridge to the field, he went down under the bridge, smeared the dog's blood all over himself and then put the dog's intestine on his stomach and pretended to have fallen down the bridge. When he saw his friends, he cried out aloud in pain, but they all gave a look and just left him there alone. When his brothers heard about him, they ran as quick as they could and brought him back all the while asking him whether he was alright or not. Chuhngam then realised that his brothers had been true to their words and that his friends were mere acquaintances who will never take the risk for his life even though he may be in danger. From that onwards, he started to reconcile with his brothers and gave them all the respect he did not give in his past days. He is thus reminded to look after his brothers and to acknowledge and respect the strong ties between family members. The Konyaks always therefore stress on people to know where their responsibilities and loyalties lie and to celebrate the unconditional love that runs through the heart of the family.

According to Abrahams, not all proverbs attempt to produce an action immediately rather they attempt to produce an attitude toward a situation that may well call for inaction and resignation. He also gives two occasions in which proverbs attack ethical problems: "one, in which a proverb is used to direct future activity; and two, in which a proverb is invoked to alter an attitude toward something that has already occurred. In either case, the proverb places the problem situation in a recognizable category by providing a solution in traditional witty terms" (Dorson 121).

One of the Konyak proverb,

"Tokhan ti pik pe ning"

(Like Tokhan, swept off by water)

implies that man is mortal and cannot escape the fate that destiny has in store for him. The only way for him is to live his life as it is and let himself be overburdened by the sense of the lurking dead. Many of the proverbs that are widely known and of interest to the Konyak tell a condensed story, as in the above proverb. Here, we are given an image suggestive of a story. Its use imply that Tokhan swept off by water is to be compared to the one to whom the saying is directed. This saying is about a person named, Tokhan in one of the village of Chen Konyak. The foreseers of his village had bad omens about Tokhan that he will drown in the water. So he took great care to avoid himself from going out to do any activity, anywhere near the water source, which might land him in trouble. But one day, one of his sisters, who had married across the river of his village, came to pay a visit. And when the time came for her to return to her husband's village, Tokhan, as a protective brother, offered himself to accompany her and drop her. When they reached the river bank, Tokhan restrained himself from crossing the river and his sister also readily agreed knowing the reasons well. Just after his sister crossed the river, Tokhan began to sharpen his machete by the river shore. Then, suddenly a huge wave of water rushed in from nowhere and swept away Tokhan along with it. And at this moment, his sister who also happened to look back at his brother and saw what had happened. What they had feared and avoided all along had exactly happened. And so she remarked, *"Ajei Tokhan, tem hon tem man yao eh!"* ("Brother Tokhan, what kind of shocking misfortune is this!") which is an expression of shock. Tokhan seems to have let himself be determined by the facticity of life. He could have affirmed his own existence by his rejection of contemplating on what is going to happen in the future. Instead he has fooled himself

by relying on what he wants to believe- that he will be safe and secure if he took precaution. He denies his individual realities and the reality of the temporality of human life.

Human behavior is often unpredictable and irrational. The Konyak proverb, "*Zu Lang, Baam Khong,"* (Mother killed, Drum Beaten) based on the story of two close friends suggest this unfathomable difficulty of human minds. While returning back from the field, one of the friends suggested that they both should kill their mothers if they find their mothers had not prepared the best food for them at home. And that they have to beat the *baam* (local drum) as a sign of their killing. On reaching home, the friend who agreed to the suggestion found his mother had prepared only a morsel of millet with no meat. He though that he had heard his friend beating the drum, so he too felt that he had to keep their promise and foolishly killed his mother without any second thought. This conveys the message that the friend who had killed his mother is in bad faith as he had allowed himself to rely too heavily on what his friends or others think of him. He allows himself to be defined as a person with weak personality who gives in very easily to peer pressure. Another cause of his bad faith is giving in to drinking from the '*baam,*' giving away the power to an external force to act as a catalyst to his action. The tale also tells us the weaker sex can become the victim of man and bear the brunt of their decisions and actions. If he had pondered deeply and acted on his own conviction without being influence by his friend and drinking, he could not have acted bizarrely. He compromised his integrity by listening to his friend's plan without protest or a second thought and lands in bad faith as he has "overemphasized his Being-for-Others and de-emphasized his own freedom to interpret his actions and his projects for himself. He resigns himself to being defined by the roles others expect him to play or by the personality traits that others sees in him. His own sense of his own identity is placed in the control of others, instead of being counter-balanced by his personal view of himself" (Patrik 87-88).

The Konyaks believe that one should avoid extremities. One should not rejoice too much or be too sad. The proverb, *"Ashan yanyi lahle, aluk tongkha pak" (*Laughing at the crab, the frog broke its back), on the surface level gives us knowledge of the community based system of cultivation, the agricultural life of the Konyak and their sense of community feeling and cooperation. The story of "a frog and a crab" who

were close friends and neighbours provides us its detailed context. Each of them went to each other's field in turns. One day, they both went to the crab's field. The crab wanted to prepare a delicious lunch for his friend. When the frog saw the crab struggling to lift the dish pot and in the process breaking its limbs one after another. The frog found the situation so amusing that it laughed uncontrollably and broke its back. And from that on, frogs are believed to have a hunchback.Everyone, both young and old, are to work together in the Konyak community. Therefore, though fields are owned by individual families, clearing of the fields, slashing and burning, weeding and harvesting are mostly done by the community in groups. They have this system of groupings which they call *'ai'* (grouping on the basis of circle of friends). So instead of hiring wage labours to cultivate the field, the *'ai's'* go to each other's field and helps out. On another level, the story seems to be a mockery extremities and on the attempt of people to achieve the impossible by pretending to be able to do it on their own. Many a times, young Konyaks are advised by the elders to take the help of others when they face difficulty depending on the situation they face in life. But it does not however mean that they not attempt at all. They only need to look into the gravity of the situation and draw a line between foolishly attempting to be brave and being wisely timid. The proverb thus implies that one should not laugh at the misfortune of others less he also meet the same fate and that one should not dare to act boldly knowing full well that it is not in one's capacity to attempt to do so. They stress on being modest and content because they knew that what rises may fall and what falls will rise depending on the deeds.

The Konyak culture instils social obligations on its members from childhood so that a man who shirks his social duties comes to be regarded as a failure and invite the censure of other members. That a man's laziness will make all things difficult even the easiest and the simplest ones. *"Nyetak aman yange, mahao te yonglak e hep" (*Unable to weave, the weaver hits the cow with the weaving stick) and *"Okha sai me, pinchong te tih"* (Missing the crow, cutting the trunk) is used to ridicule and rebuke those who blame his tools or circumstances and fail to admit their lack of skills and improve upon it. An able bodied person who fails to maintain his dwelling place or weed the fields is shamed by the community. A good workman does his job well even if his tools are not of the best quality. Here, a man is blaming the external forces- his 'weaving stick' and seething his anger on the 'tree' shows his failure to recognize the

multiplicity of other choices that are available to him. He is placing himself at the mercy of the circumstances in which he happens to find himself. In that he becomes more akin to an object, a 'Being-in-itself' than to a conscious human being, a Being-for-itself.' If a man instead of blaming his tools and circumstances and slaying his anger on others, makes the choice of improving his condition through diligence, he choose to be a man of industry.

One becomes aware of his existence during moments of crisis, when he cannot react with the habitual patterns of ordinary life. A thick-skinned person allows himself to be masked in his choice of action thereby masking his anguish over his total responsibility, his absolute freedom of choice. He lets himself be ridiculed by others by choosing to present himself as an unregretful person. The proverbs of the Konyaks, *"Sheta me yan khum pu/long shempu"* (Face masked with iron sheet or stone), *"Muk me aodu meiyao shempukih"* (Like masking one's with pig's fat and poked by the bird) is used to describe such kind of person. To have a face masked with 'iron sheet or stone' would mean a heartless person, one who is not pricked by his guilty deeds. Those days, the Konyaks used 'pig's fat' to cover the face of a dead person, usually an enemy they had beheaded, before they perform the rituals in order to chase away any curse the dead person's spirit may bring along with him. They head is then left to rot and be fed upon by birds and animals. It conveys that it is only a dead person who is blinded, unmoved and unashamed by his wrong deeds. There are instances where a person brings embarrassment and discord to his family and community by not following the rules and gets admonished by these proverbs. This is accomplished by asserting that he could not have chosen or acted other than he did.

Impersonal metaphorical sayings acting as agent of communication is apparent in the socio-cultural life of the Konyaks. For instance, "*I ha yei phei me antak wo seppu ki," (*Like mending the broken bamboo porch after his son's death) and *"Pa bahfei me, haam tuu"* (Cleaning the weeds after losing their father). This tells us about their life view that one should not procrastinate in fulfilling what needs to be done in the present. That when there is so much to be done for oneself, for one's family, one's community and one's leader, one should not be morally uncertain of what should do. Man's uncertainty about the future and his procrastination to do or not to do, and negligence on their part to perform their duty at the right moment could lead to lose of

their loved ones like the child or the father and even themselves. Another variation of this is *"Vinpa keshoh sa rhon fei me kah khun tak"* (Realising after the guest takes his walking sticks and takes leave).

One finds expressed several important cultural values concerning the responsibilities and obligations that every Konyak has towards their own children and parents and also in their treatment of their guests. The parents' are obligated to take great care of their children and to give them proper education and training. Children's duty is to obey the instruction of the parents and take care of them as well just as they are taken care of by their parents. The obligation is mutual towards each other. It is the customs for the Konyaks to treat their guest with great respect and hospitability and not let them go back in hunger. A guest or a stranger can know about a person or a household from the first glance or first acquaintance itself and so they consider it important to treat them well, less they be treated too in the same manner. On another level, it brings out the philosophy that one should be prepared in life so that they are able to face life when misfortunes and adversities befall them which is indicated by the 'construction of the porch' and the 'cleaning of the weeds.' It also relates to their agricultural life that they should construct the house they live in before it rots and to cultivate their fields on time to have a good harvest else they would be homeless when the storms blows and hungry during famine without a good harvest. It also brings home the idea that one should contribute to the community's life by courageously giving their best suggestions and by expressing their ideas for its betterment at the right time. Adversities can be avoided by helping each other through words and deeds and not by criticising after mishap has happened, which is again indicated by the realisation after the guest had left. The sayings convey to us that it is no use regretting after the damage has been done. A life cannot be recalled back or a misfortune be reverted whatever amend we may try to make later in life. It implies that one should not procrastinate in doing or mending what must be done before it is too late. The above sayings, thus, gives us knowledge about the internal structure and their relations with each other which is essential for understanding of the working of Konyak society.

Proverbs embody the "wisdom of the ages" (Oring 188). However, the problem with proverb arises when we hesitate to look at our own everyday customs as significant

because they seem too well everyday. “Proverbs are one of the most easily observed traditional expression, yet it is one of the least understood. This misunderstanding is due, perhaps, to their very familiarity; we tend to take more note of things exotic or unusual…” (Dorson 117). “Proverbs are by far the most numerous and the most frequently employed forms of verbal art, and are used in all manner of situations- as a means of amusement, in educating the young, to sanction institutionalized behaviour, as a method of gaining favour in court, in performing religious rituals and association ceremonies, and to give point and add color to ordinary conversation” (Dundes 299). Though it is the most easily observed traditional expression, yet it is one of the least understood. Many of us still know little of why and how proverbs are used or why it used by society or in what cultural situations they are encountered. This is because although people exchange proverbs to show their knowledge of them and to entertain each other, the contexts in which they are used are important. Thus “the study of proverbs and riddles can show us how thought is conditioned by and expresses through cultural forms we call folklore” (Oring 193-194). Proverbs are “educationally useful in two ways: as repositories of wisdom to be learned by the young courtier, and (most important) as devices to be learned and used by fledgling orators” (Dorson 118).

Riddles evolve from common features of the group’s environment especially linguistic environments. Each culture builds its riddles on common practices and objects. They in turn contribute to the maintenance of those cultures from which they draw the material. Riddles can also function to manage social conflict, teach rules of conduct, and conceptualize the environment for adults as well as children. They can be used to teach proper behavior and act as verbal tokens of their preparation for rites for passage. The riddle combines recreational and educational features to an unusual degree. Young people love riddles for the amusement they provide; old people encourage their use because of their instructive value…Because of their recreational and educational features, riddles are socially very significant, and therefore it is not surprising to find that among many tribes taboos are associated with their use (Dundes 184). Their great variety of contents and forms and their social importance make of riddles a most interesting and inspiring subject of study. Like proverbs, riddles are educational in their content, which is based on experience and observation. The

educational value of riddles is a consequence of their cultural content, but their primary purpose is for entertainment (Dundes 187).

Indeed careful analysis can reveal that these genres are connected to basic patterns of thought and effectively communicate basic ideas and cultural values. To quote Oshong Ering in this context, "There is every likelihood of paying less attention to the traditional culture of the people. The youth of the tribes have been dragged on to the storm of modern cultural ideas and at the same time, the older group of people are gradually dying out. There is a tendency of burying traditional culture in oblivion. In course of time, our cultural traditions may fade away…and along with it may go our crafts, arts, dress and dances. This will mean a genuine loss to the tribes and posterity will blame us for lack of wisdom and gross negligence" (Dawar 81).

