

***DYNAMICS OF ECO-CULTURAL ETHOS: A STUDY OF SELECT FICTIONAL
NARRATIVES OF FIVE WOMEN FICTIONISTS FROM NORTHEAST INDIA***

(Dissertation submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfillment for award of
the Degree of **Master of Philosophy in English**)

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2017

DECLARATION

I, Harit Sambhabana Khandayatray, hereby declare that the subject matter of my dissertation entitled *Dynamics of Ecocultural Ethos: A Study of Select Fictional Narratives of Five Women Fictionists from Northeast India*, is the bonafide record of work done by me and that the content of the dissertation 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 thesis 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 **Master of Philosophy in English**.

5th September 2017



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Dynamics of Ecocultural Ethos: A Study of Select Fictional Narratives of Five Women Fictionists from Northeast India* is a bonafide record of research work done by Miss Harit Sambhabana Khandayatray, Regn. No. 14/2017, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Camus, Meriema during 2016-2017. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English, this dissertation 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 July 2016 and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances for submission of the dissertation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

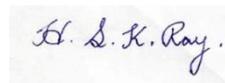
I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all those people who have helped and supported me in the course of my research work.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Nigamananda Das, for his unstinted support throughout the course of my research. I am certain that I would not have been able to complete my research without his constant encouragement and at times exhortations. His patience and energy has always been a source of inspiration.

I am also grateful to the Department of English, Nagaland University for providing me the opportunity to register myself as a research scholar in the department. I am thankful to all the faculty members of the Department for the patience with which they initiated us into the basics of research methodology during the course work. I would also like to acknowledge the necessary support and cooperation received from the administration staff and office of Kohima Campus, Nagaland University, Meriema.

At last, but not the least, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my parents and siblings for their continuous support, love and inspiration.

5th September 2017



(Harit Sambhabana Khandayatray)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nature being eternal abode of Man is the source of his subsistence and sole support of sustenance of the human and whole of the living world. None can imagine any other source of dependence than Nature. Man has been in continuous association, communion and communication with Nature. And in this communication, man is the active communicator whereas Nature has been silent and passive, though She is source of all the necessities of men. Christopher Manes rightly says, “Nature *is* silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative” (15). Our ancestors from the aboriginal times were in constant communication with Nature and were receiving mystic messages from the Nature. Unlike our ancestors, we are now unable to hear the voices of Nature. There is a culture inherent in the relationship between these two wonderful creations of God, Man and Nature. This culture arises out of the communication between Nature and Man. Man used to receive messages from Nature. The various actions of Nature have multiple implications in different cultures of human society. The process of decoding these implications is eco-culture. This eco-culture, prevalent in almost all the parts of the world, has a lot to say. It guides and judges many aspects of human life. Due to globalisation and rapid changes in society, a huge transformation in the ecological culture is vividly noticeable. This transformation in the characteristics of eco-culture brings about many modifications and advancements. The forces that stimulate these developments or changes within the various ethos of the eco-culture, in the light of the selected fictional narratives

authored by five Northeast Indian women fictionists, shall be extensively dealt with in the undertaken research. The culture associated with ecology is dynamic and this dynamism is a creation of the united effort of both the human world and the world of nature. The ethos of eco-culture, which is constantly in a state of flux, is shaped by the advent of modernisation. This relationship between man and nature, which acts as the guiding principle for man is best described by Henry David Thoreau where he also puts forward the dumbness of man in choosing a wrong path:

I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright. It is not indifferent to us which way we walk. There is a right way; but we are liable from heedlessness and stupidity to take the wrong one. (101)

The mankind's callousness to Nature is criticised by many ecologically concerned literary figures. The development of human civilisation is marked by the lost connection from the Mother Nature, the practices involved in the worshipping of Nature which is usually termed as 'pagan' or 'savage'. The root of the human civilisation is found in the cultures of the tribes, who still are seen clinging to their roots. Another well-known political, freedom fighter, and a literary figure of India, Mino Masani, rightly puts this issue in his *Our Growing Human Family: From Tribe to World Federation* when he says:

'Transport', wrote Rudyard Kipling, 'is civilisation.' True- but only part of the truth. Transport is civilisation *only* if man's mind catches up with the movements of the wheels of his car or the propeller of his aeroplane. Otherwise man is like a squirrel in a revolving cage, 'the wheel turns rapidly, but the squirrel remains within his cage'. As Jawaharlal Nehru puts it in his

Glimpses of World History, it would be the height of absurdity to say that because an engine-driver can drive an engine and Plato or Socrates could not, the engine-driver is more advanced or civilised, if today people all round the globe are still ready to cut each other's throats in stupid futile wars, it is because they have refused to give up the tribal gods and flags and songs which belong to a world moving at foot-and-horse pace. (92)

The advent of modernization, globalisation and development in science and technology has led the mankind astray. Taking the wrong path of extreme exploitation of Nature, has only led to global warming, pollution and rapid increase in various kinds of diseases. The various concepts of ecocriticism provide critical analyses of these issues reflected in literature. To introduce the aspects of ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty, in her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* states:

...ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. (xviii)

Ecocriticism with its concepts of eco-culture, Deep ecology, shallow ecology, spiritual ecology, radical ecology, rational ecology, ecofeminism and the like presents the tussle between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. In the current era of rapid erosion of human values, there is a strong necessity of discarding anthropocentrism and embracing ecocentrism to help the humanity march forward to peaceful cohabitation. The undertaken research explores the selected works of the five women fictionist: Mamoni Raisom Goswami, Mamang Dai, Easterine Kire, Mitra Phukan and

Anjum Hasan to unravel their modes of exposing ecocentrism. These five women fictionists, being the critics of environmental degradation, have put forward this issue, in which both the humans and nature are affected. The topic has extensively dealt with the various kinds of eco-cultural physicality and emotional state inherent in the people which are reflected in these select fictional narratives.

The term 'ecoculture' is a portmanteau word. It is the combination of two words: ecology and culture. Therefore, the term, 'ecoculture' means the culture associated with ecology or rational nature-human relationship where the humans constantly benefit from nature and realize it and hence follow the Deep Ecological principles. The term 'Ecology' comes from the Greek word "οἶκος" which means house or environment and 'logos' means the scientific study. Therefore, ecology is the scientific study of the environment, its various living organisms, animals, humans, plants, trees, etc and in the present context, it is more concerned with the utilitarian principles, i.e. man has to try his best to protect and conserve nature and nature is our prime abode. Environment not only refers to trees, rivers, animals, flowers, etc., but also, human beings, dust, light bulbs, chair, table, houses, bridges, etc. It consists of everything: living, non-living, animate and inanimate objects. And this very Nature we live in, which is inclusive of everything, has a culture. Etymologically, the word culture means the ways of doing anything. Whatever happens, whatever we do is culture. Whatever we do with our surrounding and our environment is our culture, or, the way we associate with the surrounding, the benefits we get from the surrounding, etc becomes the ecoculture. Hence, it varies from person to person. And this culture acts as the dynamic force behind all the occurring environmental changes. Global warming, natural disasters, extinction of many species, etc. are all the by-products of

our culture. In her Introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty has quoted the historian, Donald Worster who says:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists and philosophers, cannot do the reforming of course, but they can help with the understanding. (xxi)

The undertaken topic is an exercise to critically analyse the eco-cultures as reflected in the selected works of fiction and consequently aims at the broader goal of creating an ecological awareness among the readers. Again, the objects and the space do not have any relation with us, rather, we establish a relationship by inhabiting them. For example, the hills do not have any relation with the human beings; we inhabit the hills, but they do not inhabit us. Going to hills, mining in the hills etc. are parts of our culture. The culture followed by us gives a meaning to the relationship established between man and Nature. Our actions, as human beings feel, do not assign any meaning to the Nature. Thus, Gary Paul Nabhan says:

...I felt uncomfortable with the notion that we can give the natural world "its meaning." The plants and animals which I have observed most diligently over twenty years as a field biologist hardly seem to be waiting for me to give them meaning. Instead most human beings want to feel as though we are meaningful, and so we project our meanings upon the rest of the world. We

read meaning into other species' behaviour, but with few exceptions they are unlikely to do the same toward us. (142)

Moreover, the actions on the space, be it hills or rivers or trees are performed by us. Thus, these performances are our culture. Our surrounding, hills, mountains, trees, rivers, cities, houses, institutions etc. are a space and we are utilizing that space. Whatever we do in that space is our culture. Defining 'culture', and the way we cultivate the space and the place we live in, it is said:

The very word *culture* meant 'place tilled' in Middle English, and the same word goes back to Latin *colere*, 'to inhabit, care for, till, worship' and *cultus*, 'A cult, especially a religious one.' To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensive to cultivate it—to be responsible for it, to respond to it, to attend to it caringly. (Wikipedia- Philosopher Edward S. Casey (1996))

The term 'eco-culture' is not only restricted to the nature, but everything that surrounds us. For a more simplified understanding of the term 'eco-culture', we can break the word to mean 'ecological culture'. By ecological culture we refer to all the traditional culture continuing from the past to present and all the changes and dynamics taking place within it. It also reminds us of people who lived, or who are living in consonance with the ecology. Eco-culture emphasizes ecology as the basis for all life where life is accomplished by the way of living that is culture.

Ethos is the distinctive spirit of a culture, a community or an age. Ethos comes from the Greek word, *ēthos* which means nature or disposition or customs. This Greek term, in the words of Jack Ward Thomas, a scientist and a retired chief of the U.S Forest Service, is:

...custom, usage or character. Custom and usage are related to action, and it is actions that are judged as ethical or unethical. Character is more nebulous. Character is judged, at least partially, on integrity... and integrity is manifest in action... It is in actions that the weight of ethics lies; it is in actions that integrity and professionalism become visible. (45)

In simple terms, and in our context, ethos means tradition. Tradition is always in a state of flux, it not a fixed concept; it keeps on changing. There are some instances of the changes in ethos. We often come across this following line: this is our tradition, we are ought to follow it. This line depicts a change. It depicts the very disliking of the speaker of the diversion from something continuing to a new one. It happens because one does not need any change as he/she strongly believes that changes will call upon chaos and problems. But the very moment we speak about tradition, there will be positively some changes. It is only because of our convenience, we want to go on with the tradition and sometimes we want to change it. Some traditions that become inconvenient, are subject to changes. A famous proverb asserts that necessity is the mother of all inventions. When necessity arises, we tend to bring changes and establish a new one. Therefore, we can say that with tradition there are two things: firstly, tradition is bound to change and secondly, sometimes we insist on continuity. Continuity also occurs when we come across a change because there is also the continuity of that change. Tradition changes not only through actions, but also in our subconscious mind. It is the change in our sub-consciousness that leads to the changes in our ethos and traditions. Thus, the change in eco-culture is also inevitable. The ethos of ecological culture is subject to changes, accompanied both by productivity and loss. These changes in the ethos of eco-culture are vibrantly dynamic that lead to

a close interpretation of the developmental changes occurring in the mind of the rational being.

The term ‘dynamics’ refers to the forces that stimulate changes within a system. Ecological culture, being a system of processes and actions occurring in the surrounding, is a subject of dynamism. Dynamics ignite changes and depict how these changes are productive. Dynamics being the stimulator provide us with some changes, some differences between the past and the present, and some renewals. Dynamics bring forth rejuvenation, repair, and also restoration. The dynamics of eco-cultural ethos postulate the various changes in our surrounding and specify the operational ways that kindle such traditional changes and also the ways in which these changes occur. It also reflects the process of the continuation of the tradition or the continuation of the changes in the tradition. The phrase “dynamics of eco-cultural ethos”, thus, refers to the dynamic forces that stimulate changes in the characteristics of ecological culture. This phrase reflects the reasons behind the changes in the traditions followed by man in his relationship with Nature.

The subtleties and undercurrents that work to encourage changes in eco-cultural ethos determine the various types of impacts on the surrounding and the environment we and other living, non-living, animate and inanimate objects live in. Mind and heart are the storehouse of different ideas, emotions, feelings, perceptions, opinions, etc. and both the heart and mind undergo various changes. Eventually, the culture of mind and heart that shapes our ideas is also likely to go through changes. Since, the mind and heart following a culture are the homes (*oikos*) and the space in which ideas, thoughts and philosophies flourish, we can consider this whole concept as eco-culture. Man, being blessed with the power to think, makes extensive changes not only in the internal space but also external ones. Therefore, the dynamism involved in the eco-

cultural ethos which includes human body, mind and soul and also the environment, is very much operational, reflected in the society we live in.

Northeast India, the abode of heavenly beauty, is a territory which attracts a large number of population only to intoxicate them with its extravaganza. The unexplored land of Northeast is shielded with the undulating plains and hills and jacketed with intense greenery. This slice of India is rich in glorious flora and fauna and is a mysteriously beautiful region. It is a staircase to heaven where, various genre of music, folk and tribal culture, nature, tradition, liberalism, and a hallucinogenic atmosphere combine to form the stairs. Northeast India, sheltering the extraordinary diversity of peoples, is one of the world's wettest monsoon belts. It shares borders with Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar (Burma), and Bangladesh. Arunachal Pradesh shares an extremely sensitive frontier with Chinese occupied Tibet. The Northeastern part of India, known as the land of seven sisters (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland) and the Himalayan state of Sikkim, is a realm of cultural, religious, ethnic and natural diversity. Northeast is the most important corner of our country. In the preface to *Glimpses from the North-East*, published by the National Knowledge Commission, the beauty of this land is proved in the following words:

The North-east region of India is a rich tapestry of culture and nature. Breathtaking flora and fauna, heritage drawn from the ages and the presence of a large number of diverse groups makes this place a treasure grove. If culture represents the entire gamut of relationships which human beings share with themselves as well as with nature, the built environment, folk life and artistic activity, the north-east is a 'cultural and biodiversity hotspot', whose immense potential is beginning to be recognised. There is need for greater awareness and

sensitisation here, especially among the young. In this respect, the National Knowledge Commission believes that the task of connecting with the north-east requires a multi-pronged approach, where socio-economic development must accompany multi-cultural understanding. (v)

Like the National Knowledge Commission, there are other organisations which are still working a great deal in promoting the indigenous cultures of the different tribes and communities of Northeast India. According to the census of 2011, the population of Northeast is 45,587,982. The area covered by this beautiful land is 262,230 km sq. the density of population in this area is 148/ km sq. It has more than 220 ethnic groups and equal number of dialects. Living in accordance to the environment, the people of the different tribes of the Northeast uphold the notion of simple living and Nature plays a vital role in their lives. Nature, one of the vital components of eco-culture, acts as the guiding principle in the lives of the people inhabiting this enchanting land. The mighty river, Brahmaputra, has not only physical impacts on its children residing by its large golden land of Assam, but also on their hearts and minds. The culture associated with the ecology of Northeast India has gone through multiple changes, even though there is still the prevalence of many of such vibrant and diverse cultures. In their essay, “A Comparative Study of Tourism Industry in North-Eastern States of India” Praveen Rizal and R. Asokan comment on the vibrant possibility of tourism in this virgin land of India:

North-east India is well blessed by Nature and it lays at the centre of one of world's richest bio-geographic areas. It is the treasure house for various economic resources. It has a rich culture and ethnic heritage that can easily make it a tourist-spot. Tourism has the greatest potential for generating income and employment opportunities in North-east Indian states because North-east

India is not only characterised by the blending of flora and fauna it is also exceptionally rich in bio-diversity. Most specifically, all the eight neighbouring states in North-east India are well bestowed with unique character and beauties with them in each. This makes them a centre of attraction for tourists and one of the major tourists' destinations in India. (56)

Taking into account the aspect of Indian writing in English in this part of the country, *The Red River and the Blue Hill* (1954) by Hem Barua, is considered to be the first notable work in the field of North-east writing in English. The book is a historical, geographical, social and cultural account of the state of Assam, famously known for the red river, Brahmaputra, and the blue hill, Kamakhya. Barua, beautifully puts his account in the preface of the book: "What I have tried to do in this book is to collect cherryblossoms and chrysanthemums from different gardens and stick them in a pot." (viii)

Again, the tradition and culture concerned with ecology are not only practised in this mesmerising land but also is passed on to the next generations in the form of storytelling. The people residing in this grove of natural beauty, irrespective of state identity, caste and religion, share the same culture of oral tradition, which not only preserves this wonderful form of art but also imparts the morality and spirituality reflected in these traditions of ecological culture. Thus, Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal in his essay "Cultural Spaces: North-East Tradition on Display" has glorified this tradition of orality by referring to the famous Naga writer, Monalisa Changkija:

Oral tradition forms the core value of the inhabitants of the seven sister states. Each tribe has its own belief and knowledge systems that influence their perspectives and in turn, their entire life. For example, in Nagaland,

the *Morung* or *Ariju* (bachelors' dormitory) is “ one of the oldest and strongest means of social control and serves as an agent of community protection since this institution trains and disciplines the youth. This institution also serves society's need for social security and promotes culture. It also serves as a training centre for master craftsmanship in handloom, handicraft, pottery, masonry etc. and all other agricultural and trade activities. JP Mills had described the *Ariju* as a 'Public School' (as also a boys' club) and indeed in modern terms that is exactly what it is and because from the *Ariju*, the process of socialisation for an Ao man begins. [From *Ariju: The Traditional Seat of Learning in Ao Society* by Monalisa Changkija]. (46-47)

Luxuriously rich in scenic beauty, Northeast, like the other parts of the country, could not escape the vehement impacts of the British colonial rule. Colonialism is one of the various aspects of comprehending the spirit of Northeast. Not only colonialism, but also the impact of serious insurgency has created turmoil in this beautiful pristine land of green. The Northeast is surely the one area of postcolonial India where the outbreak of insurgency has been more frequent than anywhere else in South Asia and where recourse to armed rebellion has often been the first, rather than the last, option of a recalcitrant tribe or a larger ethnic group. Tensions among the states of Northeast and the central government as well as among the native tribal people and migrants from other parts of India are often witnessed. Unnecessary killings of innocent people is one of the treacherous impacts of insurgency. Again, a large number of continuous illegal immigration from the neighbouring country of Bangladesh has posed serious problems and resulted in many religious and communal riots creating a hue and cry

among the people of North-east. The effects of this political facet on the land of seven sisters, immigration from different parts of the country to Northeast, the aversion towards non-Northeasterners, superstitions, and the advent of modernism have been thoroughly discussed, criticised and debated by many socially concerned women fictionists of Northeast India. The depiction of the amalgamation of horror of terrorism, along with socio-political issues and the scenic beauty of this uncontaminated land is perfectly reflected in the works of these women writers. Taking into consideration the above mentioned aspects, it is an attempt to portray the scenario of the state of affairs of Northeast India from the early nineteenth century until the present day that is brought to light through the lens of five women fictionists: Mamang Dai, Easterine Kire, Anjum Hassan, Indira Goswami and Mitra Phukan.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami (14 November, 1942- 29 November, 2011), also known by her pen name, Indira Goswami, is one of the famous women writers of the North-east India. She was also a poet, editor, professor and a scholar. Goswami was not only a giant in the academic field, but also a well-known social activist. Being enough daring, Goswami, as a dauntless lady, was the mediator between the Government of India and the militant group, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). She proved to be one of the important figures of the peace talks between the government and the insurgent. Taking about her personal life, Goswami was a depressed soul, who tried committing suicides many times. The sudden death of her husband after one and a half years of their marriage took a toll on her heart and again, she became the victim of depression. This resulted in her consuming of heavy doses of sleeping pills. But, Goswami, being a strong woman, qualified this psychological and emotional test. She came up with her autobiography, *The Unfinished Autobiography* (known in

Assamese as *Adha Likha Dastabej*, 1988) in which she deals with all the hardships she faced in her life, including the suicidal attempts, her husband's sudden and unfortunate demise, the stereotyped social scorns, she received being a widow, etc. Being a literary intellectual, Goswami's first book was a collection of short stories, *Chinaki Morom*, which was published when she was only thirteen years old. The literary career of Indira Goswami proves to be an epoch-making turn in the history of Assamese literature. Her works not only depicted her deep social concern, but also encouraged women of her society to write and express themselves dauntingly. The English translated version of her famous Assamese fictions are: *Pages Stained with Blood* (2001)- a fiction, this novel is the story of a lady professor in the University of Delhi, whose life takes a disturbed turn at the execution of The Operation Blue Star (1948) in Amritsar; *The Man from Chinnamasta* (2005)- is viewed by the critics as her most controversial and subversive novel for it is a direct protest against the practice of animal sacrifice in the ancient Kamakhya Temple, in Guwahati, Assam; *The Moth Eaten Howdah of Tusker* (1988)- a story of a Brahmin widow Giribaala during the mid-twentieth century Kamrup that was going through a phase of transition; *Ahiron* (1980), *The Rusted Sword* (1980)- it is set in the backdrop of a Workers' Agitation in Madhya Pradesh; *Uday Bhanu* (1989), *Dasharathi's Steps*, *The Chenab's Current* (1972)- set in the beautiful valley of Kashmir, the novel explores the plight of the labourers who built an aqueduct over the Chenab river; *The Blue-Necked Braja* (1976)- it is considered to be one of the earliest works of Indian literature that depicts the exploitation of helpless and impoverished widows in Brindavan, it was also the outcome of the author's early widowhood, and a short experimental stay in a widows' home in the U.P town, *The Bronze Sword of Thengphakhri Tehsildar* (2005), and *The Shadow of Kamakhya* (a collection of