James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* is an American Indian story of existential angst that goes far beyond a clichéd and ghettoized other. Welch leaves us with a narrative that calls into question the very real confrontation with Jim Loney's identity as a so-called half breed (Gros Ventre/Anglo), his broken family, his restless love life, and his hard-to-place value as a fallible man. The novel soberly regards the plight of the American Indian, troubled personal identity, and the existential problems that arise from filial neglect and societal estrangement. Cheap alcohol fuels a prevailing sense of alienation and longing for an imagined elsewhere—life should be better somewhere else in the life of Jim Loney. Loney's identity becomes displaced, and then broken and thus the existential problems of belonging lie underneath the poverty of Loney's day to day circumstances. His girlfriend Rhea suggests to him that to be a half-breed is to be lucky to choose from one set of ancestors or the other: "Oh, you're so lucky to have two sets of ancestors. Just think, you can be Indian on one day and white the next. Whichever suits you" (Welch, *TDJL* 13), which is ironic as society does not give us this choice.

Loney's displacement from the larger group can lead one to feel like an outsider which takes us to the philosophy of Existentialism. The general focus of Existentialism is on the existence of the individual and the choices he makes from there, if he is able to recognize that his existence relies on his own self-determinism and not on an external morality, or objective standards of living. In the strictest sense,

he always has the freedom to choose one way or another. However, Welch's Loney never tries to philosophically solve his existential dilemma, we're only left with his broken family life, his semi-romantic love life, his tenuous friendships, his alcoholism, his violence, and his eventual demise. All these unresolved problems of his existence finally lead Loney to a self-manipulated death.

Loney seems to be precariously at the precipice of this kind of rejection of the way things are—he is on the very edge of transcendence—yet he never gets there, he just doesn't know how. "He [Loney] tried to think of all the little things that added up to a man sitting at a table drinking wine. […] all the people and events were hopelessly tangled as a bird's nest is his mind" (Welch, *TDJL* 18). Loney inadvertently shows us that personal growth can't flourish if we absent-mindedly drink away our thoughts. Loney never gets to a higher purpose. His goal is not to challenge tradition. Loney's choices are (self) limited. He fails to escape himself and avoids acknowledging his freedom and responsibility as a self-determining being. He keeps trotting back:

> I can't leave," he said, and he almost knew why. He thought of his earlier attempts to create a past, a background, an ancestry-something that would tell him who he was…He had always admired kate's ability to live in the present, but he had also wondered at her lack of need to understand the past. Maybe she had the right idea; maybe it was the present that mattered, only the present (Welch, *TDJL* 88).

Loney's existence awkwardly stares at him, and by extension we try to think of how this reflects our own lives. It's only by his inability to squarely lift himself up from his plight, do we confront a desire to do this for ourselves. This problem of Loney's is carefully expressed by Welch when Loney watches a neighbor hanging her laundry. He does this while contemplating where his life should lead from here. "He wasn't ready to do anything but sit on his step and think, and so he watched the two shirts twist and knot around each other and he thought, not of Seattle, but of the blue veins on the backs of his neighbor's legs" (Welch, *TDJL* 42). His contemplation in this situation is similar to that of Jean Paul Sartre's character Antoine Roquentin in the book *Nausea*, and his famous existential epiphany with a chestnut tree, yet with one critical distinction: Loney can't see a way to transcend his basic choices. He can't grasp his own basic existential freedom. In *Nausea,* Sartre writes: "Existence is not

something which lets itself be thought of at a distance: it must invade you suddenly, master you, weigh heavily on your heart like a great motionless beast—or else there is nothing more at all" (Patrik 20). For Sartre man's very confrontation with nothing and of existence impels him to grow into what he wants to be. Loney doesn't know he can change, therefore Sartre would say he was acting in 'bad faith.' When we're acting in bad faith we are not acknowledging our freedom to choose another way, we've blindly accepted our so-called fate. In bad faith we are the victims of circumstantial fatalism.

Loney is in bad faith because he denies himself as free. He thinks he has a fixed character which can never be changed and tends to believe that his essence cannot be modified by his existence. Loney is unable to resolve his identity crisis. "He thinks white, would not mind being white, but he seems to have Indianness visited upon him. He is the reluctant victim of a vision without quest, of vague yearnings for family, past and place that halfway yield to white interpretation-this individual has a problem, "he will not allow himself to be found," and "it had everything to do with himself"; and halfway yield to tribal analysis- Loney needs to come home" (Fleck 40).

Welch's Loney is opaque and inaccessible to himself, he "…couldn't sleep because if he slept he would dream, so he stared into the blackness of the small bedroom" (Welch, *TDJL* 94). A few lines later, Loney thinks of the next day where he'll be hunting bear with his sometime friend Myron Pretty Weasel, where he blankly thinks: "After tomorrow's slim purpose I will simply exist" (Welch, *TDJL* 95). These are frightening thoughts because later Loney shoots the curiously named Pretty Weasel, presumably mistaking him for a bear in the cattails. The rambling intensity of his actions are magnified by the coldness of his estranged father Ike, especially when Loney suggests that their situation could've been better. Ike ignorantly questions this: "Shit, what would we have done but drink ourselves to death?" (Welch, *TDJL* 132). After this, Loney walks away from his dad's trailer and shoots into one of the windows with the shotgun his dad gave him minutes earlier. This becomes a kind of self-exile enacted by Loney's futile escape from belonging to his family or anywhere else as he eventually runs headlong unto his death at Mission Canyon. His lack of belonging leads to a feeling of being exiled within his own family and community. Loney is never 'at home' in the world.

James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* carries us over to a deep sense of sadness. This in-depth sadness is brought about by Loney's inability to maneuver his circumstance to even a slightly better place. His displaced existence glares at him. It has been Loney's choice to blindly accept fatalism, the status quo, the norms, the way-it-should-be, or not. If he is not able to liberating himself nobody else can do it for him. This ultimately reveals how James Welch shown to us what life looks like when we refuse to see ourselves as full of potential, and when we fail to see ourselves as living with pure possibility.

In Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, Pauline Puyat is a discontented young woman who is a one quarter white blood. Pauline, on the other hand, has no pride in her people, in fact seems to detest everything that is not "white." When she first leaves the reservation to go into the town of Argus, she leaves her past self behind and tries to forget to what culture she belongs to. However, once she is involved with the "white" world, she seems to loathe the people she becomes acquainted with as much as the people she has left behind. She seems to have distaste for everyone who is not herself. Her tone is haughty, and some time into her narrative she begins to view herself as a martyr. She is not sure of herself, however, and in some cases is conflicted in her memory as to whether or not she even performed actions she is remembering. In that she seems to be living in bad faith because she is never fully sincere or even sure about who she is.

Pauline represents all the pain, rage, and frustration of a person forced to live in two different cultures while being rejected to a large degree by both. In her confusion she wanders between white and Indian worlds. Initially she assumes a role of keeper of the dead, and then increasingly turns to religion. When she gets pregnant, she tries to abort her child but is prevented by Bernardette and they both agree that Pauline should stay on the farm and wear concealing clothes. She later forgets her illegitimate, whom she names Marie, and leaves Marie to be raised by her grandmother Bernadette and enters a convent. Pauline embraces religion as a solipsistic form of ritualized self-effacement bordering on narcissism that blinds her to other's suffering. She teaches at Saint Catherine's and she blinds and deafens children to their native culture. She is renamed and reborn as Sister Leopolda. At this point, Pauline construes herself as

casually determined by heredity, temperament, or social circumstances and opinions of others and thus ends in bad faith.

In her confusion she wanders between white and Indian worlds. Pauline embraces religion as a solipsistic form of ritualized self-effacement bordering on narcissism that blinds her to other's suffering. Throughout *Tracks*, Pauline openly chooses Catholicism over her native religion and abandons her native ways almost completely. She prefers whites to Indians and even wants to be white. Nanapush wants to hold on to the Indian tradition while Pauline breaks away from traditions. Pauline's main dream is to not be Pauline. She tries to flee from her own anguish by taking refuge in "not-believing-what-one [she]-believes," as stated by Sartre:

> The first act of bad faith is to flee from what one cannot flee, to flee from what it is. The very project of flight reveals to bad faith an inner disintegration in the heart of being, and it is thisdisintegration which bad faith wishes to be. Bad faith seeks to flee thein-itself by means of the inner disintegration of my being. But it deniesthis very disintegration as it denies that it is itself bad faith. Bad faithseeks by means of "not-being-what-one-is" to escape from thein-itself which I am not in the mode of being what one is not. It deniesitself as bad faith and aims at the in-itself which I am not in themode of "not-being-what-one-is-not" (*BN* 93-94).

Pauline justifies her own hatred of her heritage by dreaming that God believes she is white, and puts off her responsibility toward her past actions on Fleur, and believes that if she converts Indians to Christianity, she will be absolved of all her own sins. In one scene, she has a vision that God appears before her and tells her that she is not really Native American, but white, and that she has been chosen to do His work. Pauline resists all of the watery aspects of her Indian heritage, though, and so as she moves further and further into white and Christian identification, she invents disciplines of liquid denial. First, she forgoes daytime urination and restricts her intake of liquids to facilitate this. Later, she ceases bathing. In the sixth chapter, narrated by Pauline herself, these two practices of saintly self-mortification are counteracted by Nanapush and Fleur Pillager.

Pauline's constant quest for sanctity only leads her to deprive herself of any ability to help others. When Pauline tries to help Fleur prevent a miscarriage, she is literally held back by her conscious separation from the Ojibwa culture. She is confused and psychologically damaged by her unbalanced commitment to catholic martyrdom and Chippewa tradition. There are many things that Pauline fails to do to effectively prevent Fleur from miscarrying. The most obvious is her failure to efficiently put together the herbal steep made of Alder: "And I could not remember the plant's configuration, even though its use was common enough for bleeding problems" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 156). Although Pauline could be nervously forgetting the properties of Alder, this forgetfulness of a basic remedy stresses her abandonment of Ojibwa society and its practices. Pauline literally witnesses the men's ambushing of Fleur and her raped by the butchermen of Argus, North Dakota, after her victory at Poker, but she remains silent although she might have been able to prevent the attack. Moreover when Nanapush tries to cure Fleur waning powers in a sweat lodge ceremony, Pauline tries her best to interrupt by preaching Christianity. She thus exposes a darker side of her character. In her attempt to sustain a controlling influence on the lives of those around her, she finds herself further isolated from the local Native community. Pauline is unwilling to acknowledge either her own freedom to clearly choose between Ojibwe heritage and Catholicism, nor is she responsible for her past actions towards herself and towards others,

By remaining silent Pauline rejects the possibility of sharing a significant experience in the formation of herself and accordingly participating in ongoing communal activity. She proceeds to try to live as a nun and recalls returning to the Pillager's cabin. Thinking of only of herself, she asks for food. Declaring that she has abandoned her body and soul to Him, she proceeds to quickly consume the stew given to her before noticing that Eli, Fleur, Margaret and Nanapush themselves eat hardly anything. By ignoring their plight, Pauline misses another opportunity to gain an insight into both herself and the local community. Instead she continues to promote her own spiritual duty and piety, a belief system that encourages a sense of superiority over those around her. Pauline is unwilling to acknowledge either her own freedom to clearly choose between Ojibwe heritage and Catholicism, nor is she responsible for her past actions towards herself and towards others. When she ultimately dismisses the belief system of her tribe, "It was clear that the Indians were not protected by the

thing in the Lake or the other Manitous who lived in trees, the bush, or spirits of animals that were hunted so scarce they became discouraged and did not mate," (Erdrich, *Tracks* 139) she assimilates into the White world and transcends her quest for being.

As Pauline becomes increasingly absorbed in her absolutism, she refuses to accept the invitations of the other around her to re-enter the community. Pauline decides to destroy Misshepeshu. She returns to the lake and taking Nanapush's leaky boat, she drifts off-shore in the foggy, freezing water. When Nanapush attempts to save her she pushes him away. In Pauline's mind she has now triumphantly returned to her community and can destroy Misshepeshu and begin to gather Chippewa souls to lead them to the Christian heaven. Pauline kills Napoleon Morrisey thinking him to be the devil creature. From this point she strives less to tell stories with her own voice and more to fulfill her visionary consciousness.

After the death of the infant, Pauline and Fleur skate on bark shoes along an "iced pathway along with other Indians" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 159) to the heaven of the Chippewa. In this sorrowful place, Pauline meets the souls of those she has betrayed or destroyed. She hides to avoid the gaze of her parents and looks away from the men she abandoned in the meat locker in Argus. However, she must finally admit, "I was visible. They [the men] saw me, and it was clear from their eyes they knew my arms had fixed the beam in the cradle back in Argus. I had sent them to this place" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 162). Pauline's admission of guilt is short lived, for as she and Fleur return to the living, she resumes her quest for "whiteness." When she realizes that others are looking at her, "the ineliminable presence of others in her life becomes palpable force that pins her down" (Patrik 86). She becomes self-conscious because she believes that the other is not only viewing her, but also interpreting what she do and even judging her.

Once Pauline returns to the living, she remains unwilling to accept the reality and the consequences of her actions. After the murder of Napoleon Morrissey, her last link to the past, she can finally repudiate her Chippewa heritage and be "white." She exits the novel believing she is "sanctified and recovered" as she becomes the bride of Christ. She leaves Pauline behind and becomes Sister Leopolda. After the Lake

Matchimanito incident, she sanctifies herself, “marrying” her absolutism. She becomes a “bride” for Christ who, she declares, will take her as wife. Finally she changes her name to Leopolda. Pauline thus fulfils her goal to “dissolve”, to become one with providence. In doing so, however, she also finalizes her separation from her community. At the end of the novel, she coldly envisions the demolition of Fleur’s cabin and the selling and dividing of the land. Pauline had to pay the price for shifting away from her tribe. She loses her sanity, suffers from delusions and physically punishing herself. When she ultimately dismisses the belief system of her tribe, “It was clear that the Indians were not protected by the thing in the Lake or the other Manitous who lived in trees, the bush, or spirits of animals that were hunted so scarce they became discouraged and did not mate,” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 139) she assimilates into the White world and transcends her quest for being.

In our everyday life, we try to assume the ‘being’ of our social role and fully identifies with our factical situation (profession, race, class, gender) as a fixed identity. We try to disappear into our social role and accept society’s judgement that we are determined to act according to a specific human ‘type’ of person we are. In that we avoid responsibility, for our choices, and acknowledgement for our freedom as a self-determining being. We can transcend our bad faith by acting on a concrete situation and modifying it in some way rather than aspiring to be anything.

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CHAPTER V

COMPARATIVE PROSPECTIVES

Comparative Literature is referred to as global literature or world literature. The concept of world literature comes from Goethe's term *Weltliteratur* (world literature) which means all literature should be taken as one. The scope of comparative literature is very vast as it includes the entire human experience and thus, is interdisciplinary. Different fields like history, cultural studies, religious studies, sociology, anthropology and translation studies are taken into consideration. This eclectic move towards comparative studies creates difficulties for the comparatists as his study becomes broader. "Comparative Literature comes out of the premise that a literature is to be studied with reference to other literatures within and outside the country. It transcends the narrowness, provinciality and parochialism of national and general literatures" (Das 4). Similarly, in the introduction of the book, *What is World Literature?* David Damrosch wrote about the complicated nature of Comparative Literature as a discipline, "What does it really mean to speak of a "world literature? Which literature, Whose world?" (1). One of the most crucial features of world literature, Damrosch argues, originates in the complex ways in which "works of world literature take on a new life as they move into the world at large and to understand this new life we need to look closely at the ways the work becomes reframed in its translations and in its new culture context (Damrosch 24). World literature is thus always as much about the host culture's values and needs as it is about a work's source culture" (Damrosch 283).

In his article, "Why Compare?" David Ferris remarks:

> The task of comparison is a task that originates in relation to a world. It is not a task that belongs to the world despite the current tendency to see the comparative part of Comparative Literature as if the words "world" and "comparative" were so interchangeable that no real difference can be discerned as one in translated as the other because one is so comparable to the other (Behdad and Thomas 35).

Ferris further states that for Comparative Literature, "the significance of world literature is not that there are more literatures, cultures beyond a European canon; its significance is that it fulfils the inmost tendency of the methodological practice that

has justified not only the significance of literary study but also the humanities" (Behdad and Thomas 40).

The present study falls into the category of Comparative Literature which concern itself with the study of existential philosophy in the folklore of the Konyaks and the selected fictional narrratives of Natives American writers, Louise Erdrich and James Welch and brings out a comparison between the cultural practice of the two tribal societies which is remarkably striking and brings out how folk elements has been or can be incorporated in narrative writings and how it can contribute to the preservation of culture that are fast disappearing and their necessity for their reconstruction to salvage their identity.

Until the early 19th century, the Nagas of present Nagaland were more or less confined to their territory and their contact with the outside world was minimal till the British colonized part of the Naga territory. The Naga Hills never formed a part of Assam or India at any time before the advent of the British. Since then Nagas have been exposed to a wide range of experimental colonial dominance, but at no time was Naga territory ever defined or consolidated by the colonial forces. This fact is amply borne out through the writings on the Nagas such as Butler's account of the Naga tribes in 1873:

> ...of all the tribes inhabiting the enormous tract of mountainous country hemming in Assam on the south, the Nagas are the most numerous. Roughly speaking, they may be said to extend from the Kopili river on the west to Bori Dihing on the east, towards the south, they occupy the whole hill country bordering upon the hill districts of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Luckimpore. In the southern direction, they positively know that, they not only extend upto but actually cross over the great main watershed between Irawadi and Brahmaputra...they actually extend upto the Valley of Chindwin River (Longkumer and Jamir 37-38).

The inhabitants of hilly areas disturbed the tea business of the British in the plain area with persistent raids, so the British retaliated with punitive expeditions and adopted various measures to consolidate the Naga Hills,

> "The British annexation of Naga territory was motivated by Imperial designs; tea cultivation and the gardens were already beginning to take place by the 1860s and the Assam Bengal Railway was constructed by 1899. These developments led to the rapid annexation and transfer of Naga areas into the Assam 'administrative unit.' The British colonial power exercised limited political control over the Naga territory by pursuing the policy of non-interference leaving the administration as well as economic affairs in the hands of the traditional Naga authority. However, their immense interest to protect their imperial stakes led to imposition of various regulatory acts and laws on the Naga people and their land" (Longkumer and Jamir 42).

British colonialism ushered in an era of great change particularly in terms of territorial expansion and administration. In the beginning of the 1830's, the British colonial power became to split up the Naga areas for administrative convenience and political expediency, later joined by the Indian and Burmese Government: the process continued even after the British left the area. Today the Nagas are found in different political territories of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Burma and not just concentrated in Nagaland alone. K.S.Singh, Das and Imchen (1994) records that the demarcation of present day Nagaland was done by the Britishers with an aim to "consolidate their economic hold in the lowlands (9). The encroachment of the lands of the konyaks were solely with the purpose of their tea plantation and coal mining. And when they resisted, the British punished them by destroying villages, imposing heavy fines and through punitive raids.

Only a certain portion of the Naga territory was 'administered'. Even so, the traditional Naga village administration continued to function with a high degree of autonomy. The rest, particularly the erstwhile North Eastern Frontier Agency, remained entirely self-governing and continued to be treated as an excluded, unadministered and backward tract until 1948. Wakching was the only administrative outpost, opened in 1913, of the Britishers' in the Konyak area. The rest of the Konyak villages were left Unadministered and the areas were called "Free Nagas." The Konyak area was not brought under the civil administration of India till 1948 even after India's independence. With the creation of Tuensang administrative centre in 1948, a sub-divisional headquarter was established at Mon Pangching on 14th

November, 1951 under NEFA which was headed by W.H.Rynjah as the Assistant Political Officer.

The 1950s is infamous in the history of the Nagas. India had just got her independence in 1947 from the British rule and wanted to integrate as many areas as they could which were administered by the British. This led to their attempt to integrate the Naga Hills as well. But they were met with stiff opposition by the Nagas who did not want to be integrated or be left in the hands of the Indians but to be a free nation independent of itself. India, on the other hand undertook all the coercive measures to consolidate the Naga Hills. And so the more coercive forces India used to subdue the Nagas, the more violent the struggle by the Nagas to govern themselves began. The Nagas launched a civil disobedience movement in 1952 boycotting the Indian Government and the general elections of 1952; the same was repeated in 1957. India realized that the Nagas could not be easily persuaded to join the Union of India. As such, the Government of India stepped up armed forces with extra constitutional powers such as the Assam Maintenance of Public Order 1953 (AMPO), Disturbed Area Act, Nagaland Security Regulations Act 1962, National Security Act (NSA), and the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSP) 1956 and 1972 (Longkumer and Jamir, 41). The Konyaks alongwith the rest of the Nagas also suffered due to the Naga political movement for independence. They have always stressed on the total unification of all the Nagas for a political solution. That unless the Nagas unite as one, solution cannot be arrived at.

What ensued was the signing of the 16 Point Agreement in July 1960 which led to the creation of the Naga Hills Tuensang Area by merging the Naga Hills District and the Tuensang-Mon Areas. This created Nagaland as the 16th state of India under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India on 1st December 1963. And on 21st December, 1973 Mon was given the status of a District under Nagaland. From 1964 onwards General Election to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly started in Nagaland with 46 members out of which Tuensang-Mon area was given only 6 seats. But they did not contest for election until after one decade in 1974 and their seats were also increased to 20. The six tribes under the then Tuensang Hills District, Konyak, Chang, Phom, Yimchunger, Khiamniungan, Sangtam seek separation from the present Nagaland to be identified as Eastern Nagaland, a separate frontier state.

And today, Konyaks are scattered within the state of Nagaland in the districts of Mon, Longleng and Tuensang, within the country in the state of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland and between the contries of Myanmar and India. And this is how the house of the *Angh* of Longwa Village shares two boundaries of Myanmar and India.

The impacts of these historical movements can be even seen today with severe fratricidal struggles even among the Nagas along villages, tribes and ideological lines. The continuing resistance to be identified as Indian is based on the fact that the Nagas have never been under India or any other outsiders. This history of resistance and the acts, agreements and movements created the idea of the 'other' in the minds of the people and the depiction of the Nagas as 'rebels,' 'headhunters,' 'hostiles,' 'insurgents,' 'savages,' 'extremists,' 'terrorists' etc even today. The constructed identity has been accepted by insiders and outsiders alike without any question. The identity of the Nagas as people with rich culture and unique oral traditions has been suppressed and silenced. The community feeling of oneness and universal brotherhood which has been an important aspect of their tribal identity has been lost. All these events seem to have led to anxiety as Heidegger maintains where "the everyday world "withdraws," and one is left with an indeterminate apprehensiveness and uneasiness, a sense of uncanniness. The source of this uneasiness, however, is no specific thing or state of affairs. Ultimately, it is an apprehension of the groundlessness of one's own being, that one is essentially a thrown, finite, "being of possibility," a "being-in-the-world" and not a substantial thing in any traditional sense. Anxiety reveals the "nothingness" of human beings hand in hand with the "nothingness" of the world. It allows us to be moved by the "wonder" and "strangeness" of beings themselves, and ultimately provokes us to ask "why." Far from being illusory and nonexistent, the nothing lies at the root of all human inquiry, for without an apprehension of nothingness we would not be moved to inquire into why things are as they are (Michelman 323-324).

Most of the colonial administrators had portrayed the Nagas as wild, savage, barbaric, murderers and exotic in their writngs. John McGosh wrote about the Nagas in 1837: "They are the wildest and most barbarous of hill tribes, and looked upon with dread and horror by the neighbours of the plains who consider them as ruthless robbers and murderers" (Fuhrer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas* 3). The Konyaks have been

misrepresented along with the rest of the Nagas as 'savages,' 'headhunters,' 'naked.' Nagaland remains an unknown and ignored territory in the map of India and Mon district still remains the least represented and the remotest district of Nagaland. People from northeast are called as 'Chinese,' 'Chinky,' 'oriental' 'insurgents,' outside their states; the Konyaks are called as 'backward,' 'darkskinned,' 'uncivilized,' 'wild' even in their home-state. Today, the Konyaks struggle to remove the 'Backward' tag and to catch up with the competitive world. The identity of the Konyaks has been marginalized and deliberately distorted by the dominant British culture. This has led to misrepresentation of many aspects of the life of the Konyaks. They have formed their identity by allowing themselves to become what others say about them and not how they perceive themselves to be. Westernisation and its internalization by the Konyaks has led to the tendency of treating themselves as 'other' which according to the existentialists is 'being in bad faith' and not being authentic to oneself. Today, the Konyak society is divided by hatred and disintegration. Families, villages and society are divided not only by the breaking down of the traditional kinship but also because of the confusion brought about by the modern political system that has rendered powerless the Angh system of the Konyaks. As K. Thanzauva said, "The traditional decision making procedure by consesnsus in consultation with others had been replaced by majority vote; the harmony of the village community had been disrupted, dividing the community into several parties…" (Wangsa 59). Reclaiming and rediscovering their identity entails rediscovering their sense of place and communal life.

Throughout the writings of the Native Americans, we see that they have their unique tribal identity before the advent of colonization which is also the same case with the Konyak Nagas. But with the coming of colonialism, both have been adversely affected by western cultures. Both the society believed in harmony, tribal communality, kinship, cooperation, respect, oneness, hospitality, generosity, helpfulness and the feeling of brotherhood. But all these qualities are disintegrating due to colonial rule. Easterine Kire remarked:

> One of the lasting results of occupation is the psychological colonization we have suffered from for a long time. We didn't know how to take pride in ourselves, our cultures, our stories, our narratives. We devalued them because

> we and our narratives were devalued by those who colonized us (Kire, "Keynote Address at Unity College", Dimapur).