translated short stories). In her lifetime, Goswami, for her striking achievements and for her sincere contribution towards the society, had received many awards. She received the highest literary award, Sahitya Akademi award in 1983 for her famous novel, *Mamore Dhora Tarowal (The Rusted Sword)*. In 1988, she received Asom Sahitya Sabha award. In 1989, she received the Bharat Nirman Award and Katha National Award for literature in 1993. Other notable awards received by Goswami are Jnanpith Award in 2001, and Asom Ratna, the highest civilian award of Assam. She was also awarded Padma Shri, but she refused to accept it. In 2008, Goswami received Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Gold Plate from the Asiatic Society. She was also awarded the Ambassador for Peace from the Inter Religious and International Federation for World Peace. Goswami, as can be seen, has her magnificent contribution to the Assamese society, and the society of India at large. In the select fictional narratives, *The Man from Chinnamasta* and *The Shadow of Kamakhya*, Goswami, deals with the various social issues like, insurgency, female subjugation, animal sacrifice and loss of identity which has an impact not only on the lives of the people, but also on the eco-cultural aspect. These very issues dealt by her in the two fictions, act as the driving force for the rapid changes witnessed in the eco-cultural ethos. *The Man from Chinnamasta* is predominantly a protest against animal sacrifice. Besides this, the author has given a sound and convincing voice to the muted 'weaker sex' of the society. She has given a parallel description of the brutal injustice done to the animals and women. By this, she establishes a similarity between the plight of the women and animals, the mute beings. The women in *The Man from Chinnamasta* fight for their rights and break the stereotyped principles imposed by the patriarchy. Goswami lashes out so called beliefs and superstitions held by the society and enunciates the futility, suffering and distress brought forth by these superstitious

beliefs, thus, providing a new shape to the eco-cultural ethos of the society she lives in. Again, in *The Shadow of Kamakhya* (collection of short stories), the author has put forward some heart-rending realities of the society. Goswami's *The Shadow of Kamakhya* is a collection of eight short stories translated from Assamese. The stories provide an insight into the events associated with insurgency, Indian Army, floods, love and betrayal, sacrifice, status of women, caste system, superstitions, black magic, poverty, unemployment, sexual exploitation and the struggle for survival. These events leave the readers without any choice, but to live in the stories.

Mamang Dai (b. 1957), of Arunachal Pradesh, is considered to be the first writer in English to contribute vehemently in the preservation of her native tribal culture and ethics. She proves to be successful enough in creating an important space for herself in the field of Indian Writing in English. She is not only a writer, but also a journalist and a former civil servant in Itanagar, capital of Arunachal Pradesh. Mamang Dai, also being a poet, her first book was a collection of poems, *River Poems* (2004), which was introduced by one of the famous Indian poets, Keki N. Daruwalla. The other works of Mamang Dai are: *Arunachal Pradesh: The Hidden Land* (2002), *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), *Once upon a Moontime: From the Magical Story World of Arunachal Pradesh* (2005), *The Sky Queen* (2005), *Stupid Cupid* (2009), *Mountain Harvest: The Food of Arunachal Pradesh* (2005), *Midsummer- Survival Lyrics* (2014) and *The Black Hill* (2014). For her remarkable achievements, Dai received Verrier Elwin Award in 2003 from the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for her non-fictional work, *Arunachal Pradesh: The Hidden Land*, and the Padma Shri Award in 2011. The works of Dai uphold the very love for and a deep sense of preservation of her culture which is very much associated with the Mother Nature. The mysterious relationship of man and nature, prevalent in the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, is

perfectly reflected in the works of Dai. Through her works, she has made a flawless presentation of the merging of ecology and culture which is evident in the lives of the tribesmen of her place. She is successful in promoting the unnoticed traditions of her state and leaves her readers bewildered and mesmerized. In the select novel, *The Black Hill*, Mamang Dai has made a commendable interplay of history and imagination. Apart from the historical story of the struggle of Father Nicholas Krick to reach Tibet, the book also explicitly deals with the idea of evil, strongly attributed to the principles of animism. The actions of trees, sky, sun, moon, water, birds and of everything in nature, and dreams seem to have significant effect in the lives of the people of Abor and Mishmee tribes. The struggle between good and evil is reflected in both the worlds of human and nature. The relationship established between man and nature, amidst the political turmoil, is captivating of the fact that in spite of the advent of modernisation and scientific development, the mentioned tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are fastened to their cultural and traditional beliefs that worship Nature. The actions of the humans are guided by the commands of nature. The actions of Nature are sometimes considered good or evil omen for the tribe people who prepare themselves mentally and physically to enjoy and mourn accordingly. The very idea of evil seems to set certain rules and regulations for them. The defiance of such rules prove to have adverse effects on the life of the people of these two tribes which is clearly portrayed by Mamang Dai in *The Black Hill*. With the advent of a new religion and modernisation, acting as the dynamic forces, a change is visible in the eco-cultural ethos of the lives of the tribesmen and their varying attitude towards these changes.

Easterine Kire (b. 1959), of Nagaland, is a poet and fictionist who has achieved her fame in many aspects of the literary field. She is considered to be the first Naga writer

in English. Her first book in English was a collection of poetry, *Kelhoukevira* (1982). Kire's first novel was *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003) is Nagaland's first English novel. She also writes short stories and children's books. Her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007), having received many awards, is a novel about an oppressed Naga girl child amidst the changing social structures. In the novel, she invokes the spirits of time and place, and births and deaths. This shows the author's deep sense of affiliation towards her own culture which is still prevalent to some extent even in this modernised society. Based on real life incidents, comes her another novel, *Mari* (2010) which is a touching story about a mother who had lost her fiancé at the time the Japanese invasion in 1944. Her next novel, *Bitter Wormwood* (2011) talks of the filthy politics of the Northeast India that spans from the 1950s and 1960s to the present day. It was shortlisted for The Hindu Prize in the year 2012. Her following novel, *When the River Sleeps*, has received many awards and recognitions. The book is about a hunter who sets on an adventure seeking a river which is supposed to provide him with a magical stone that will give him powers. This book won her The Hindu Prize in the year 2015. Another achievement of Easterine Kire is that her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* is translated into a few UN languages and her *Mari* has been translated into German. She is not only a wonderful writer but also is associated with a Jazz band, in Norway (her present stay) Jazzopoesi, where she is a performer of Jazz poetry. The select fictional narrative of Easterine Kire for research, *A Naga Village Remembered* also dilates the strong colonial resistance by the heroes of Khonoma village, the mixed feelings and emotions encountered by the tribes due to the advent of European modernism, also introducing them to a new religion, "Christianity". The conversion among many villagers to Christianity was institutionalised, that also ushered in education. This resulted in creating fear and insecurity among the people of

Khonoma who thought that their pre-Christian world of taboos, rituals and festivals would be shaken by the very arrival of Christianity and education. The various folk tales and historical events, depicting the culture and tradition of these tribes are beautifully woven in the form of fiction, providing the readers a lively flight to the glorious days amidst nature. These events paint a picture of the colonial days in the hills and valleys of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The struggle of the tribes to prevent the foreigners from intruding their pristine habitat is intricately fabricated. This historical and cultural narrative depicts the tremendously intense love of the tribal people for their land which is shielded by their age old beliefs, superstitions and profound intimacy towards Nature.

Mitra Phukan (b. 1953) is an eminent writer from Assam. She is also a translator and a columnist. She is a regular contributor to the prominent English dailies. Also being a trained classical vocalist, Phukan, till date, has written the following books: *Mamoni's Adventures* (1986), a children's book, adventurous in tone, about a seven year old girl who lives with her mother (a tea-picker) and her brother; *Chumki Posts a Letter* (1989)- yet another adventurous story of the six year old, whimsical, happy-go-lucky, and sincere Chumki who helps her mother by posting a letter; *The Biratpur Adventure* (1994), *R G Baruah: The Architect of Modern Assam* (2004), *The Collector's Wife* (2005), *Terrorist Camp Adventure* (2003), and *A Monsoon of Music* (2011)- a novel based on music, that weaves the story of Nomita Shrama, a 26 year old vocalist, along with four other aspirant musicians. Phukan also wrote *Guwahati Gaze* (2013), *Blossoms in the Graveyard* (2016), and *A Full Night's Thievery* (2016)- also based on music, the novel deals with the contemporary Assamese society where traditional ways of life are left behind and the issues like, militancy, witchcraft take a

toll on the lives of the characters. *Mamoni's Adventures* won her the UNICEF-CBT award. An online blog, namely, *Speaking Tiger* provides some information about her:

In addition, her short stories have appeared in various journals. Her works have been translated into several Indian and European languages. As a translator herself, she has brought the works of some of the best-known contemporary Assamese fiction writers into English. Her widely read column, 'All Things Considered', appears fortnightly in *The Assam Tribune*. She is an active member of Aradhana, an organization that takes music to the underprivileged sections of society, and a founder member of the North East Writers' Forum.

In *The Collector's Wife*, the select narrative, insurgency being the backdrop, revolves around the story of the struggle made by the protagonist, Rukmini, the wife of a district collector. The contrast between the so-called elegant life of Rukmini and her inner turmoil, affected by male chauvinism, is strikingly established by the author. Being a District Collector's Wife, her life seems settled and safe in the big, beautiful bungalow on the hill above the cremation ground, undisturbed by the incessant hardships and sufferings of the common people living down the hill. But it is necessary to note that, each time there is some 'incident' or chaos in the district she lives in, the fear and uncertainty that grips the town is also vividly reflected in the life of Rukmini. The turmoil in the nature reflected in the life of the protagonist is a clear depiction of the indirect relation of man with Nature. By this, the author establishes an eco-cultural connection in the incidents occurring in the lives of the characters.

Born in Shillong, the Scotland of the East, Anjum Hasan is a novelist, short-story writer, a poet and an editor. Currently living in Bangalore, Hasan has a bright literary

career. She predominantly deals with the various aspects of life in the cosmopolitan city of Shillong. Westernisation, love for English music, the nature as an enchantress, the varying attitudes of the native and non-native people residing in Shillong, are some of the interests of Hasan. Her works are a lucid depiction of her marvellous craft of writing. She takes her readers to the mesmerizing playground of words. The first book written by Hasan is a collection of poems, *Street on the Hill*, published by Sahitya Akademi in 2006. *Lunatic in my Head* (2007) is her debut novel which was shortlisted for the Crossword Book Award in 2007. Her second novel was *Neti, Neti* (2009) and it was longlisted for the 2008 Man Asian Literary Prize and shortlisted for The Hindu Best Fiction Award in 2010. This book deals with the dark sense of humour where the protagonist, a 25-year old girl oscillates between the life in Shillong and the new life in the cool city of Bangalore. She tries her best to adapt herself with the new atmosphere in Bangalore, which, unlike Shillong, is a place where time does not stop for anyone and everything darn thing moves fast. Next, her collection of short-stories, *Difficult Pleasures* (2012) was published which was shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize and the Crossword Book Award. Her latest work is a novel *The Cosmopolitans* (2015), which is set in Bangalore and is about a famous artist Baban Reddy. It Anjum Hasan's *Lunatic in my Head* weaves the complexity of the life of Dkhars (non-Khasis) through the strings of dreams, love, passion, and failure. Shillong, being the backdrop of the events, serves as the hub of western music, English literature, and the desperate longing of the non-Khasis for favourable reception by the 'locals'. Despite the diversity of the dreams aspired by the three leading roles, Firdaus Ansari, Aman Moody and Sophie Das, it is the strong affection for the Scotland of the East that binds them together. The book celebrates the spirit of Shillong by mesmerizing play of the clouds, solitary walks in the rain

drenched streets, tête-à-tête among friends on rock music (especially Pink Floyd), sharing of joints, quoting of great English authors, delightful snack on peppered boiled potatoes soaked in tamarind water, engrossment in the dreamy ethereal world of love, disturbed marital life, boredom, frustration towards the personal state of affairs and finally the strong desire for acceptance. The juxtaposition of nature with the lives of the three central characters of the novel creates a sense of deep eco-culture and also creates an association with its dynamic ethos.

In a research project, the eco-cultural dimension of a work of literature is hardly taken into consideration. This is a brand new attempt to peek into the dynamics of eco-cultural ethos reflected in the select fictional narratives of five women fictionists of North-east India. The works generated from this beautiful part of the country, provide a wonderful platform for an extensive research on eco-cultural ethos and its dynamics. The select women fictionists, owning a bright literary career, and having known the culture of ecology much better than the mainland writers, prove to be the best selection for this research. *The Man from Chinnamasta*, *The Shadow of Kamakhya* (Indira Goswami), *The Black Hill* (Mamang Dai), *A Naga Village Remembered* (Easterine Kire), *The Collector's Wife* (Mitra Phukan) and *Lunatic in my Head* (Anjum Hasan) have a perfect setting of the ecological culture of the different places of the North-east India. These fictions not only depict the sense of eco-culture but also the dynamic forces behind its changes. These fictions light the path to spirituality, a result of the deep association with ecological culture. One cannot find an internet or a Wi-Fi connection in a deep forest, but indubitably, he/she can find a connection with the nature, the connection one fails to establish in the widely web-connected world. Analysing eco-culture in any form of art is a spiritual experience; and in the process, one goes through a moral strengthening of his/her spiritual bent of mind.

Understanding and exploring the different languages of ecological culture, not only re-establish our lost concern about and attachment with the green Nature, but also preserve this unconscious bond between man and nature, created out of eco-culture.

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CHAPTER II

THE WOMANIST AND FEMINIST WOMEN PROTAGONISTS IN INDIRA

GOSWAMI AND MITRA PHUKAN

God made woman and man. The only difference between these two living beings is biological. Karl Jung believed that masculine and feminine characters are found in both the sexes. Anima is the inner feminine part of the male personality and Animus is the masculine part of the female personality (*A Glossary...*103). The problem is that the society has imposed on its members certain specific ways to behave in and this very imposition stands as a barrier in the exploration of Anima and Animus, giving rise to differences. These differences mark men as powerful and women weak and feeble in every aspect of life and thus women are devoid of all rights that the man enjoys. The constructs are in the minds of the people residing in the society, and the 'people' include not only men but women as well. The discrimination against women is age-old. The inner exasperation in women surfaced in its manifold shapes when the movement for equality or appropriate rights resulted in the movement called feminism. Many attempts are made to define the goal of this movement. Peter Barry observes that feminism was a "major effort (that) went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy that is the cultural 'mind-set' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality" (117). He further comments:

The concern with conditioning and socialisation underpins a crucial set of distinctions- that between the terms feminist, female and feminine. As Toril Moi explains, the first is 'a political position', the second 'a matter of biology' and the third 'a set of culturally defined characteristics'. (122)

Women were considered to be intellectually retarded. Their ability and skills were underestimated and they were not even allowed to choose writing as their career. Therefore, it was a great shock among the men folk when they came to know that George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans) was not a man but a woman. This injustice towards the subjugated, subaltern and exploited women gives rise to feminism. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) ignited an impulse in the women to start a revolution that would fight for the equality and liberty of women. In *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate Politics*, bell hooks (2000) shares her "simple definition" of feminism, "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (viii). Thus, the feminists fight for their rights and for equality. They break themselves free from the conventionalities and frame their own paths to achieve equal rights. The rise of feminism began not by changing the minds of the men folk but by bringing about significant changes in the suppressed attitude of women and by instilling a sense of realisation of their true worth, capabilities and rights. bell hooks makes a right comment on feminists:

Feminists are made, not born. One doesn't become an advocate of feminist politics simply by having been born female. Like all political positions one becomes a believer in feminist politics through choice and action. When women first organised in groups to talk together about the issue of sexism and male domination, they were clear that females were as socialized to believe sexist thinking as males, the difference being simply that males benefited from sexism more than females and were as a consequence less likely to want to surrender patriarchal privilege. Before women could change patriarchy, we had to change ourselves; we had to raise our consciousness. (7)

Feminist movements across the globe have myriad shapes. Hence it may rather be called feminisms. Though major feminist movements are influenced by the western feminism, the Indian writers have faced the indigenous realities and their ideas about the significant issues regarding women sufferings in India may be realized as Indian feminism and the strategies of Indian feminism should be analyzed referring to the Indian writers' views.

The term 'womanism' is coined by the famous African-American feminist, Alice Walker in her prose work, *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens*, published in 1983. Womanism is basically concerned with the suppressed and exploited lives of the Black women, the women of colour. The womanists are seen making peace with the pitiable forced situation imposed on them by patriarchy, social, economic and political conditions. They are in a pact with their suppressed state. They are not in a position to retaliate because of their degraded social and economic condition and also because of their colour. They do not even have the support of their fellow white American women. Alice Walker has given a few definitions of Womanism in her *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens*:

Womanist 1. From *womanish*. (Opp. of "girlish", i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious*.

2. *Also*: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*.

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. (xi-xii)

Ikechukwu Orjinta rightly says about womanism:

Part of the view that the womanists want is the struggle for equality between women and men. An equality that will be zero hypocritical, absurd and contradictory. Women activists observe racism, injustice, arrogance and incompatible conditions, leading to all forms of discrimination: xenophobia, sexism, racism, caste, class system, fanaticism, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, etc. The person who violates one should not complain if he is the victim of the other. (64)

Womanism and feminism are two terms with two different meanings.

Layli Maparyan gives the distinction between womanism and feminism:

- Womanism and feminism are qualitatively different because they are based on different cosmological and cultural foundations.
- Thus, womanism is not a “version” of feminism.
- Yet, from a social and ecological problem-solving perspective, womanism and feminism are complementary, each contributing in different ways to wellbeing, peace, and justice. (6)

The sufferings of women are immense. Feminism and womanism are the modes of protests amidst millenniums of silence with the aspirations for some changes. In the present work deliberate attempts have been made towards depiction of the feminist and womanist characters in Indira Goswami’s *The Man from Chinnamasta* and *The Shadow of Kamakhya* and also Mitra Phukan’s *The Collector’s Wife*.

India is a hive of diversely great tradition and heritage. The innumerable myths present the religious and social texts, contribute to the rich ethnicity of India. India- the epitome of ‘Unity in diversity’ has vibrant scholars, philosophers who have taught us the art of living. *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, the great epics of India, including the Vedas and Upanishads teach us the values and principles of life. One can find great sayings on respecting women and on providing equal status to them, only in India. The mythological figures of India, responsible for fabricating the holy social texts, have lots to say on women. To start with, we can take the example of the Indian mythological woman character, Sati, as cited by Goswami. The mythological stories have deep impact on the lives of the people. The actions of these mythological characters shape the ideologies of the common man. These ideologies assign different attributes to both the sexes of the society. At the very beginning of the story of her

novel, *The Man from Chinnamasta*, Indira Goswami has made a commendable attempt in citing the example of Sati, wife of Shiva. The story of Sati proves to be one of the feminist attributes of women, revolutionary in tone. The tone of protest and the action following the protest, upholding the feminist traits, are perfectly proved in this example. Indira Goswami says:

Sati, the incarnation of Parvati- she who is worshipped both as mother and as symbol of erotic love- once lived here with Shiva. She had married Shiva against the wishes of her father, Raja Daksha. And now, unable to bear her father's taunts- the way he called her husband a beggar, a haunter of Shamshans- she could not do less than throw herself on his yagna fire. (6-7)

Acting against the wishes of her father and ending her life as a revolt against the tantrums of her father, Sati proves to be one of the mythological feminist characters of India. She refuses to give in to the patriarchal hegemony. She breaks herself free from the shackles of patriarchy, thus enlightening the dark and hideous tunnel of ignorance of the power inherent in women. Again, the status of women is highly elevated in the Indian scriptures, and, Goswami has quoted one of the great sayings from the *Mahabharat* through her character Dorothy in *The Man from Chinnamasta*. One of the innocent men brought to the police station to be identified as the attacker of Dorothy Brown says: "This country is our mother and superior even to heaven. *Janani janmabhūmischa swargadapi gariyasi...*" (73)

Dorothy Brown, the protagonist of *The Man from Chinnamasta*, is both a womanist and feminist character. At the initial stage of the novel, Dorothy seems to be a womanist, but she eventually turns to be a feminist, raising her voice against the dominance of patriarchal stereotypes. At the beginning of the novel, we see her

dissatisfaction and inner revolt against the injustice made towards her by her husband, Henry Brown. She does not revolt against him directly, rather, leaves him to stay in the Darbhanga House, being a disciple of the Jatadhari, a scholarly hermit from Torsa. But, in due course of time, Dorothy emerges as a feminist, who takes both the verbal and physical action against the wrongs made to her. The following line proves her meek personality, generally attributed to a woman, “The woman’s lips quivered, her eyes brimmed over as she turned to the *munshi*.” (13)

This line reflects her nervousness. But, the activities and dialogues of Dorothy Brown after this incident, proves her to be a true feminist. She is strong in her protest. She is as fearless as a tigress. The following conversation between Dorothy and the clerk of her husband highlights her fearlessness and bold attitude that make her feminist:

Dorothy Brown was busy settling in. She said, “I shall stay alone.”

“The master insisted...” The clerk said apologetically. “There are wild animals in the vicinity. You saw the jackals that crossed us on our way this evening. Parashuram is a faithful old servant. Let him stay.”

Dorothy Brown gave the *munshi* a stern look. “From now on, I have nothing whatsoever to do with your master. I shall decide what is best for my own welfare and honour. I will send Parashuram back in the morning. Tell your master he is never to visit me here.” (20)

The above conversation expresses her deep sense of confidence for her lone survival in the deep forest and also highlights her strong sense of rebellion towards the fake concerns of her husband, who cheated her by living with a Khasi woman. She is bold enough to cast off her husband from her life and rebuff his false assistance. This

action of Dorothy hurts the male ego of Henry Brown, the Principal of Cotton College, and infuriates him with vengeance.