Understanding of the Native Americans necessitates understanding of some of the disastrous moment in their history. Indian lands were valuable, and, significantly, some tribes were successful competitors within the American economy. The desire for Indian lands, resources, and complete obedience can be exemplified by numerous political and military efforts to "remove" whole tribes to "Indian territory" or reservations (Lundquist 22). The Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830 with President Andrew Jackson's full support. The Cherokee fought it all the way to the Supreme Court but to no avail. The Act forced the "Five Civilized Tribes" (Coulombe 23) - Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks and Seminoles- from their tribal lands in the southeastern part of the United States to Oklahama. What followed is known as the Trail of Tears. By 1838, nearly 17,000 Natives were forcibly marched- often at gunpoint- from their tribal lands. When they resisted this removal, they were rounded up into "concentration camps" (Lundquist 23). The journeys of these tribes from 1831 to 1838 were scarred by disease, starvation and exhaustion: thousands died en route and others after arrival. While eastern tribes were being forced west of the Mississippi River, western tribes were also facing ongoing encroachment and assault. Euro-Americans continued making imperialist incursions into tribal lands, establishing missionaries and trading posts throughout the west.

The period between 1870 and 1890 is often referred to as the "Indian wars." During this time, tribes still in possession of valuable land were confronted with increasingly dire prospects. Many Acts, Settlements and Enactments like the Indian Appropriations Act, 1871, the General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) 1887, the introduction of boarding school system in 1879 at Carlisle, The Major Crimes act (1885), The Indian Citizen Act (1924), The Indian reorganization Act (1934), The Indian Claims Commission Act (1946), The Relocation Act (1956) and The American Indian religious Freedom Act (1978) relocated Indian tribes from their immemorial lands to "Indian territory" in Oklahoma; imposed American ideologies onto tribal governments; allotted communal lands to individual members of tribes-making such Lands taxable and unallocated lands open to homesteaders; granted U.S. citizenship to Native Americans against the will of many; patterned tribal governments after colonial government systems;

terminated numerous Indian nations' sovereignty; and relocated individual tribal members to urban centers in order to assimilate them (Lundquist 24). In 1871, a shift in U.S. policy occurred with the passage of the Indian Appropriations Act. It stipulated that tribes would no longer be considered separate sovereign nations, so they would not be formally negotiated with.Many tribes in the west faced impossible choices. Treaties restricted them to reservations; railroad companies surveyed routes directly through tribal lands; and buffalo herds were hunted to near extinction (Coulombe 26).

The situation in Indian country got worse after 1890. A time-bomb was ticking in the form of the General Allotment Act (Dawes Act), passed in 1887 and sponsored by Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts. It was "promoted as a means of rapidly assimilating Indians in a generation through imposing individualism and breaking up tribal ownership of land in common. Under the Act each head of household was allotted one hundred and sixty (160) acres of land with eighty (80) acres given to single persons over eighteen and to orphans" (Porter and Roemer 53). The Act authorized the federal government to buy up the remainder of the land after allotments had been made and to use the money, or keep it in trust, for the benefit of the tribe. Its effect was was taking Indian land out of tribal ownership and plunging Indian peoples further into economic dependence on the federal government. The Act cost Native Americans a total of 86 million acres of land in 47 years, and many reservations were made into checkerboards of Indian/white ownership. Allotment threatened to fracture tribal unity in myriad ways.

The introduction of boarding school system in 1879 at Carlisle encouraged the forceful education of Indian children. The General Allotment Act also stipulated that Indian children must attend off-reservation boarding schools. Rations were withheld from parents who refused to send their children away. By 1920, 70 percent of Native children were attending boarding schools in 14 states. English was mandatory. Tribal languages, dress, and hairstyles were prohibited. Boys were generally taught farming and commercial skills, and girls were trained for domestic services. Native American children were forcibly taken away from their families and relocated hundreds of miles away from where their hair was cut and their traditional clothing were replaced. European missionaries gave Native American children Christian names and they were

prohibited from using their Native language. 'Indianness' that included traditional forms of education were seen as barriers to progress. Therefore, they wanted to abolish all indigenous practices. This cultural insensitivity on the part of the European missionaries played a crucial role in the assimilation process. Regarding this situation, Laure Tohe writes:

> "Assimilation made us feel ashamed for what we were, where we came from, how we spoke, our stories, our families, how we dressed, and for speaking our language." She continues: "the most devastating legacy of boarding school is the devastation of our native languages and culture. We are still trying to recover from the loss. Separation from home, land, and culture equals loss of identity and language" (Coulombe 28-29).

Another major event is the House Concurrent Resolution 108, passed in 1953 (The Termination Act) which resolved to solve the centuries old Indian problem by terminating tribes and tribal units. It forced the Natives to join the popular American culture. Besides these, other enactments like The Major Crimes act (1885), The Indian Citizen Act (1924), The Indian reorganization Act (1934), The Indian Claims Commission Act (1946), The Relocation Act (1956) and The American Indian religious Freedom Act (1978) relocated Indian tribes from their immemorial lands to "Indian territory" in Oklahoma; imposed American ideologies onto tribal governments; allotted communal lands to individual members of tribes-making such Lnds taxable and unallocated lands open to homesteaders; granted U.S. citizenship to Native Americans against the will of many; patterned tribal governments after colonial government systems; terminated numerous Indian nations' sovereignty; and relocated individual tribal members to urban centers in order to assimilate them (Lundquist 24).

James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* recalls the manner in which Natives were judged and condemned according to the prevailing culture's prejudices. Charging Elk's experiences parallels the hurdles faced by Native people generally during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Charging Elk is declared officially "dead" by inept government operatives, whereas in the United States natives were often treated as a "vanishing" people by many white officials. Natives were compelled to survive in a hostile cultural environment that refused to recognize them

in any meaningful way and ignored them as inconsequential. Charging Elk gains a renewed sense of self that combines his connection to the past with a strong understanding of his place in the present. Welch thus asks readers to transform their beliefs by re-visioning the world using new terms and a new context to understand the Natives.

All indigenous peoples and cultures were threatened either directly or indirectly by the arrival of Europeans. Warfare weakened and destroyed many Native communities and cultures. Battles over land occurred regularly, and some escalated to the level of full-scale war. The loss of tribal language remains a severe threat to indigenous cultures and beliefs throughout Native American communities. Native experts have argued for "the necessity of maintaining their ancestral language because their culture, their ceremonies, and their spiritual history and values can only be transferred through metaphors inherent in the language and through the cognitive imagery these metaphors invoke" (Coulombe 29). The incessant disruption of Native life-ways through the violent dislocations imposed on tribal peoples by colonizers, their loss of self-determination and lands has been and continues to be detrimental to the ongoing psychic life of North American peoples. Their struggle to survive or overcome virtually insurmountable trauma or obstacles is fraught with difficulty and anxiety. In that the familiar world loses its normal significance and all of their habitual and everyday ways of relating to the world drop away and sink into insignificance and they no longer feel at home in the world of the ready-to-hand.

Both the Konyaks and the Native Americanshave been misrepresented by the colonialists and misconceived by the worlds. Their tribal cultures have been exoticized by outsiders and too often treated as a curiosity. These key moments in the Konyak Nagas and the Native American are of prime importance in understanding their struggles and how their indigeneity had been robbed and manipulated by the dominant culture. Today, the Konyak Nagas and the Native American are caught between two ideals. "First, the need of the older generation to preserve what is left of their Native identity and secondly the desire of the present generation to merge with the popular culture" (Mepfhuo 36).

The Konyak Nagas and the Native Americans have deep reverence for the land they inhabit without any displacement from time immemorial as their identity is connected to the community and the people. The Konyaks refer to their land or village as "*Nyupuh Kahtok*" which means "Mother land." As Mar Imsong, in *God-Land-People* writes, "The "Mother Earth" from whom people have emanated retains a personal relationship with them. It is the land from which Naga people trace their origin Earth is their mother, who gave birth to humanity, fertility and procreation" (Imsong 199). They consider land as a gift from God and highly value their land as their whole life is centered on the land. They affirmed their cultural, social, political and religious identity based on their concept of land. They depended on land for their sustenance, survival and progression. Esther Konyak writes in her article, "Respecting Nature and social Responsibility," The Konyak Nagas resorted to resources provided by the forest…The forest provided everything they needed and hence a profound interdependent relationship existed between humans and nature" (*FNR* 53). The Konyak's religious rites and rituals and cultural festivals are all connected to the activities they do on the land. The biggest festival of the Konyaks's, "*Aoleang Monyu,"* and also *Aonye* and *Lao Ong Mo* are festivals connected to agricultural activities of sowing and harvesting. For them, "land is not only a piece of property but also a part of their being; it is in and through the land that they are bound together with their "relatives" (such as trees, animals, rocks, etc) and where all their ancestors continue to live in spirit" (Imsong 101-102).

The coming of the Britishers to the Naga Hills in the first part of the 19th century and their consolidation and introduction of land reforms to protect their tea plantations was a blow to the Konyak Nagas who had deep connection with their land and land constituted their identity. The systematic process of land alienation for the Konyaks started primarily through the colonial regulatory acts and laws. Longkumer and Jamir has rightly stated in *Land Alienation: Dynamics of Colonialism, Security and Development* (2012):

> Under the present political governing system there is an ambiguity and double standard maintained by the Government of India, whereby, on one hand Article 371 (A) clearly recognizes the state customary laws in regard to land and its resources, whereas on the other hand, complete power is vested in the

state administration and judicial system which undermine and completely marginalize traditional laws and practices (15).

They further comment that,

> "with the change of political history, the traditional land use pattern and land relations have been considerably altered and changed….There is fragmentation of communal, clan, and family land into private/individual land. Land, far from being a source of identity and communal solidarity is now perceived merely as a source of wealth for many Nagas….The sudden spurt of a money oriented culture changed the value system and lifestyle of the indigenous people whose nascent materialistic worldview and living demand money whatever the source. In the process, land, which was once considered sacred, is reduced to the status of a mere commodity which can be disposed of at will to cater to a lifestyle fuelled by consumerism" (Longkumer and Jamir 15-16).

Under the British colonial designs, the Konyak inhabited territory was divided and fragmented from time to time alienating people and their lands. Today the Konyak inhabited land stands divide into two countries, namely India and Myanmar, within India it is spread out in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar and within the state, it is alienated and fragmented within the districts of Mon, Tuensang and Longleng and among different Konyak villages which has raised land disputes from time to time. In spite of the British noninterference policy towards the Nagas and their limited administration in the Naga territory, the process of colonizing people and land resulted in a long term ramification in the entire Naga territory.

Every Naga, or for that matter, Konyak is "passionately attached to his land, his system of land-tenure, the arrangements for the government of his village, the organization of cultivation, the administration of tribal justice through the village and tribal courts" (Elwin 9). Even when India got Independence from the British rule, the Nagas fought for their land to remain independent and not be integrated with India in respect of their territory, identity and diverse differences socially, religiously, culturally, linguistically and politically, to protect their tribal land and sought to reclaim their rightful ownership. Losing their tribal land meant that they are losing their indigenous values and traditions as Esther Konyak writes,

> The very identity of a Naga is rooted to land and culture. The loss of land is seen as loss of identity, an alienation from nature. With this strong sense of connection, the protection of land and forest was both conscious and culturally internalized. Therefore, the belief that as "land belonged to the human, the human belonged to the land" was a strong ethical and moral foundation of everyday Konyak life (*FNR* 53).

She further continues, "Today, the modern Konyak is fast losing the intimate relationship with mother earth. The displacement of people into urban ares, rapacious industries and businesses, abandonment of agricultural practices are some indications of this loss" (*FNR* 53). Today, in almost all the urban areas of the Nagas, land has become a marketable commodity owned and controlled by the few riches; in the rural areas, villages are disputing cases over land. Thiscrisis is developing in the name of modern developments. People are self-deceiving themselves by denying responsibility for their present action in amassing wealth; they think that their freedom gives them the licence to disavow anything they might have done. In this way they are spending most of their lives in bad faith because they can never be fully sincere or even sure about who they are.

The General Allotment Act of 1887 in Native Americans' history is a witness to the destruction of communal land ownership. Most of the Native American writings mark their characters being called back home and pulled inward which emphasize the idea that identity lies with the tribal group. The native people have suffered continuous colonial onslaught with war, settler population growth, land disputes, land seizures, missionary colonialism, disruption of traditional farming and fishing practices, the introduction of alcohol, and the importation of foreign illnesses which caused tremendous population loss for more than one hundred and fifty years. It is such pressures which forced some tribes to abandon their ancestral land as they hover in anxiety which has destroyed the meaningfulness of their everyday world and compelled them to feel that the world is not truly a home and the very continuity of tribal societies, languages, and cultures came under threat.

People and place are inseparable in the tribal societies of both the Konyaks and the Native Americans. The longing for the tribal land or to be 'home' is present in tribal societies. Everything is connected to their land they call home and revolves around it -

spiritual, social, religious, cultural and physical. Life of the Individual is an integrated whole. To them home is of great importance as it is the past, values and place that define their tribal identity. For the Konyaks, home is not marginally the people in a family or people who are related by blood by "home" is their tribal clan, community and village, their mother land where they belong to. The Konyaks consider their village as their home, their motherland. To be far away from it is living like an orphan. There is always the constant desire to return home even if they venture out of their home which is indicated by one of the folksong:

> Oh! Why be uninterested in one's birthplace?
> Why be fed up of one's contented village?
> Though a day is travelled, a night is journeyed
> There is a yearning for the sun to set soon and for the early break of dawn
> For *angu* to hark early the day (Konyak MS).