There are many other examples in the novel of women subjugation, and of womanist characters who, despite their hatred for the patriarchal dominance, do not raise a voice or do not speak for their rights. They literally cry over their helplessness thus expressing their lack of courage in taking a strong and bold step against their injustices and difficulties faced. A beautiful comparison can be drawn between Mother Nature and women because both of them act as the progenitors. And, in return, both of them are subjected to exploitation. Nature is in a continuous process to heal the living beings taking shelter in her abode. Like Nature, women, in spite of their pitiable condition imposed by the patriarchy, always try to protect their abusers in every way possible. The women's inner voice of retaliation is muted by the incessant misery and pain caused by the men folk, thus proving to be womanist by behaviour. In this context, Ikechukwu Orjinta, quotes Andrea Trumann (*Feminist Theory*) in her dissertation:

The idea that woman has a closer relationship with nature, if not identical with it is not an invention of the women's movement, but has a long history [...]. For the German speaking area, the belief in a particularly close relationship between nature and woman can be traced back to the pre-Christian period of the Germanic tribes. Because of their ability to give birth, the woman was absolutely associated with fertility and nature, whereby the un-understandable process of birth has been streamlined. Nature was conceived as being ruled by demons, and so was the woman seen during pregnancy and childbirth as dominated by demons. On the other hand, they should also only be able to

drive out the demons by ritual incantations. Due to their proximity to nature, she possesses clairvoyant ability and magic. This notion corresponded to the time when the human causation of copulation and birth is not known, certainly, the real power position of women. (50-51)

Goswami, being an ecoconscious writer, in her novel *The Man from Chinnamasta* has given an adroit presentation of not only the plight of animals but also women who submit themselves to the bitter situations of their lives. The following paragraph taken from the same novel, proves this very womanist features of the subaltern folk of our society:

A woman in the front, who had come to seek help to mend her drunken husband's waywardness, made a futile attempt to lose herself among the devotees. The man, pounced on her, and grabbed her by the hair, hurling abuses. "You bitch! You should be pounding the paddy at home. How dare you come to this charlatan who has abducted a foreign woman? You whore."
(27)

This very extract depicts how women are abused not only verbally but also physically for no fault of theirs. The woman's faint trail to cure her husband strikes her back. Here, the woman, even though she takes a step to get rid of the difficulties caused by her troublesome husband, is crushed down by the harsh grip of her abusive husband. Now, she is unable to strike back at her husband because the womanist features dominate her. The following conversation between Dorothy Brown and two women, wives of the priests, regarding the latter's sore- hands, also highlights the same pitiable condition of women who succumb to the agony and ache enforced upon them:

One of the women took off her achal. “It’s because we spend all our lives in the kitchen, cooking.”

“Cooking?”

“Yes. If we don’t cook for our jajmans- our patrons- who will?”

“Jajmans’ meals?”

“Yes, for sixty to eighty people every day.” (31)

This strain of hard work and a poor physical condition are utterly disliked by the women. Yet, they perform their job as a sense of obligation and do not revolt, thus portraying their strong womanist traits. The similar condition is expressed by another important woman character, Bishnupriya, mother of Ratnadhar:

All her life Bishnupriya had been cooking for her husband’s patrons. Her skin was chapped and black from constant contact and exposure to the heat of the kitchen fires. (81-82)

Bishnupriya, again fails to take any revolutionary action against the practice of child marriage, even though she hates the very idea of it. The eleven year old daughter of one the jajmans, was brought to carry out the superstitious beliefs of animal sacrificing in order to marry an old already married man. She felt pity for the poor little girl but, being a person of strong womanist traits, she could not raise her voice against this injustice. The following lines express the utter helplessness of Bishnupriya:

Bishnupriya’s heart went out to Bidhibala. The very thought of this lovely young girl being married off to an old man was disturbing. But nothing could

be done about it now. These things happened. A forty year old man would marry a child of eleven. (96)

Dorothy Brown, the protagonist of the novel, having gone through a lot of mental torture, rises out as a radical feminist, who roots out all the injustice done towards her by Henry Brown. She does not complain, rather she bewilders her husband by breaking his conventional male ego. The following incident, extracted from the novel, where Henry Brown is infuriated by his wife's boldness, proves it all:

Brown's temper boiled over. "Come on out you stupid cow!" He burst out, kicking at the door, hammering at it with his fists. The munshi went round the back to see if a door or window had been left open by chance. By now an audience of devotees and ascetics from the neighbourhood had collected, spellbound by the unfolding drama.

"Why are you making such a scene?" It was Dorothy from the gamble tree window.

Henry exploded. Dorothy's absurd decision to come and live in this fashion wasn't just a slap in his face. It was an affront to the Empire, their Britishness, their heritage.

"The buggy's waiting Dorothy. Stop this nonsense and let's go." He grabbed at her hand. She tried to bite herself free from her husband's vice grip. "I'm not going back. Your Khasi woman is pregnant." She hissed.

"So that rascal's put a spell on you. You slut! Mother of all whores! That's what you came for? To fornicate with that goddamn fellow?" (35)

The verbal abuses of Henry Brown do not seem to affect Dorothy's decision of staying alone. Brown stoops to the level of torturing her physically, but Dorothy does not give in. She also hits back by biting him to free herself from his clutch. This act of Dorothy renders her rebellious nature as a feminist who speaks of her rights and wants and achieves them come what may. Again, the feminist attitude of Indian women can be traced back to the history of Assam. Indira Goswami, in the novel, *The Man from Chinnamasta*, cites the example of a true incident that depicts the audacity of a queen, who did not hesitate to step into a police station to lodge a complaint, the very act which is conventionally not followed. Goswami says:

The story went that the Chairing king stole the second queen's jewellery in 1852. The queen had lodged a formal complaint with Captain Holroyd, the principal assistant agent Gauhati. (45)

Whole throughout the novel, Dorothy Brown has portrayed many of her feminist traits. The following incident of the novel is adroitly presented by Goswami, where Dorothy's dauntless interaction with a group of people that demanded her leave from the life of Jatadhari, ascertains her being a feminist:

That instant, Dorothy who was sitting behind a bush, stood up and said firmly in Asomiya, "I have come here of my own will. No one can ask me to leave." She turned on her heel and stalked off... Nobody had ever heard a white woman speak this way. They had occasionally seen this fire in the speeches of the Assamese women who had joined the movement for independence. (55)

This behaviour of Dorothy is compared to the fire born out of the zeal of patriotism. Here, the love for motherland is compared to the love for the freedom of women. The way a woman fights for her nation is equivalent to her fight for the independence of

her inner self. The struggle for sovereignty, which was supposed to be undertaken only by the men of the country, was also undertaken by the women counterparts creating a sense of amazement among the stereotypes, who had been underestimating the power and capability of women. Thus, this brashness of Dorothy, expressed in the above mentioned episode, marks her as a strong feminist.

In another incident in the novel, *The Man from Chinnamasta*, Dorothy, the protagonist, reveals both her womanist and feminist traits. While executing her feminist traits, she portrays her feminist characteristics as well. The soft-hearted nature of the woman is depicted in the following conversation with her friend, William, regarding the beneficiary of her property. When she is asked whom she wants to be the beneficiary of her property, Dorothy says:

“It’s for the Khasi woman’s child by Henry Brown, who until the other day, was my husband.”

“What!”

“You heard what I said!”

William was losing patience. He fumbled for words. “But unlike Henry Creed or Arthur Brown, he has not married the woman! You see, he still hasn’t married this Khasi woman!”

“I shall still make the will even if the child is a bastard.” (65)

Dorothy Brown is the embodiment of water and fire. The stern reply to her friend, regarding her stubborn decision of making the son of the Khasi woman the beneficiary of her will, proves her as a feminist character. Whereas, her decision regarding her will delineates her inherent womanist feature, a delicately soft heart.

Well, Dorothy Brown is not only a feminist in her mannerisms, but also in physical strength. She proves to be at par with the men, when she was attacked by a group of vagabonds, and she succeeded in saving herself by applying her brute physical force.

Indira Goswami has beautifully put it:

Then with some miraculous burst of strength, Dorothy, spread eagled on the floor, brought one knee up hard into the groin of the man about to mount her.

When the police came, she was lying there, half naked, scrapings of human skin and blood under her fingernails. (67)

The anger raised out of the suppression and betrayal from the men folk, is vividly displayed in the above mentioned incident. Her wrath is accompanied by the masculine part of her female personality, Animus and thus, proves that because of the lack of cultivation of the masculinity inherent in a woman, she is considered the “weaker” section of the society. Whereas, the truth is that, women have all the qualities a man has and vice versa.

Again, Dorothy’s indifference towards her husband, Henry, hurts his male ego because, being a conventional stereotype, he had expected his wife, after the brutal attack on her (which was expectedly conspired by Henry himself) to surrender to the dangerous world of men where a woman can live only at the assistance and guidance of a male. Dorothy did not speak to anyone else. Dorothy, as she proves him wrong by breaking the rigid chains of patriarchy, metaphorically slaps her husband by her following act:

She climbed up into the buggy and sat with William. Ratnadar got in with the driver. Henry had expected that Dorothy would go with him- but that did not happen.

Henry came running over to assist Dorothy. But she stepped back and took William's hand instead. (70)

Again, when she was made to be accompanied by her husband, Henry, to identify the attackers, she utters a stern reply to the police, "We don't live together" (71). Unlike the womanists, she is audacious enough to confront the strangely glaring eyes of men in the police station. Again, having set her foot in the police station, Dorothy is aware of the fact that she is the first dauntless woman in the history of the mighty British Empire to come to a police station seeking justice and fighting for herself. Goswami puts her thoughts in a better language:

Dorothy Brown was aware that she was the only English woman ever to have sat in the Gauhati police station. She was the only woman who had ever dared challenge the might of the British Empire. (72)

Bidhibala, the eleven year old daughter of Singhadatta of Sualkuchi, is rebel and rebels against her father and also questions the injustice made towards women. In the following conversation with Ratnadar, she bewilders him when she enquires regarding the molestation of Dorothy Brown, a question, generally not expected from a woman. In the words of Goswami:

Suddenly, Bidhibala dropped her shyness, "Is this the room where Dorothy Brown was molested? Everyone in Sualkuchi was talking about it." Ratnadar was taken aback. He had not expected such candour. (97)

Bidhibala, being an eleven year old girl, was a dauntless child who, like other children, had questions in her mind but, unlike them, had the guts to question the patriarchal authority. She has portrayed many feminist traits in her dealings with the other characters of the novel. Bidhibala also questioned the injustice done to girls in

one of the historical incidents of Assam. Her question shook the nerves of Ratnadhar, when objected fearlessly:

“How could they kill the girls when they weren’t even sure?”

A tremor ran through Ratnadhar’s heart. What difference was there between sacrificial animals and women? (99)

Even though Bidhibala was courageous and vocal in her objections, she had a few womanist traits that left her in deep commotion. This commotion tortured her and she could not help it. The thoughts of her marriage with an old already married man, and her beloved buffalo calf brought to Kamakhya to be sacrificed on the account of her marriage led her to annoyance. Bidhibala’s disturbed state of mind is beautifully portrayed by Goswami:

The calf bellowed again. It still needed its mother’s warmth. Only because of her. Because her marriage had been fixed, her heart pounded. She prayed to the goddess to take her life and spare the animal. Its cry was desperate. What must it be thinking? Should she go and check? Suddenly she could see the predatory face of the grey haired man to whom she would soon be married. He had shared the same bed with another woman for ten years. She would not say... there were many things she wanted to say. She was wracked by thoughts of rebellion. That man! The very thought of him made her shudder...In the next few days, it would be sacrificed. For her. Its head would be hacked off. For her. (102-103)

Bidhibala, breaking away the conventions, and being a child feminist, does not follow the scriptures that speak of irrationality, that suggest the killing of animals to satisfy the bloody thirst of the Gods. She does not approve of ridiculous and illogical sayings

of the great scriptures that people blindly follow. She strictly rejects the suggestion of Ratnadhar to read a particular scripture which approves of animal sacrifice. Having the traits of a feminist, Bidhibala boldly declines:

“No, I have not. Scriptures that prescribe such acts don’t interest me. I know Sanskrit is the language of the gods, but I don’t want to read such books... Even if you ask me a million times, I shall not read these scriptures! I have no use for scriptures that recommend the killing of animals.” (104-105)

Bidhibala was frustrated at her helplessness. But at the end, she came out like a blazing fire when she daringly spoke to her father in a protesting and arrogant tone, leaving her audience bewildered. In the words of Indira Goswami:

Bidhibala, who had never dared raise her head in her father’s presence, came out. Eyes blazing, she stormed up to him. “You cannot get buffaloes. You will not bring buffaloes. I shall not marry a man already...” (121)

“You will not sacrifice a buffalo. You will not...” (122)

Bidhibala’s deliberation with her father was absolutely rude and commanding. She could not tolerate the continuous injustice towards her and the innocent animals to be sacrificed. Even though she was being physically tortured by her father with the kicks and him dragging her, because of the audacity she presented, she was adamant in her decision. In the midst of the thrashings, she kept on revolting and said in a tone of revolt, “I am not going...” (123)

Like Bidhibala, Bishnupriya, though a womanist in nature, bursts out her anger at Singhadatta. She could not endure the wrath of Singhadatta who threatened her son, Ratnadhar for liberating the buffalo brought for sacrifice. Goswami has given an

adroit presentation of this heated situation and the astonished reaction of the people near her:

Bishnupriya couldn't take it anymore. This was the first time that the people of Bamunpara- the Brahmin settlements- heard her speak.

“Singhadatta of Sualkuchi! How dare you insult my son! Look at my hands. I have cooked for the pilgrims all my life. The goddess knows this. How dare you abuse my son! I curse you...” (122)

Bidhibala, who had revolted against the irrational conventions of the society, proves to be a feminist character in the novel. Unable to take the pain of watching her beloved buffalo being sacrificed, she left the place with a group of prostitutes and later met with a devastating fate by dying of hunger. The news of her death was an utter shock to Ratnadhara, who was in love with Bidhibala; he exclaimed in deep agony by drawing out a vivid comparison, “Bidhibala, they made a sacrifice of you instead of the buffalo,” (156)

Indira Goswami, in her another work of fiction, a collection of short stories, *The Shadow of Kamakhya*, deals with the various social issues like, animal sacrifice, poverty, flood, insurgency, girl child as a burden to the parents, safety of women in the society. The women portrayed in the stories, are usually womanist in nature. They succumb to the pitiable situation enforced on them by the society. The helplessness brought about by poverty ignites the womanist traits in them. But then, sometimes, they lose control of the situation and tend to portray feminist features. The few woman characters that portray womanist and feminist features need to be presented here. In the short story, “The Journey”, condition of the daughter of the poor owner of a little shop by the side of the highway is presented. She is pregnant, carrying the

child of a soldier from the Indian Army. Poverty and abandonment of the soldier do not urge her subsiding feminist nature. She is rather seen as compromising with the bitter situation, and suffering all the pain as if they are mandatory. In the second story, “The Offspring”, the paralysed and invalid wife of Pitambar is a womanist character. Even though she is aware that her husband is cooking up some evil plans with the priest, Krishnakanta, she is unable to speak up because of her physical helplessness. Again, another important character in the story, Damayanti, a Brahmin and a widow of a young priest, involves herself in sexual practices. She displays some feminist characters when she sternly rejects the proposal of Krishnakanta who asked her to marry Pitambar. The priest brought the news of rejection to Pitambar. He says:

“I told her about you. She was infuriated! She spat out. ‘That pariah! How dare he send this proposal to me! Doesn’t he know that I am from the Jajamani Brahmin caste and he, the vermin, is a low-caste Mahajan?’ (21)

In spite of her social status, Damayanti is bold enough to use harsh words for rejecting the proposal of a Pariah. She portrays a feminist trait by audaciously voicing out her rejection even when she is aware of her poor financial conditions. She is not afraid of the consequences.

“The Empty Chest”, another heart rending story by Goswami, portrays the helplessness, utter poverty, and the pathetic fake hope experienced by the lead character Toradoi. Toradoi, a mother of three children, and moreover, being a womanist, does not fight for her rights she is supposed to receive from the son of a rich sahib. Her heart being broken by the dead Saru Bopa, the son of the rich sahib, she does not make any move at the shock of receiving such a mental blow.

Padmapriya, the protagonist of the story, “Under the Shadow of Kamakhya”, is a silent sufferer of the pitiable situation thrust upon her by the family of her husband. Having been sent away to her father’s place, she feels that she has become a burden to the family. She notices the irritation in her father’s voice. Her feelings are perfectly expressed by Goswami:

The tone of her father’s voice drove her out of the room. Of late, she had begun to perceive a coldness in her father’s voice. That rich warmth and sympathy which had been present earlier, after the Shastri’s family had sent her back to her maternal home- that tone was now often missing. She felt unwanted, as if she was a burden to her family. (40)

When Padmapriya often meets Sambhudev, the priest in charge of the ritual sacrifices, she is able to voice out her disapproval against the killing of animals. When the relationship with her husband, Bhuvaneshwar comes to a good settlement with the help of Padmapriya’s friend, Bhuvaneshwar visits her regularly. The fact that she becomes pregnant, not with the child of Bhuvaneshwar, but with Sambhudev, is not known to Bhuvaneshwar. At the end of the story, she boldly confronts her husband and tells him the truth. The following conversation proves her audacity:

She said, “So you have confessed that the child is yours.”

“Yes I have. I have admitted it. It is the truth. In these past two months.”

“The child isn’t yours.”

“What?”

“The child isn’t yours.”

“Isn’t mine?”

He swooped upon her, and grabbing her hand, shook her violently.

“Whose is it? Then whose is it?”

“The child’s father is Sambhudev.”

“Sambhudev!”

Bhuvaneshwar collapsed in a heap near the door. (75-76)

This conversation proves her hidden feminist voice to fearlessly accept the fault she had done without counting the consequences she had to face as its aftermath.

In another story, “The Beast”, Goswami has narrated the story of a passionate lover, Nimai Rabha. The wilderness of she had for Krishnakanta, is similar to that of the daring nature she possessed. Goswami says:

And she moved about fearlessly in these wild and eerie places. She had told Krishnakanta that she had always been thus. She believed that nobody could harm her. Nobody could harm a person who was pure of heart. (84)

Nimai Rabha’s love for Krishnakanta was dauntless as she kept on searching for him after he went missing. She did not fear the ‘beasts’ who laid dirty eyes on her. But her dauntless love for Krishnakanta, who least bothered about her, in the later part of the story killed her.

The last story of the collection, “To Break a Begging Bowl”, is one of the most powerful stories that talk of poverty, evil minds of the society, insurgency and exploitation of women. The story is about Phuleshwari. All throughout the story, she proves to be a womanist character, who complains about the injustice done towards her but at the fear of the society, fails to fight for her rights. When she is falsely accused by the villagers and her husband of having an affair with the soldier, she is

unable to speak up for the right. She is confused and full of despair. Even, Phuleshwari's first child, a daughter, Annabala, who is a widow and is also a betrayed lover of a cheater, Jairam, lays at her mother's house, hopeless, dejected, and degraded health wise. She has no voice to speak up for her justice. Goswami has depicted the plight of Phuleshwari and her inability to do anything about it in a heart rending manner:

Everywhere Phuleshwari poured out the story of her woes and agony with tears flowing from her eyes. Sometimes she became hysterical and questioned anyone she came across about Haiber, again and again, in a loud wailing voice. She would talk about Annabala's fate and the treachery of Choudhury's son. Other women would gather around her clucking with sympathy or attempting to give her advice. Some of them became agitated and urged her to beat that bastard son of Choudhury with mekhela. (164-165)

When Phuleshwari's second daughter, Bhuvaneshwari reached her puberty, the latter refused to perform any kind of rituals, and this refusal spread in the village. There was an assembly in the panchayat where the priest's wife spoke for her. Her words prove that she is a strong feminist character who questions the authority and the so called conventions people blindly follow:

That day, the words of the priest's wife were worth listening to. Standing erect, she had said, "On the South Bank as well as in the North Bank, most of the people have watered down our rituals. Even some Gossains and brahmins overlook the performance of shraddha for their fathers and forefathers. You have before your eyes many such examples. But you have kept your eyes blindfolded. That fox deceived young Annabala, took away her land and made

her a mad woman. He moves freely up and down on our roads, wearing canvas shoes, and nobody does anything about it.

And Haiber had disappeared. But nobody has cared to catch him and drag him by his ears to his home. So if she abandons some rituals, will mountains of calamity fall on her head?" the priest's head dropped low over his knees. What words could he utter to counter his wife's tirade? (169)

The priest's wife was brave enough to counter attack all the villagers. Unlike the priest's wife, there was Jairam, the cheater's wife. When Phuleshwari and Bhuvaneshwari went to his place to get back Annabala's land, the helpless emotions of Jairam's wife, a womanist, is vividly portrayed by Goswami:

Jairam's wife wanted to plead with him for these two poor, unfortunate women. But she could not muster up enough courage. She knew her husband very well. He did not like interference in his affairs. He had beaten her up once or twice for doing so. (187)

But, Bhuvaneshwari is somewhat feminist in nature. She is used by the contractor to satisfy his sexual thirst, and in return gets a meagre amount of money. When she is questioned by her mother, who seems to be in an utter shock, Bhuvaneshwari declares her decision on her mother and sister:

She stood near her mother and said in a tone bereft of any shame or remorse, "Nowadays the government has made it easy to get rid of an unborn child. It isn't necessary to go to Guwahati. It can be done right here near Teeniali. Don't think that I don't know anything."