For the Native Americans, the home they leave is not only a place but "a past, a set of values and parents, an 'ancien regime'" (Fleck 16). "Indians come Home" (Fleck 17).In Welch's *Winter in the Blood,* a thirty-ish Indian who has quit his job in an Oregon hospital returns to the ranch in northern Montana, to a desperate round of drunken bar hopping that leads, finally to discovering his grandfather, pulling out of his lethargy, and throwing the traditional tobacco pouch in his grandmother's grave. Welch's novels such as *Winter in the Blood* or *Fools Crow* depicts the vital importance of the land, of Montana's prairies and sacred animals. The protagonist of *Winter In the Blood* had to confront the western world of run-down towns, hookers, white fugitives from the law, his runaway Cree girlfriend, and barroom violence, he is able to rediscover his sacred ancestral roots through the open, rolling prairies with meadow larks and the scent of sagebrush, through his memories of his deceased brother and father, through his pipe-smoking ancient grandmother, and most importantly through his grandfather Yellow Calf who lives so close to the land. As young ranch hands, Mose and his brother gains a feeling for the land, and such a feeling compels the surviving brother to return again and again after numerous forays into white man's world (Fleck 5). Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* is another example where an Indian in northern Montana refuses to leave-despite pressure and opportunity- his hopeless town and native land. He shrinks back into the darkest corner of all, as his circle spirals inward to one place, one past, and suicide. Indian

"homing" is presented as the opposite of competitive individualism. The ending sought by the Native American protagonist is significantly related to tribal past and place. With or without redemption, these "homing" plots all present tribal past as a gravity field stronger than individual will (Fleck 18-19).

Both the tribals suffer from the anguish of whether they should leave the old to take the new.They feel anguished to be separated from their home, their loved ones and their near and dear ones. They feel ill at ease that when they return, the houses will be empty and they will no longer be able to meet their parents, friends, neighbours, and villagers as they might have been long gone. This apprehension of what might happen in their absence makes them to return home whenever they get the opportunity.

Community feeling of oneness and brotherhood is another important aspect of a tribal community found in both the societies of the Konyaks and the Native Americans. In Konyak society, people work together which is popularly known as *'Ei' or 'Ei pu'*in building their houses, going to each other's fields, in pulling each *baan*'s log-drum, bringing wood for pounding table, hunting for food, protecting their village, carrying firewood etc. These are systematically carried out on the advice of the *Angh* of the village and the elders of the clans. Failure to compile by the community results in paying fine or being looked down by their society. They put their people before everything else. Clan identity places individuals within systems of privileges and obligations-obligations to know clan and tribal histories, genealogies, landscapes, mythologies, and to evaluate and share knowledge in dialogue with others. Konyaks are village-centric like the other Nagas. The tribal village is the apex social and political structure. They are structured on the basis of clan and family. Each family is headed by the father or a senior male member of the family. Community life was intact and ordered. Every head of a community at different levels like clan, village and territory is generally honoured, obeyed and accepted as the head of the group. Konyak society is community oriented. If a person fails to obey and abide by the social norms of the community and clan, he is looked down by the society. Even though there are more than hundred villages in Konyak area, every person can be identified from his name as belonging to a particular clan. When a child is born, elders of the child's family along with the clan decide the name based on ancestral clan lineage worthy for the child to bring name and fame to the clan and family. They

cannot use the name of other clans by any chance. Social, religious and economic activities are carried out cooperatively by clan members and *Baans.*

In Native culture, it is a strong belief that building relationships between individuals and cultures promotes acceptance which is the cornerstone to the growth of trust. The term "relationships" implies that only by honoring the true nature of people and cultures is trust promoted to create an environment where real communication and understanding takes place.The Native American tribes demonstrate cooperation and good relations with the group in their rituals, work, play and decision making. Ella C. Delloria in Speaking of Indians writes that her people, "the Dakotas, understand the meaning of self-sacrifice, perhaps because their legends taught them that the buffalo, on which their very life depended, gave itself voluntarily that they might live" (Ruoff 11). Erdrich's *Love medicine* emphasizes the closeness and interconnectedness of the entire family, clan and tribe. The Kashpaws and Pillagers in the story were leaders of a community in the tribe before they were forcibly moved to the reservation. They have a heritage and a lineage to be proud of but it was broken due to the government policy that divided the clans and tribes.

Ella Deloria commented about Native American Kinship that "All peoples who live communally must first find some way to get along together harmoniously and with a measure of decency and order. This is a universal problem. Each people, even the most primitive, has solved it in its own way….: it was through kinship" (Lundquist 235). In Erdrich's North Dakota saga, we see that the principal family lines include the Nanapushes, the Pillagers, the Kashpaws, the Lazarres, the Lamartines and the Morriseys- names bespeaking the complex combinations of genetic and ethnic inheritances existent among the Ojibwe. In *The Antelope Wife*, Erdrich writes, "Everything is all knotted up in a tangle. Pull one string of this family and the whole web will tremble" (*AW* 1). Gary Storhoof points out that one of Erdrich's "persistent" concerns is "how one's family shapes, patterns, or even determines life choices in the future. The 'lines,' symbolizing patterns of choices and actions the child learns inter-generationally through family conduct, become, in Erdrich's novels fundamentally directional" (Lundquist 104). For both the societies, "Voice does not mean one man, one voice, but the voices of the collective, the councils, and the creative visions handed down through the voices of sacred characters" (Lundquist 44). The individual

becomes the voice of the community instead of representing himself. Their strong sense of communal and tribal feeling makes them to keep aside their personal interest for the benefit of the community at large. As stated by Silko with regard to Native Americans, so is it with Konyaks that allegiance belongs first to all people and only then to a specific group: "[F]irst of all, you're a human being; secondly, you originate from somewhere, and from a family, and a culture. But first of all, human beings" (Coulombe 76).

Respect for age and experience are highly valued in both the Konyaks and the Native Americans. It enabled them to survive and continue their culture. The Konyaks are never to call their elders by name even though the gap between two persons might be by months, weeks, days, hours or seconds. They always have to address the male elders as, '*Opu,' 'Opa,' 'Okao,*' and '*Ojei*' which means 'Grandfather,' 'Father,' 'Uncle,' and 'Brother' and to female elders '*Opi,' 'Onyu,' 'Onyi'* and '*Onya*' which means 'Grandmother,' 'Mother,' 'Aunt,' and 'Sister.' Husbands and wives address each other as '*Khoi*' and not by name and friends also address each other as '*Shemnyu,*' and '*Shempa.*' Children were respect and obey their parents and elders less they be cursed with barrenness or death of their children. People are not to hold their heads held high up infront of the elders which is disrespectful. Otherwise they are rebuked by the community. In those days, younger people had to carry the things, empty or loaded, of the old people as a form of respect. The elders teach the younger generations about their customs and traditions in the *Baan* and *Ywo,* boys' and girls' respective dormitories or at home encircling their fireplace or while working in the fields or at home orally. Respect for the clan is inculcated in the young by teaching them to respect the institution of the elders. Elders narrate stories to young people in the 'baan,' around the fireplace, while working in the field, pounding rice, travelling to other villages, at home and even while sleeping. Every individual is taught about community feeling, cooperation, love for one's culture, tradition, religion and customs, feeling of oneness and brotherhood. Tribal societies have immense respect for traditional and cultural values and religion. Those who shift away are considered to be betrayers or those who insulted the laws of the land. Tribal identity is based on respect, loyalty and dedication towards one's people, belief and traditions. But today people are more inclined towards individual growth and amass of wealth for personal status in the society. One no longer gives importance to community welfare. People

are fighting with each other to get privileges and become richer than others in order to assert their superiority over others. Elders are pained by the profound changes brought about by modernization as the old are forgotten and respect for them is diminishing and disappearing. The youth feel that their education and success in life makes them earn respect more than the elders. They no longer give importance to the teachings of the old but instead hurl insults at them for being old and not contributing to their advancement and comforts. They are filled with dishonesty, deception and hypocrisy which are the various strategies of bad faith, of avoidance and self-deception.

"In American Indian communities, elders are the revered, because they are recognised as culture-bearers of their society" (Porter and Roemer 233). The Natives believe that the elders gives them the best long view of what it means to be human, since they are the ones who mark memory where they have been and are the ones who most likely possess a collective vision they need to carry forward and the cultural values and truths that gives them their identity as a people. But for them elders does not necessarily seem to mean a person who has reached a certain age but one to whom they turn to for their wisdom. In that sense, ""Elder" stands for influence, mentor, guide or culture-bearer" (Porter and Roemer 233).

Historically, the Konyaks and the Native Americans use indigenous languages, oral traditions and storytelling to pass tribal knowledge, beliefs and myths down to future generations. It is through their oral traditions that they regulated the varying complexities of their societies. Orality is the means by which the Konyaks make their history long before colonization manifested its presence. The Konyaks preserve their traditional customs, beliefs and practices, their community stories and tribal stories orally from one generation to another. In *Orality and Literacy Text: The Technologizing of the World*, Walter Ong maintains that,

> Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche (25).

Tribal oral traditions include stories, songs, and histories as well as prayers, ceremonies, and rituals. Their oral traditional customs, beliefs and practices creates a sense of community response and responsibility. They are usually related integrally to

the spiritual belief systems of specific tribes, village, clans and individuals. Much of the cultural knowledge and context necessary to understand the individual components of tribal oral traditions is available only to tribal members. A person without stories is referred to as one without much worth.

In Erdrich's, *Love Medicine*, there are many narrators but no story is considered more important than the other. Each story that is narrated is like an individual teller, which is complete in itself and reconnected to the whole through remembering and telling. Each narrative has special significance for a special context and listener and a unique meaning in its proximity to other stories. The story of each character becomes the collective stories of the tribe as each individual have a unique relationship with the tribal land. "Stories also express another kind of human self, another, older way of being. They are stories of a greater kinship that Euro-America has chosen to forgot [sic]" (Pulitano 5).

The first chapter of *Love Medicine* opens with a lyrical description of the events leading up to June Morrissey's sudden and inexplicable death in a snowstorm. Then the narrative shifts to a first person narrative by June's niece Albertine and then slides into a series of kitchen table conversations as more and more relatives reminisce about people and events familiar to the characters. These stories go back and forth randomly relating events that happened both on and off the reservations to Indians, Whites and mixed-bloods. All the people who are important to June are introduced by the end of the chapter and by binding the characters to one another, they explained to the reader who June was, why she left the reservation and what made her set off in a snowstorm to walk home to these people who are narrating the stories of her life. This is the core essence of community narratives- a celebration of many voices that made up a story of June. Thus the "community implied goes beyond the tribe, even beyond the human…all relations is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings" (Garrard 127).

In Welch's *Winter in the Blood*, the protagonist's inner being is profoundly shaped by first Raise, his father, and Mose, his brother. Though the father was never around very much, he was, nonetheless, memorable for his storytelling which made even the white

man laugh. Yellow calf is the most important link to the narrator's past, to the earth, and to the spirit world. Yellow Calf is as ancient as the hills; he leads a life of nineteenth-century simplicity amid the confusing and barren twentieth century. He is in no way lonely for he can communicate with nature and is surrounded by nature. The narrator and hero of the novel tells Yellow Calf: "No man should live alone." But the old man answers:

> "Who's alone? The deer come- in the evenings-they come to feed on the other side of the ditch. I can hear them when they whistle, I whistle back" (Fleck 6).

Yellow Calf is the narrator's link with a sacred land alive with spiritual realities. To reiterate Black Elks words, "It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell us of two-leggeds sharing in it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things; for these children of one mother and their father is one spirit" (Fleck 6). Thus both the Konyaks and the Native Americans used storytelling as "story telling helps the members of a group maintain an awareness of how the present is a result of past action. It can thus help groups maintain their identity without institutional amnesia, thereby relating their past history to the present state of things and preparing the way for an imagined future that may be a more blessed state" (Niles 54). Their oral cultures typically preserve their worldview and traditions in stories. It is through their oral traditions that they regulated the varying complexities of their societies. According to Garrard, "Oral storytelling conveys a religious sensibility that stresses ideals of reciprocity, wholeness and beauty and so expresses a deep sense of attachment between a people and the land they inhabit" (Garrard 126).