She stopped for some time. "Listen! That contractor from Baitarni is not going to marry me. He has his own wife and children. And I won't drop the baby in

my womb! Whether a boy or a girl, whatever it is. I'll take care of my child on my own, alone!"

Phuleshwari exploded, "You bitch! What will you say when people ask who the father is?"

Bhuvaneshwari spat on the ground with venom. Coming forward, she hissed, "I don't care for anybody! And a father's name? I have no need for it! I'll stick to my word. Let them skin me alive if they want to!" (190-191)

The above conversation expresses the daughter's utter audacity and stubbornness to give birth to an illegitimate child. The way she has vowed on her decision depicts that in future she, like a feminist, is going to fight for her rights.

The two works of fiction *The Man from Chinnamasta* and *The Shadow of Kamakhya*, by the author and social worker of Assam, Indira Goswami, deal with both the types of women, womanists and feminists. These characters' traits are moulded by the situations imposed on them by the patriarchy.

Another woman fictionist of Assam, Mitra Phukan, in her novel *The Collector's Wife*, has presented a few strong womanist characters. All the events in the novel unfold at the perfect amalgamation of insurgency and women's silent search for identity, having several adverse impacts on the lives of the characters. These women, in the novel, are found to be unhappy by the prevailing condition of their lives. They are in a constant complaining mood about their situations that they dislike. But, unlike the feminists, they don't take any necessary steps to change those situations. Rukmini Bezboruah, the protagonist of the novel, is a hard core womanist who engages herself in silent observation of the injustice done towards the society, women in particular and also of the injustice done to her. She, in her monologues, complains about her

existing situation, the superstitions that affect her, her husband's attitude towards her, and everything that shapes the course of her life. The taunts that she receives from the society for being a barren woman affects her mentally and hates the way she is being taunted, but, unfortunately, she remains silent and rather she expresses her fake apologies to those people. In the very first chapter, we come across such a situation where Rukmini attends the marriage ceremony of her colleague and is embarrassed by the bitter confrontation of two elderly ladies who look down upon her for her barrenness. The bride, who is the witness of this insult directed towards Rukmini, apologises to the latter for such an embarrassment in her own wedding reception. But, surprisingly, Rukmini had a womanist reply to her colleague's apology:

“I don't mind, really, I don't,” said Rukmini quietly. “In fact I should have thought of it myself. It was inexcusable for me to sit so near the bride.” (16)

The very confrontation she had with those two ladies disturbs her a lot and she is unable to have a proper sleep that night. She despised the way she was looked down upon by those two elderly women. But her silence, rather we should say it as her fake humility, bounds her to accept the fault of her barrenness. She accepts the mental injustice acted upon her by the society, even though she dislikes it.

There are many more instances in the novel that proves Rukmini being a strong womanist. Rukmini, the wife of Siddharth Bezboruah, the District Collector of a small town, Parbatpuri, compromises her career for the sake of her husband's transferable job. She works as a part time English lecturer in government colleges, shifting herself from one college to another in different places according to her husband's places of transfer. She does not receive any job satisfaction. Mitra Phukan has beautifully put the commotion regarding her job, going on in the mind of Rukmini:

Rukmini had realized several years ago that teaching was not her vocation in life. She did not enjoy presenting the tortured soliloquies of Hamlet to small-town teenage minds, or Jane Austen's polished prose to those whose knowledge of English grammar was at best merely adequate... It wasn't as though the money was very attractive either. Rukmini was paid a paltry Rs 1,000 for efforts, for she was a 'part-timer'. Regular teachers were paid about six times as much. But regular teachers were expected to stay rooted in Parbatpuri. Rukmini couldn't apply for a permanent post, because she was obliged to move with Siddharth whenever he was transferred to another district. (27)

In spite of the job dissatisfaction she has, Rukmini makes peace with the situation by justifying her compromise in career. Her thoughts are perfectly reflected in the following lines:

In the meantime, her work gave her something to do and also an identity, however frail, of her own... In any case, teaching was one of the few avenues open to women in her situation. Operating a business for instance, would be impossible for the wife of a man in a transferrable job, a wife who was expected to accompany her husband wherever he went. (28)

This proves Rukmini as a womanist who keeps on ranting about her situation but does not take any action. Even though she does not have any fault in her barrenness, she is mentally depressed and feels guilty of her condition. The guilt she carried within her is expressed by Phukan in the following words:

These days Rukmini was always burdened with the feeling that she had been unable to fulfil her part of a social contract. That she had not kept a bargain. That she had regened on a promise of vital importance. (54)

The guilt of her barrenness engulfed her in such a way that, it had become a habit to compromise with the situation without even letting others know about her disliking. This has been beautifully put by Phukan:

Indeed, after all these years of childlessness, she had become so at fielding questions and hiding her feelings and pursuing on a cheerful face, that the mask had almost moulded itself to the skin of her cheeks. (104)

Again, another character in the novel, like Rukmini, is also a womanist. Mitali has also made a peaceful compromise with her career. Her high educational qualification seems to be futile because of her husband's transferrable job and thus, she has to work as high school teacher. This was the question put up to her by Rukmini:

"... And you're a PhD in biotechnology. You could have got an excellent teaching job somewhere, and made waves in academia. Or gone in for a corporate career with a big firm, doing genetic engineering. And won heaps of laurels, not to mention career satisfaction. Instead of which, you're teaching high school students the basics of science. How do you feel about it?" (115)

Mitali's humble reply proves her satisfaction she seems to enjoy in the compromise. She justifies her current state of being as a high school teacher, whereas she could have done wonders with the educational qualification she had. She says:

"Honestly, I don't think about my PhD much these days," she said slowly.
 "It's all a question of attitude, isn't it? Of course I'm embarrassingly overqualified for the job I do, but I don't mind teaching at that level. Really,"

she emphasised, seeing the doubt in Rukmini's eyes. "It's quite restful, explaining the fundas of science to a branch of small-town schoolgirls. In any case," she added ruefully, "I've lost touch with my subject completely. I know nothing of the latest developments in biotechnology except what is reported in the press." (115)

Mitali, being a womanist, further adds:

"In any case, I was brought up in the belief that a woman's career is secondary to her husband's." (115)

Siddharth, the husband of Rukmini, did not have the least interest in having a baby. He tried to avoid all dealings related to Rukmini's pregnancy. This was very annoying to Rukmini. But she chose to remain silent and preferred to engage herself in silent complaining. In the words of Mitra Phukan:

Rukmini said nothing. But she couldn't help feeling a twinge of annoyance. Surely he could at least have telephoned the doctor? After all, it was possible to have this baby all by herself. (158)

Another character in the novel, Bondona, a student of Rukmini, has a few feminist traits in her. She, belonging to a poor family, is the victim of the large number of migration taking place from different parts of the country and from the neighbouring country, Bangladesh to her own state, Assam. Even though she knows, that her protest against this immigration can hamper her future, she continues with it. Justifying the fight for her motherland, she says to Rukmini:

"... Can you imagine girls of my age from conservative Brahmin families doing what I do- thirty, forty years ago? Luckily, I won a merit scholarship- yes, I wrested it through sheer hard work. We have no reservations for poor

Brahmin girls, no quotas in college seats for children of priests, no matter how poor they may be. My mother knows what I am doing- running around organising processions, moving out on the streets at all hours of the day and night, spending so much time with men who are not related, she knows that this will jeopardize my chances in the marriage market, probably quite irrevocably. But she supports what I do. So does my father.” (181)

After introspecting the situation of Nandini Deuri, wife of the SP who was killed, Rukmini wonders about herself. Even though she wants changes in her life and wants to bring about necessary deviations in the course of her life, she hesitates to take any necessary moves. She wonders about her future, and it is reflected in the following lines:

And what about her, Rukmini Bezboruah? What would happen to her? Where would she be, ten, twenty years from now? What would she be doing? Still teaching desolutely in colleges in backward districts, and trying to get Siddharth to agree to let her begin to take fertility drugs under Dr Rabha’s guidance? (193)

The following conversation between Nandini Deuri and Rukmini has a lot to speak:

“... I’m thankful that the bakery is slowly, but definitely, beginning to erase my other identity.”

“Other identity?” Rukmini wondered whether Nandini was implying that she regretted those busy years as Hrishikesh Deuri’s wife.

... Nandini replied, “Don’t misunderstand me. I was happy being Deuri’s wife, sharing his life. But that was then. Now, with his death... without this new me that I’m trying to create, I would have been known, forever, as that poor lady, the widow

of that police officer who was killed in front of her eyes while they were celebrating their wedding anniversary. That label would have clung to me forever. And, through me, to the children.” (302)

The above conversation depicts the self-satisfaction of Nandini Deuri at her new identity she formed after her husband's death. Even though she is deeply saddened by the death of her husband, she, as a feminist, does not complain about her situation, rather, uses her talent and rises out of the situation to establish a new identity of her own, not the poor wife of the deceased SP. This action of Nandini Deuri depicts her as a feminist who fights herself out of an undesirable situation.

The title of the novel *The Collector's Wife* is itself very womanist in nature. Whole throughout the novel, Rukmini, the protagonist, is identified as the wife of the district collector. Even till the pathetic end of the novel, she fails to establish a desirable identity of her own. She is left as the poor, helpless wife of the district collector, Siddharth Bezboruah who was shot down and as a desolate being who lost her friend, Manoj Mahanta. Right from the beginning of the novel, till the end, Rukmini portrays her womanist traits and thus hesitatingly submits herself to all the unwanted situations that ascend in her life.

Indira Goswami and Mitra Phukan have done a commendable depiction of the womanist and feminist characters in their selected works of fiction. The womanists and feminists with a theoretical framework are offered by these two authors in fictitious accounts of lives, situations, and emotions similar to their own. After a thorough critical analysis of the content of the two novels and the short story collection, it can be concluded that womanist and feminist literature talk about the interests of women and the main course of action is carried out by women. With the

sense of tradition and convention deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of the people of India, these fictitious female characters tend to be both womanist and feminist in nature and in their dealings with the contemporary men folk. These two writers, through their stylistic and literary approaches, have illustrated the situation of Indian women, quite different from the women of the West.