Taboo is a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing as the people found it offensive or embarrassing. Taboos were forbidden folkways and mores of the past society. They are important and formed an integral part of the Konyak Naga society and the Native Americans at large, but are executed more at the individual level with religious overtones. On closer examination, taboos were essential social functions that exhibited both the latent and manifest functions that benefitted the individual and the society. The Nagas believed that wrong actions, immoral actions incur the displeasure of the spirit. Taboos acted as a deterrent for many who desired to steal, kill or harm others because of its attachment with a supernatural God. Taboos had to be observed so that the creator '*Kahwang'* in

Konyak, '*Ükepenuopfü'* in Angamis, '*Tsüngrem'* in Aos are feared, revered and not angered for fear of harmful calamities, crop failure, massive injuries unnatural death or restlessness in the afterlife (Hibo and Ngullie 1). And thus the religious life of the people centres around the taboos and the taboo factor operates very strongly in the socio religious life of the Konyak Nagas. Easterine Kire writes, "Wrong actions, immoral actions are all actions that incur the displeasure of the spirit world and the taboo operates to ensure that members of the village community do not disturb the life of the society" (*ANVR* 41). Similarly, it is taboo too for the Konyaks to marry within one's own clan. Marriage within the clan is incestuous and its violation leads to excommunication or banishment from the village or in extreme cases suffer death by drowning. It is also taboo to kill a man or woman of same village. Both husband and wife are subjected to observe certain taboos during pregnancy. The wife is not allowed to eat the meat of buffaloes or mithun or else the child will be born with horns nor is she to eat the flesh of trapped birds as it might result in delivery complication. The husband is not allowed to touch or cut up a dead animal nor make baskets or trap birds. Even after the birth of a child, people abstain from visiting the house as the new born child might be susceptible to dangerous influences emanating from strangers or visitors. Deceiving and displeasing one's parents will lead to sickness and curse. One will not have any children even if they marry. If they have any child, then the child will not grow well and will not be successful in life. Displeasing one's paternal and maternal uncles, leads to deterioration of one's health. The particular person will have cursed life, and will not have their offspring alive, or in good health. Deceiving and displeasing one's parents will lead to sickness and curse. One will not have any children even if they marry. If they have any child, then the child will not grow well and will not be successful in life. The particular person will have cursed life, and will not have their offspring alive, or in good health. Just as the Native Americans forbid looking directly at one's mother-in-law by her son-in-law, it was taboo for Konyaks to utter words pertaining to intimacy, childbirth, and pregnancy or to even use the word "egg" in front of one's mother-in-law. Women are forbidden to enter the men's morung or to sleep with their husband when they are about to go for hunting or war the next day.

The taboo is dictated by religion and gives a guide as to how life is to be lived so that the religious and social welfare of the community is protected. Observing the taboos

ensures the healthy life of the community and the survival of the village, for natural calamities can be attributed to violation of taboos. Taboos show deep moral conscious and concern for the moral issues of life by providing answer to the question, how people should live. A taboo is directed against their derision for fear that the same disability may be visited upon one's family too. The taboo factor operates strongly in both the societies. The proximity of the spiritual world to the world of men dictates that men live a highly moral life, considering the taboos carefully and avoiding their violation because repercussions of violations of taboos can be felt on earth (Iralu, *FEIA* 73). Today, the Konyak society is at a crossroad where taboos are considered are outdated. It is having less relevance for the present generation and they are replacing them with modern laws, values and ethics. It has been rightly remarked in, *The Relevance of Taboos at the Beginning of the 21st Century*,

> A gap or a vacuum exists in contemporary times, particularly for the young...It is not uncommon to find clashes between the young and the old on almost all issues of life. The young generation finds the older generation as too orthodox, who become unapproachable, un-teacable and un-bendable. Family times are lecturing times which offend the youmg and repulse them from all family activities. Whereas, the older generation finds the present young generation as unpredictable, impulsive, disrespectful, rebellious, un-teachable and ignorant as well as disinterested in traditions and culture (Hibo and Ngullie 5).

Every Native American tribe has its own etiquette and taboos. Many of their taboos center on food and vary from tribe to tribe. By observing the taboos related to their world, they believe they can avoid sickness and even untimely death. Gluttony is considered taboo. At a meal, a person should always make sure to leave enough food so that all the other clan members can have a portion of the meal that is served. They do not drink milk. Eating burned bread is taboo in the Navajo culture. The owl is considered a messenger of bad news or even death, so eating owl meat is taboo (Taylor and Williams 205-206). In *Fools Crow*, Welch mentions about the taboo of the Natives where a married man should not look directly at his mother-in-law. Fools Crow and Heavy Shield Woman stare at each other in a way they had never looked at each other. This taboo is also violated in *Winter in the Blood,* where the narrator's grandmother in her old silent age had to endure the vulgar teasing of Lame Bull.

Welch also writes about the Pikuni traditional taboo or moral restriction that one must never burn a wood gnawed by a beaver. In effect, Welch demonstrates how every culture has rules, and every rule most likely has exceptions.

Welch's *Winter in the Blood* narrates the traditional Blackfeet taboo against intermarriage within the band because according to an old law, male members of the band were considered as relatives. It is this violation by the narrator's grandmother that leads to the unwitting cause of the family's isolation from Blackfeet tribe and the narrator's feeling of separateness in the novel. When the grandmother (then about forty-five) and Yellow Calf conceived a child almost at the last opportunity before the onset of her menopause, they were violating a taboo in order to recreate a new race of Blackfeet in an alien land. This violation of custom was one more portion of the bad medicine passed on to the daughter Teresa. The taboo of a mother-in-law and her son-in-law living some distance away and not in the same tepee is also violated. Again, the grandmother's treatment by her grandson, where she is usually regarded as a subject for bad jokes or detached curiosity, is a deviation from the traditional respect children were expected to show elders.

Magic Realism is very much a part of the world of the Konyaks and the Natives Americans where fantasy and reality are combined without having to justify the strangeness of events or characters. The natural and the supernatural, the spiritual and the human world co-exist through myths, folktales and folk stories and runs in a parallel line. Wendy Faris, in *Ordinary Enchantments,* defines Magic Realism:

> Magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them (1).

The natural and the supernatural, the spiritual and the human world co-exist in the life of the Konyaks. "*Taak pik pu*" (in Chen dialect) is one such instance about this coexistence where both young and old are driven away into the forest by spirits. "*Taak*" refers to the spirits and "*pik pu"* means flown or swept off. As Kire writes in "*Forest Song*," it is an "inexplicable phenomenon of people going missing from the village, only to be found three or four days later" (Kire, *Forest Song*7). It is believed

that *Taak* usually takes those people who lag behind when returning home from the field or if a person is wandering alone around sunset. The whole village goes looking for the person spirited away by *Taak* as they believed that they cannot come home on their own. "Humans have to struggle to get them back and the men go out in pairs so no one can stop the other if he should begin to go off after a spirit song" (Kire, *Forest Song* 12). And thus they are made to switch between the realms of the spirit world and the living. The folktale of the heaven princess Helem and the man Ngampa is another lore which is conjoined in Konyak myth and consciousness which foregrounds the belief that man and spirit lived together. It relates that Ngampa of Wakching village had planted red *Aw-iy* (Canna Lily) in his orchard which he took great care of it. When he realized that someone had been plucking them, he oneday waited for the culprit who was none other than the heavenly princess Helem. The story recalls their marriage on earth and how Kahwang helped them to cultivate crops and harvest them, how they celebrated the "*Lao Ong Mo*" or harvest festival. Even today, when people hear the singing of different birds "*Muyak, Muyak," "Shokpat, Shokpat," and "Gonggong, Gonggong,"* they believe that it is Helem's spirit crying. Another folktale surrounding the origin of rice revolves around Liya, meaning "heavenly being," who marries Nangpu-Kuwang one of the seven sons of Ngushoh of Eangchang village. Another folktale of "Spirit, Man and Brother" describes three of them as brothers who lived together and of how man and tiger separated ways after having a fight over the burial of their mother and the spirit being the eldest watches over both man and tiger. Men temporarily inhabit a tiger's body and/or are possessed by a tiger spirit and so tigers bear human soul. Konyaks believe that the spirit of the *Angh*s lives in the "*Shahnyu*" or tiger and that of the great warriors in *"Meila"* or bears. And when any of these animals were killed or shot at or hunted, it is believed that the particular person whose spirit resides in one of them, start to get ill and die. It is said that they can even point out the place where they had been hit and even the particular person who had hunted or killed the animal. When the man dies before the tiger, the spirited animal become oblivious of its surrounding and even wanders home to the particular village. The Konyaks also forbid the eating of the flesh of feline animals by the *Angh* clan as they are believed to be tiger-men clans. The folktale of "*Awang Akshamshu*" clan relates the presence and help of tigers in one of the family where they named their child as "*Shahchaoponung*" which means 'tiger's child' and his descendants are known as "*Awang Shahnyakshu*" (Tiger's clan) (Wangjin,

Konyak and Konyak 60-62). The Konyaks believe that their ancestors' spirit visit them again and again.

In Erdrich's *Tracks,* Lulu's mother, Fluer Pillager; a Native American woman has magical powers. She is a central figure in both Nanapush's and Pauline's stories. She is the heroine of Nanapush's story. Nanapush loves her as his daughter and she too loves him. She represents the ancient ways of their people. She lives on an Indian reservation on her family's land by Lake Matchimanito. After her parents die from illness, Nanapush and Puckwan rescue sick Fluer from her family's cabin. Twice saved from drowning, Fleur is thought to be a witch, a mistress of the Misshepeshu, the water man, the monster who dwells at the bottom of the lake. Some of her neighbours describes that she messed with evil, laughed at the old women's advice and dressed like a man. She got herself into some half-forgotten medicine, studied ways that they should not talk about. Some said that she kept the finger of a child in her pocket and a powder of unborn rabbits in a leather thong around her neck. She is accused of laying the heart of an owl on her tongue so that she could see at night, and went out, hunting, not even in her own body. She is also believed to bewitch men, beats them at poker, and works spells in the dark of the night. Eventually, she settles down in a passionate but uneasy marriage with the shy Eli Kashpaw. Nanapush helps her bury her family. The spirits of the pillagers come for them, but using his voice he overcomes every obstacle. Nanapush and Fluer mourn for their lost families, but Father Damian, a priest on the reservation revives them. Nanapush and Edgar Pukwan, a member of the tribal police, travel a few miles to the Pillager residence to quarantine the area and burn the house to the ground with the bodies inside; however, the house will not burn. Pukwan "threw kerosene repeatedly against the logs and even started a blaze with birchbark and chips of wood, the flames narrowed and shrank, went out in puffs of smoke. Pukwan cursed and looked desperate, caught between his official duties and his fear of Pillagers" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 3). This incident introduces us to the spiritual power, or magic, belonging to the Pillagers who "knew the secret ways to cure and kill, until their art deserted them" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 2). It also exhibits the inability of Pukwan to destroy the Pillagers' home or their bodies, and his understanding that something more powerful—the Pillager's power—was at work than his repeated efforts to make and maintain a fire. When the Indian agent visits Fleur to collect the money on the allotment of lands what happened was, "the next

thing we heard he was living in the woods and eating roots, gambling with ghosts" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 9). These "ghosts" as Nanapush calls them, perhaps Fleur's ancestors, are assisting her by initially driving away the Agent. When he returns once more, they continue to haunt him, slowly driving him insane. Here, we are again made aware of the power of the Pillagers, who protect the future of their family, and, in turn, the future of the tribe. The woods, at least on Fleur's property, become a "realm of the spirit" which upholds the spiritual connection with the land and the tribe's ancestors and exists as a place where magical events are still possible—even probable. Creating an environment on Fleur's property where "magical" events can still take place allows Fleur to continue the shamanistic traditions of her tribe, in turn allowing the tribes traditions to continue alongside the assimilation of some of the tribe's members. In this way, Fleur becomes the representative for the tribe's belief system, history and ancestry, and her land, the land of the tribe. Thus, most of the magical realist elements of the novel occur on Fleur's property, in her presence or through her.

The Antelope Wife chronicles the lives of two Ojibwa families living in contemporary Minneapolis. It also circles back into the past in a series of magical, dreamlike sequences of mythical continuities and cultural dislocations. Sweetheart Calico, the "deer wife," is Erdrich's fictional character that originates from Chippewa myth, teaching that love is nurtured only in freedom. The Native ideological concept of The Twins intertwines and "beads" the fate of the characters between chapters. Erdrich balances humour with doctrine by characterizing "Windigo," a shadowy spirit entity, as an animal that enjoys telling jokes. The antelope wife from the legend is animated to a central character in the novel, retaining mythical qualities that move her "wicked hoof" ta "supple gait." The fabled wife character, wearing beads coloured the "blue of time" appears first as a child reared by deer, but retains mortal connection to the heroin, Rovina, to the old grandmothers, and to Rovina's children. In *The Antelope Wife*, the 'magic' is as real as the 'real': this is how Erdrich's fiction differs from the Western view of the literature that is called 'magical realism'. The 'magic' elements are only 'magic' to certain readers who perceive it as such, or to those readers who consciously interpret the texts as 'magical realism', but they are as real as anything else to the characters in the novels. Sweetheart Calico is not a hybrid creature, a

‘magical’ physical mixing of animal and human. In the world of the novel she is real, and whatever blurring of species she might be, above all she is a person.

The Konyaks believed in the Supreme Being known as *Youngwan Kahwang,* the creator of the whole creation and invokes *Kahwang*’s blessing before going to the field, journeying, hunting and fishing. *Aoleang Monyu,* spring festival celebrated in the month of April, is the greatest festival of the Konyaks. “Ao”meansBird, “Leang”– “desire, wish” or “celebrating bountiness,” “Mo*”* means “feast,” and “Nyu”– Big/biggest. During this festival, Konyaks invoke the divine blessing of “Wangwan,” the spirit of blessing upon man and their crops so that there would be healthy lives and a prosperous new year. But however, as A. Yanang Konyak writes:

> It is not only during feasts and ceremonies that the Konyaks invokes Kahwang. Often in the course of his daily life he will murmur prayer to *Kahwang*. For instance, when he begins to eat, he throws a little bit of rice to the side saying, “*Kahwang*, eat you first,” when he is lucky in hunting, he cuts of a small piece of flesh and throws it into the forest for *Kahwang* with the words: “In future, give me again such luck (*From Darkness to Light* 17).

They believe in the presence of benevolent and malevolent spirits who are protective in their function, guards them from all dangers and misfortunes of life, and brings them prosperity and blessings in all walks of life and also of malicious and evil spirits that causes them misfortunes, sickness, famine, droughts, epidemics, and disasters. They believed that lying, stealing, quarrelling, inflicting cruelty, being infidel incurs the wrath of *Kahwang*.

When Christianity was first introduced to the Konyaks, they refused to accept it because accepting meant forgetting their old ways of life, culture and tradition and losing their tribal communal identity. Since the Konyaks already had their own system of tribal religion, the attempts by the Christian missionaries to introduce Christianity yielded no positive result. Conversion to Christianity was considered as a shameful act, the betrayal by an individual against the community. The converts were considered as the ‘enemy’ and were excommunicated from all links with their old

village. The *Anghs* could hardly be persuaded to convert to Christianity. As P.K. Thungon remarked,

> The anxiety of the people for preservation of their traditional culture and faith is quite genuine. It is borne out of a lurking fear in their minds that if no timely effective action is action, their age-old culture and faith might be swarmed or overwhelmed by different culture and faith, alien to the society (Dawar 68).

It was only after rigorous revivalism everywhere in the land of the Konyaks that people were gradually forced to convert and accept Christianity as their religion and tend to identify themselves as Christians, as pointed out by M. Tonlong,

> The Christian message of salvation with the spirit to picture one's soul being designed for heaven has its impact on the life of the people to a great extend. This salvation concept of individual souls to live forever in heaven leads our people to dream for the another world which further leads to neglect even forget to realize the importance of the present reality (Wangsa 45).

Easterine Kire writes about Christianity:

> …the new religion was really a fulfillment of the old- answering the questions that the old was struggling with and giving meaning to the feasts and life as the village knew it and lived it. Christianity spoke of the soul, that deathless part of man which was different from the spirit of man i.e. the soul. The soul was different from the spirit, it did not die, so it was like that part of us that travelled down into the land of the dead to start a new existence as an ancestral shade. Christianity promised a place of peace, not fear and pain (*ANVR* 99-100).

In the process, they have abandoned the practice of headhunting in integrating Christianity in their lives. History tells us that they had even denied Hinduism as they feared that another religion apart from Baptist Christianity would tear apart their society thereby bringing in disintegration and conflicts. The intact religious rites and rituals began to deteriorate with the people gradually starting to accept Christianity and conform to it and today, majority of the Konyaks belong to the Baptist

denomination of Christianity emphasizing on collective identity. Any move to introduce other religion except the Baptist denomination is seen as an attempt to disrupt the religious fabric of the society. Today they fight against the cult of the Heraka in Mon with this same vein.

These cultural transformations resulted in profound destabilization of the traditional Konyak institutions, social customs, festivals and rituals, and had to bury even their rich traditional ornaments, during the colonial rule as well as at present. Christianity negated the values of the cultures of the Konyaks as 'heathens' and objected the intermingling of Christians and non-Christians. As Wangsa points out, "The coming of Christianity in Konyak society seems to be killing of a snake from its tail rather than from its head" (62). With Christianization, the traditional tribal religion of Konyak tribe began to loosen its grip alongwith the deterioration of its traditional institution *"Baan."* Today the young Konyaks hardly know about their rich cultural and religious heritage, and with the introduction of English medium schools they can hardly converse in their own mother-tongue. In a way, people reclaimed their traditional religious beliefs in the presence of the Holy spirit in the community and people. They have internalized this new religion so much so that those who are not Christians today are looked down upon by society as unbelievers. The traditional system of life is now carried out in the name of the Holy Spirit and gennas are replaced by observance of Sunday service. 'Today there are many Konyak communities which have totally abandoned their own tribal religion and have embraced Christianity not so much as a result of individual conversion but the belief that by accepting the new religion they would obtain the fruits of civilization' (Wangsa 46).

Similarly, in the eighteenth century, an increase in missionary efforts by European colonists-particularly during the Christian revivalism of the 1730s and 1740s-sought to Westernized indigenous Americans. Mission schools and Indian "Praying Towns" were established by white reformers on tribal lands, and many Natives took the opportunity to learn to read and write in English. It was during this time that many Native people incorporated elements of Christianity into their belief systems, or they converted outright as they faced relentless physical and cultural assaults (Coulombe 21). The Indian encounters with missionaries are recorded in penetrant irony. The missionaries denied any "fellowship between the religion of God and the works of the

Devil" (Swann 7). Native and Christian theologians Paul Schultz (Ojibwa) and George Tinker (Osage/Cherokee) suggest that Christianity is amiss with regard to human creation:

> Before the missionaries came, the native peoples had little theoretical sense of sin, no sense of fallen humanity, and no sense of basic inclination in every human being to do evil. To the contrary, the primary sense that our peoples had of themselves in those early days was not a sense of individual fallenness, but the sense of community belonging to God as Creator, who together participated in and celebrated the balance and harmony of creation. God created harmony and balance. The people's response was to participate with the Creator in maintaining the harmony and balance of all things (Lundquist 218).

But this did not mean that they did not acknowledge the existence of evil, Sin for them was any action that brings about community imbalance and disharmony. Loss of tribal land by the Natives directly impacted their religious communities and individual identities as their sacred mountains became secularized and tribal burial grounds became cornfields. Leslie Marmon Silko writes about the disintegration of tribal society due to Christianity, "Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the Individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and care for them as her children, as her family" (Coulombe 72). Thus the colonial intervention and conceptualization along with Christianity as historical forces has shaped and reshaped Konyak society beyond recognition. Both the societies are anguished in the face of the past and in the face of the present as they have accepted Christianity and Christian names while at the same time they try to recover their lost traditions and tribal identity. As Charles A. Eastman writes:

> From the time I first accepted the Christ ideal it has grown upon me steadily, but I also see more and more plainly our modern divergence from that ideal. I confess I have wondered much that Christianity is not practiced by the very people who vouch for that wonderful conception of exemplary living. It appears that they are anxious to pass on their religion to all races of men, but keep very little of it themselves (Lundquist 48).

A sense of displacement was created in the land of the Konyaks by the Britishers introducing 'kani,'or opium and alcohol in the land of the Konyaks. According to Wangsa, "Opium Mahal was opened at Wakching" and "Sorab Mahal, with the sole purpose to give cheap drinks for the labourers for the Borjan Colliery, was opened at Naganimora (Lakhan)" (50). Today, Alcohol and opium has become a disease for the Konyaks that separates individuals from family, community, and a sense of place in the world. Even though attempts were made by the Konyak Students' Union, Konyak Union and Konyak Nyupuh Sheko Khong to curb this menace, its influx continues and has become a social hazard of the society. Similarly, the colonizers created a sense of displacement in Native America by introducing alcohol. Numerous characters in Native American fiction suffer the ravages of alcoholism. They try to drink away their sense of dispossession from themselves and from the land as Leslie Silko asserts, "They tried to sink the loss in booze, and silence their grief with war storie about their courage, defending the land they had already lost" (Lundquist 221). According to Ward, Stander, and Solomon, "One of the most serious conditions affecting reservation populations is substance abuse" (Lundquist 263).They further remarked that the "weakening of old belief systems and hopes as well as disillusionment with religious beliefs predisposes [Native Americans] to substance use as an escape, as does loss of a sense of continuity, traditions and habits" (Lundquist 263). Both these tribal societies grief for the loss of their cultural practices that integrated their communities socially and spiritually.Therefore, the systematic abuse of Opium in the Konyak society and Indian drinking has gone far deeper into annihilating the very core of their being and became the mechanism for adapting to the social disorganization (loss of culture and identity) that has resulted from acculturation even when such behavior means loss of family, employment, and self-respect. Acculturation has thus displaced both the societies from their traditional past history and culture and left them hanging by inducing the slipping away of beings as a whole. It has set up conditions for colonially induced despair manifesting itself in joblessness, poverty, poor health, cultural malaise, family disintegration, alcoholism, opium culture and other collective indicators of a failure to thrive. It is indeed a grievous concern that the present generation of both these societies to liberate themselves from this colonial despair

Gender complementarity is seen in both the societies of the Konyaks and the Native Americans which arose, within tribal constructs, out of the gendered division of labor. Women were considered to be responsible for the bearing of and usually the caring for children, and so their work involved tasks that could be done close to the home. The men were responsible for protection of the community and also were able to travel farther away from the home to secure food and other necessities. Men and women's assigned roles in tribal life are believed and projected to complement each other, and they were equally valued for the contributions they made to the community; one role did not have more importance than another. This general description of gender complementarity allows for many variations, as gender roles are social constructs, more importantly tribal constructs as Black Elk says, "The woman is the life of the flowering tree, but the man must feed and care for it"…."for out of woman the people grows" (Lundquist 232).

But there are complex realities where matters are related to women in Konyak society. Nagaland being a patrilineal society, both men and women are conditioned in the psyche that women naturally are to occupy and play the weaker and submissive role. Women are placed in a subservient position and discriminated in various spheres. Boys are considered as assets while girls are regarded as burden. They are never considered as real members of the family. They are not shared family secrets and hushed up. They are traditionally excluded from participating in decision making of the community and are not to take part even in family or clan issues. A Konyak woman was considered as a 'ideal woman' if they rise very early at the break of dawn and starts her household chores of pounding rice, fetching water and bringing firewood, cooking for the family and setting off early to the field before her neighbour does. They are described as procreators meant to marry and produce the tribe's generation. The blame of a childless family always falls upon the wife even though it is the husband who is infertile. They have no right to inherit immovable properties like residential plots, houses, jhum fields and forestlands. They were only entitled to personal items like ornaments, carry baskets, traditional umbrella and clothes which they receive during their marriage. Even when it comes to her marriage, a Konyak woman did not have the right to choose her husband. There were instances where in some villages they were engaged to be married at a very early age even without their

knowledge. They had to learn as soon as they come out from their mother's womb till her death.

The writings of Erdrich and Welch also brings into focus often neglected aspects of Native American culture. Native American women are also confined to domestic spheres of activities and discriminated in their social life just as the Konyak women. Rebecca Tillet wrot about how the traditional, social, political and religious roles undertaken by Native women were either "eroded or eradicated, leading to a more general 'devaluation of women'" (Tillet 68). In *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions,* Gunn Allen writes, "Traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic thannot, and they are never patriarchal" (Hollrah 21). While *The Antelope Wife* addresses women's experiences in a variety of ways, in its characterizations of women, for example, or in its repeated references to beading and cooking, at the heart of its complicated plot lie the stories of women who have found in themselves the power to say ''no.'' In their quite different ways, the bayoneted grandmother, Matilda/ Other Side of the Earth, Sweetheart Calico, Mary and Zosie, and, of course, Rozin all resist the efforts of men to impose their will on women, to claim women as the objects of their desire or to define for women the conditions of their being. All of these women are in some sense the ''antelope wife,'' the figure of the woman who draws upon her own power to realize her honest nature.

In both the societies, cultural and political circumstanceplays an important role in retaining the inferior and confined roles and position of women. The irony is that most of the time it is not only who abuse and discriminate women but women themselves who illtreat and abuses other women and carry on the patriarchal hegemony in the society. They simply conform to the cultural norms and values without any confrontation. By doing so, women are trying to avoid acknowledging their own freedom and responsibility as a self-determining human being, most commonly by construing themselves as casually determined by heredity, temperament , or social circumstances or by conforming themselves to social norms and the opinions of others. Therefore, as Easterine Kire writes, she needs to "discover[s] a positive energy inside her and use[s] it to shape her social reality for the better" ("ICORN Featured Writer," 2006). Erdrich observes that although women have been taught to present to the world their "demure" faces, these faces often hide the "wild

energy" that transforms women into something than what they seem to be. In her work, *The Antelope Wife,* Erdrich goes on to explain, she uses those occasions when women take the form of animals to symbolically represent their transformation; when a woman takes the form of an animal, she is enacting ‘‘her own power’’ Sweetheart Calico commands the power to be free when she lives at one withthe antelope. When women recognize and express their power, they findtheir ‘‘honest nature’’ hidden beneath the ‘‘socialized nature’’ that is reflectedin ‘‘demure’’ faces. Erdrich goes on to explain that when womenrealize their power, they come to understand that they can say ‘‘No,’’ a word that they are generally not taught to use (Stookey 140).

Throughout the oral narratives of the Konyaks, we see that they have their unique tribal identity before the advent of colonization which is also the same case with the Native Americans. Both the Konyaks and the Native Americans strongly resisted the foreign invasions by the colonizers. The refusal to submit to colonial powers is an important step in reclaiming their authentic identity and cultural identity. The refusal of the tribal people to assimilate to European culture and the resistance to colonialism is an important aspect of establishing or re-establishing tribal identity. Colonialism has adversely affected their indigenous. Both the society believed in harmony, tribal communality, kinship, cooperation, respect, oneness, hospitality, generosity, helpfulness and the feeling of brotherhood. Everything seems to be interconnected; people to land, stories to people and people to people. Their community and kinship patterns are a testament to the idea that a natural harmony between peoples can be achieved if those peoples adhere to appropriate behaviours with regard to family matters. And individual action is valued only in so far as it contributes to the larger good. But all these qualities are disintegrating due to colonial rule. Easterine Kire remarked:

> One of the lasting results of occupation is the psychological colonization we have suffered from for a long time. We didn't know how to take pride in ourselves, our cultures, our stories, our narratives. We devalued them because we and our narratives were devalued by those who colonized us (Kire, *Keynote Addressat Unity College*, Dimapur).

Both the tribal societies are caught between two cultures or two ideals and are confronted with the knottiest problems of deciding upon which side of the culture line

to take their narrative stance. Whereas the older generations longs to preserve what is left of their Native culture and identity, the present generations are adopting many aspects of dominant and mainstream cultures, pop culture and the regional cultures where they are located. Their inherited traditional cultures are being incorporated and reinterpreted in the contexts of their contemporary needs, desires and values. Their move away from villages and reservations to urban areas have arouse in them the tendency to exoticize their own indigenous lives as well. The fear of the loss of indigenous cultures looms large for both the tribals. Therefore while at the same time they search for their authentic identity, they are also encountered with the problem of catching up with the world.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The thesis is an attempt to examine Konyak Folklore and select fictional narratives of Louise Erdrich and James welch in the light of existentialist philosophy.

In chapter one, an introduction has been given about Mon district, the land of Konyak and their society with their oral traditions. The two selected Native American writers, Louise Erdrich and James Welch and their selected fictional writing and backgrounds have also been given. An introduction to existentialist philosophy focusing specifically on Jean-Paul Sartre's and the thematic concerns of the quest for identity, existential anxiety and their projection of bad faith have also been introduced and explained.

The second chapter examines the theme of questions of identity in general and the existential view of identity in particular, inherent in the folktales of the Konyak and the two fictions of Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *The Antelope Wife*, which are studied in detail. The chapter delineates how the search for identity is considered a universal phenomenon and how both the Konyaks and the Native Americans can take their own responsibility in making their own essences, their identity, rather than accepting a prefabricated identity conferred by external forces. Problems were faced in examining the folklores and selected fictional narratives of Erdrich and Welch in the light of existentialist philosophy as both the tribal societies seems to have their identity tied to community which is in contrast to the western concept of individual identity. The existentialists emphasise that 'each individual creates his or her own personality, habits, tendencies, preferences, talents and character flaws' (Patrik 21). That a person is rather the result of how he or she chooses to exist, the sum of his or her actions and decisions.This is in contrast to the tribal identity where people are identified and described as groups as Innes Hernandez writes in the book of *Growing up Native American,*

> "We refer to each other by the tribe or nation that we are from-that is one of the first question that we ask each other "Who are your people" and "Where are you from" (Riley 8-9).

A person in tribal society has an identity only when they belong to the tribal unit, as William Bevis remarks, "Identity for a Native American is not a matter of findingone's self but of finding a self that is transpersonal…To be separated from that transpersonal time and space is to lose identity" (Fleck 19).

The third chapter explicates in detail the existential theme of anxiety in the folksongs of the Konyaks and the fictional narratives of Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife* and James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney.* It shows how anxiety is the human awareness of not just our inherent freedom, but also our responsibility for our own free choices and how both the tribal societies seem to be ridden with fear of losing their past rich heritage and tradition and struggles to keep up with the present competitive world.

The fourth chapter provides a detailed account of the psychology of inauthenticity, the existential projection of faith, i.e., bad faith in the riddles, proverbs and metaphors of the Konyaks and the narrative writings of Louise Erdrich and James Welch. Welch's character, Jim Loney displaces his identity and faces the existential problems of belonging which lie underneath his poverty, and arises from filial neglect and societal estrangement. Likewise, Louise Erdrich's character, Pauline Puyat wanders between white and Indian world and is confined and psychologically damaged by her unbalanced commitment to catholic martyrdom and Chippewa tradition.

The fifth chapter is a comparative study of the Konyaks and the Native Americans taking into consideration the various themes and their relatedness ranging from their past historical and political background, their quest for an indigenous tribal identity, their misrepresentation by the outsiders, their respect for age and experience, oral tradition and storytelling, taboo, magic realism, their indigenous religious system, resistance against Christianity, substance abuse and gender complementarity.

Through this study of *"Horizons of Konyak Folklore and Select Native Americans Fictional Narratives: A Comparative Study in Existentialist Philosophy,"* it can be concluded that history is of paramount importance in the quest for an indigenous tribal identity, society and people, in recovering and maintaining the tribal identity of the colonized people.

We see that the Konyaks and the Native Americans believe in the "interconnectedness and relationship between all things, between animals, land, peoples and their language, and a requirement to seek individual, communal, and environmental balance. Place, self and land are so intimately linked that loss of territory is a deprivation of psychic strength" (Porter and Roemer 43). In Native American society, an individual once removed from his tribal base by war, the lure of the city, or other causes, must suffer extreme alienation as a third worlder within so-called mainstream America. If he or she somehow survives this dislocation and alienation, and if they desire re-entry into their previous world, they must go through the process of a gradual reaffirmation of tribal values. They had to shed superimposed white values and psychically reintegrate with tribal spiritualism through a process of traditional and/or innovative ceremony. For this when an individual is being whisked away from his homeland during a critical period of his life, he finds coming home no easy chore (Fleck 3-4). But their indigenous peoples and culture were threatened, either directly and indirectly, by the arrival of the colonizers. And even though both the tribals accepted, assimilated and internalized the foreign beliefs systems and way of life, it was only because of the anxiety that haunted them about their future generation. As P.K. Thungon remarked, "The anxiety of the people for preservation of their traditional culture and faith is quite genuine. It is borne out of a lurking fear in their minds that if no timely effective action is action, their age-old culture and faith might be swarmed or overwhelmed by different culture and faith, alien to the society" (Dawar 68). Battles over land, freedom and sovereign occurred regularly which weakened and destroyed their society and culture. They were immeasurably faced with physical and cultural assaults which forced them to put up strong resistance. And if they surrendered it was not because they were defeated but because they were overwhelmed by the afflictions and wanted peace and security.

In the colonial construction and writing of the Konyaks and the Native Americans, their native voices are silenced. Indeed the Britishers' has constructed the 'other,' the non-west as 'primitive' by confirming their individuality as 'civilised' in contrast. The 'other' was considered by the West as static societies, where progress was alien to them. Eurocentric notion based Europe as the centre of existence and civilisation, the rest was considered periphery, the existence of which can be defined only by the presence of the West, the centre. Westernisation and its internalization by the

Konyaks has led to the tendency of treating themselves as 'other' which according to the existentialists is 'being in bad faith' and not being authentic to oneself. Today, the Konyak society is divided by hatred and disintegration. Families, villages and society are divided not only by the breaking down of the traditional kinship but also because of the confusion brought about by the modern political system that has rendered powerless the Angh system of the Konyaks. As K. Thanzauva said, "The traditional decision making procedure by consesnsus in consultation with others had been replaced by majority vote; the harmony of the village community had been disrupted, dividing the community into several parties…" (Wangsa 59). It is therefore necessary for the Konyaks to revisit their constructed identity by going back to their past tribal heritage for understanding their past, present and future. Their oral traditions represent their worldview and social structure. Therefore in order to continue as a tribal community, the Konyaks need to go back to the past and recover all those history that makes them a tribal whole and transcend the identities that have been imposed on them and which have been internalized by them. Many of the Konyaks are submitting to the western ways of life by assimilating the colonialists' culture. In turn they are getting dislocated from the tribal community.

Both the tribal societies can use story telling as a healing process and in narrating the historical and cultural history of tribes and in educating younger generations who are forgetting their tribal history and identity. In order to free themselves from the gaze of the 'other,' they both need to take the responsibility in preserving and knowing their oral traditions and ways of life as it is by themselves and not as it seemed to the outsiders. In using oral traditions as a creative outlet, they can voice out their struggles and painful experiences which have been suppressed and dominated for many years. They need to foster the respect for the tribal land and the community feeling of oneness in recovering the identity from the ruins of colonialism.

In allowing themselves to being objects of curiosity and exotic beings, and letting their aspects of tribal culture romanticized, they will be self-deceiving themselves from the truth of life- about who they are as they are crediting the colonial interpretators, the outside forces with the responsibility to define them. This can be transcended by assigning and accepting their past with great value, by taking the freedom to change the misconceptions and misrepresentations by outsiders and by

being responsible for what they have already made of themselves. By refusing to conform to the narration of their history by colonialists, historians, ethnographers, anthropologists and other writers, they can seek to offer an authentic and impartial interpretation of their history uninfluenced by any pre-conceived notions and influence. As the existentialists say, authenticity is being true to oneself as a free individual, being distinct tribals, because then only they will be able to fully acknowledge their own freedom and decisiveness in understanding the particular actions that go into the creation of their own essence.

Native Americans have to a large extent use literature as a medium to remember and reclaim what had been lost during the period of colonization. Many native writers have also voiced out their personal voices and opinions which have contributed in attaining tribal identity as their experiences become the experience of their people and in attempting to protest against the mis-representations, stereotyping and mis-conceptions about them. James Welch and Louise Erdrich are two such writers who have encouraged thoughtful responses by introducing and directing readers to the issues and ideas important within them, towards fostering solidarity bonds, and positive responses to issues important to indigenous people. They use literature as an opportunity to shape and educate their readers about the human relationships and connections that contributed to past failures and that will lead to future successes.

Naga culture is wholly based on oral tradition, passed down the generations orally and has been the source of learning every aspect of their life. Any work written about the Konyaks had happened only by the hands of the colonial administrators, ethnographers and anthropologists. However, when it comes to the ethnographic and monographic writing about the Konyaks, there were many difficulties faced as there were hardly any folklore included with its context and the true voice of the people have been neglected and were thus not free from preconceived notions. They have distorted the native identity and culture by labelling them as ‘exotic,’ and as ‘object of curiosity.’ The Konyaks have time and again been misrepresented as ‘savage headhunters,’ ‘backward,’ and ‘uncivilized.’ Not much has been done to preserve their oral traditions which is fast disappearing in this Westernized and cosmopolitan world where assimilation and acculturization is the current trend.

TheKonyak society is free from pre-conceived ideas, as the Konyaks are true to themselves. The Konyaks are found within the two countries of India and Myanmar and within India, they are spread out in the states of Nagaland, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh and within the state of Nagaland, majority of them inhabit Mon district and some are scattered in Tuensang and Longleng. And so in this dissertation, the Konyak folklore of the Konyaks of Mon district only which is itself the largest Konyak inhabited area, is explicated. In collecting folklore materials, it has been found that much of the oral traditions of the Konyaks have not been studied or recorded and preserved extensively. Most of the materials are first hand collection from different villages and areas and print materials mostly from the souvenirs and magazines by the Konyaks themselves, also from the theological, anthropological, historical and political perspectives and few writings by others. It thus becomes imperative that studies need to be conducted in the oral literature of the Konyaks for their preservation as they are the main source for a reconstruction of their past.

Another problem faced in explicating the Konyak folklore in terms of individual identity or the quest for personal identity is that there are no historical figures or characters, or legends as in the fiction in applying the existential themes. Problems were also faced in collecting and translating the folklores of the Konyaks. Much time was spent on collecting as there are more than a hundred Konyak villages, and each village or group of villages have their own narratives about their origin and migration, their social and religious customs and traditions which are at the most similar with slight differences only. Most of the Konyak folktales, folksongs, rites and rituals, proverbs, metaphors and riddles are similar and give insight into the codes of conduct, behaviour, thoughts on folk life.

Despite these difficulties faced and also considering the fact that there is not much writings by the Konyaks themselves, the present study has been undertaken as folklore is the only means to reconstruct and rediscover and to represent themselves free from misrepresentation. But it cannot be claimed as an exhaustive work on the whole of Konyak culture but only as a partial personal interpretation of the scholar with objective analysis based primarily on oral resources. Much work needs to be done on this area and it is hoped that more scholars would be undertaking the project of in-depth study on Konyak folklore even in the future. In this backdrop, the rich

tribal oral traditions of the Konyaks need to be explored and studied in preserving, maintaining and enriching them and in understanding them before they are lost. There is a longing in the hearts of the people of Mon to hold on to the past and to uphold the past values of their customs and traditions in this fast changing world. It is important to educate the younger generations about their ancestral heritage, history, customs and traditions as tribal identity is connected to one's ancestral values. And thus the process of collection, preservation and revival of oral traditions can be used to heighten public knowledge of social and political issues important to Konyak community and in resisting the colonial influence and reclaiming and rediscovering their authentic identity.

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