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CHAPTER III

KEY TO RIGHT LIVING: EASTERINE KIRE'S

A NAGA VILLAGE REMEMBERED

Easterine Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* is an ecological text that deals explicitly with the various tribal rituals, beliefs, taboos, so as to say, the tradition and culture, followed by the villagers of Khonoma, an Angami Naga village in the district of Kohima. The text is an epitome of the culture deeply rooted in nature and in the spirits hidden within her. The rules and regulations made by the villagers in order to lead a right living are profoundly connected with the Nature and her various actions. The keys to right living, in this village have undergone many significant changes due to the introduction of Christianity, education and science and technology. The village of Khonoma, known to be the first green village in India acts as the mouthpiece of all the changes that occurred in its history. The dynamics of ecocultural ethos are perfectly reflected in this fictional narrative *A Naga Village Remembered*. The clash between tradition and modernity in the village of Khonoma is a consequence of the mismatched beliefs of the Angamis and the new religion, Christianity. Jeanne Kay, in one of her essays, has carved out the differences and attitudes of Christianity and Judaism (almost equal beliefs as the Angamis) towards Nature. In her words:

...many environmentalists still presume that nature-worshipping societies are more ecologically beneficent than either Judaism or Christianity. A further elaboration of biblical attitudes towards plants and animals and of nature as reward and punishment may help to explain the Bible's attitude towards nature worship, the obverse of human dominion over the environment.

One should first note that the Bible makes few direct attacks against the worship of natural features per se, whether in context of neighbouring polytheistic cultures within Judaism itself. . . . The literal worship of natural features is not a preoccupation of the Bible, perhaps because of the ancient Middle East's elaborate anthropomorphic pantheons. The Bible does strongly and persistently condemn the veneration of manufactured images of these deities, which have been excavated in great numbers from archaeological sites in the region.

Nature features, nevertheless, provided both Jews and polytheists with milieus in which supernatural visitations were expected. With both kinds of religions, adherents often do not worship the literal natural object itself, but rather deem it scared because of a spirit which they believe to live within or nearby it. The spirit, rather than its eco-logical housing, is actually the object of deification. Thus, the prophets typically condemned Israel for worshipping pagan gods "under every leafy tree," not for worshipping the trees themselves. The Bible depicts both Israelites and heathens as sanctifying specific types of environments. The former do so without condemnation when they worship God: the Bible, however, denounces both groups when nature becomes the setting for worship of Baal, Asherah, or other deities (cf. Jer. 2:20-23, 3:13; Ezek, 20:28). (216-217)

As a key to right living, human beings have set some rules and regulations in accordance with nature. Some basic habits have been formed in the community of humans in order to lead a smooth life. People have fallen into some specific routines as a result of which any kind of diversion from that routine may lead to chaos. In the olden golden days, our people had followed a certain culture and tradition of leading

an efficient life. But, due to the advancement of science and technology in the modern age, these habits that have turned into tradition and culture are in the process of extinction. In the following extract, we see, Kovi, one of the important characters in the novel, appreciate his tradition of his fellow tribesmen:

Kovi habitually rose early. Even then, as he walked outside in the morning he saw the women returning in small groups with their carrying baskets stacked with firewood. His heart warmed at the sight. Ah, the old ways are good, he thought, our women do us proud when they show themselves so eager to keep the teaching of their fathers:

The women would set out before dawn to fetch firewood for the day. But if they already had firewood for their households, they could be seen fetching water in their water carriers. (1)

Apart from some of the guidelines to a right living, society is full of illogical and meaningless conventions. It has been a tradition in almost all the communities of the world to place women in a socially degraded position in order to maintain a fit social relation among its inhabitants. The saddest part in a society is that women have accepted the imposed degraded status in the society. It is perfectly reflected in the following lines from the novel:

Many men never told their wives about the meetings of the clan and the women could only guess at what went on in the highly secretive all-men meets that infrequently took place. But they knew that it was about grave matters. (2)

Another instance of the *thehou*, proves the age-old custom of discriminating women:

Talk at the *thehou* often centred round what was called man's talk. No women were allowed to come to the *thehou* or enter the male dormitories. Reminiscing about hunts and battles in the past made the *thehou* a place where

any youth with a man's heart inside him linger to listen or add his stories as well.

But if the elders were there, the younger men listened closely without speaking much. They came to learn the stories of village. It was good to be called a *thehou no*, a child of the *thehou*- it meant that such a person was well versed in the stories and customs of the village. (6)

The extract also deals with the inspiration received from the talks at the *thehou*. The men of the village, in order to linger with their traditional courage and valour, inspire themselves with the stories that they heard from their elders. This helped them in building up a strong mental and physical health so that they will be able to protect their people at an hour of need.

Again, there are different traditions followed by the people of different communities in different occasions or events. In the village of Khonoma, when someone dies, he/she is sent to the other world with few ornaments or cloths of family members as companions. It is kind of mental assurance for the family members. In the following extract from the novel, we see Pelhu gifts his dead brother a piece of cloth and his necklace which will act as companions in his journey:

With a heavy heart, Pelhu rose and removed his cloth and his carnelian necklace. With his cloth he covered his brother and his necklace he placed on his body saying, "I leave those to your companions, my brother." Then he returned to the village alone. (4)

Superstitious beliefs are an integral part of many communities, ensuring a right kind of living. These superstitions fall under the tradition followed by them. The presence of the spirits in nature is valued by all the members of the village. The deep

association of the people of Khonoma with the spirit world is perfectly reflected in the novel. In some of the important events of a person's life, there are some rituals to be performed, and one of such is the ritual of claiming the newborn. Childbirth, being a vital episode in the life of the mother and father, has been described by Eric Katz through an ecological viewpoint. He has cited the opinion of Andrew Brennan in the following paragraph:

Brennan cites the procedure of "natural childbirth," that is, childbirth free of technological medical interventions. "Childbirth is an especially striking example of the wilderness within us...where we can appreciate the natural at first hand..." It is natural, free and wild not because it is a nonhuman activity- after all, it is human childbirth- but because it is independent of a certain type of human activity, actions designed to control and manipulate natural processes. (585)

This wilderness in childbirth is celebrated with a ritual. It is explained in the following lines extracted from the fiction:

As the child squealed into the world, Kovi quickly smeared saliva on his finger and touched it to his son's forehead with the words, "I am first." That ensured the spirits could not claim the child before him. There had been too many deaths of new-borns in the village because their fathers had not been alert enough to stake claim before the spirits. (5)

Engrossing oneself in deep sorrow at the loss of something or someone he or she loves dearly may prove to be very heavy. It might result in neglecting the other social responsibilities one needs to carry out. Therefore, when Kovi's wife died at the time of giving birth to a child, his mourning was silenced by the mid wife. The author says:

The midwife had recovered herself and she shushed him saying, “No, no mourning for a *lashu* death, it is taboo.”...

The strictest of taboos was upon the *lashu* death. No mourning of the dead. (5)

In almost all the communities, there are few stereotyped judgements on men. And these judgemental attributions act as a compulsion to reach up to the decided benchmark. The following lines from the fiction tell about the expectations society has from men:

“... A man is not a man if you let another man kill your kin and torch your houses and you do nothing about it. We have a name for such men- *Thenumia!*” (7)

These are some of the conventions to right living followed by the people of Khonoma. There are many rituals and customs for people of different age-group, particularly for the males, in order to maintain courage and valour throughout their life. The ritual of initiation is one of such traditional customs that ensures a person’s sense of responsibility:

Levi’s age-group had gone through the rituals of initiation and were now earning *thekra* by working in other people’s fields to be paid in money or grain. Their earnings went to the feast of the age-group, a grand feast at harvest. (7)

Easterine Kire, being an ecologically concerned writer, deals with the all the concerned subjects associated with Nature. The activities of the people of the village of Khonoma proved their deep alliance with the elements of Nature- trees, sun, moon, rivers, etc. Devoid of materialism, that was brought in by the British, these people

depended solely on nature for a right kind of living. Kire has beautifully depicted the habits and the everyday routine of the villagers of Khonoma:

It was early yet, an hour or so to sunrise but most people in the village started the day at first light of dawn, working long and hard at the fields or in the forests dragging firewood or cutting logs for new houses. Younger boys learnt to weave baskets. As they grew older, they became adept at weaving the carrying baskets the women used to carry water and wood. In the very finely woven baskets, they carried grain. But these were among the most intricate to make. (8)

The duties assigned to people considering their age and sex serve as a key to right kind of living. There are sayings and beliefs which provide the villagers the urge to abide by the obligations and maintain a harmonious lifestyle. In the following dialogue, we see that parents engage themselves in constant reminder to their children regarding their duties:

“... a household is not worthy of its name if its granaries are empty. The sun and rain are the Creator’s blessings. They rain and shine in turn for us to make our fields and get our harvest. War is part of a village’s life but if we have grain, we can withstand war. If we do not have grain, a few days of war will overcome us.” (10)

The extract also talks of how one associates every aspect of his/her life with the forces of nature. The role of sun and rain is explicitly portrayed by the author in that extract. And even, in the following paragraph, we come across how people celebrate different festivals following the directions of Nature. In the following extract, Easterine Kire

has given an explicit description of one of the festivals celebrated in the village of Khonoma:

The moon was already declining and on the decline of the full moon *Terhase* would be held, a ritual of making peace with the spirits. It was at *Terhase* that the priests of the Thepa and Thevo clan took a chicken each beyond the village gate. As a child, Piano had seen the ritual from a safe distance. The Thevo priest, an old man with fierce eyes spoke loudly: Spirit Vo-o, we were wondering where you were but here you are. We have come to solicit peace between man and spirit. Let there be no destruction and calamity, no death and disease and plague. Who is honest, you are honest. Who is honest, I am honest. We will compete each other in honesty. (11)

Being ecologically concerned, Kire has not only provided the proof of the role of the forces of Nature, but also the strong presence of the supernatural elements of Nature. The above ritual described by the author depicts the intense belief of the villagers in the spirits and also the strong bond between them. The key to right living has one of its roots in these elements of Nature. The paragraph also emphasizes on one of the principles of life that is honesty. Again, Kire has also given some instances of people abiding by some restrictions and taboos that the society has framed. The deviance from such rules shall only bring misfortune, troubles and disaster in one's life. Even here, we can see the intricately woven bond between the man and Nature; the following paragraph is a stunning instance of how the people of Khonoma worshipped mother earth. As a key to right living, these people assign earth a supreme place in their lives:

If you had not heeded the taboos, you could live on unharmed for some years but the day would soon come when the earth would open up to receive you before your time. (12)

There are quite interesting beliefs surviving among the villagers of Khonoma. These beliefs are associated with the animals that we usually consider to be wild. Acting as a key to right living, the following extract from the fiction says it all:

“Do you know why we call the tiger ‘elder brother’”? Levi asked his younger brother. “Of course” Lato replied, “every child of this village knows the answer to that question. It is because man and tiger and spirit were brothers once. When we were hunting two months ago, we heard a tiger growling. Dolhu shouted, ‘It is only us, elder brother’ and he stopped growling immediately.” (14)

Like many rituals discussed above, blessing of the household is also one of them where the entire village is involved in the ritual. In this context, the ritual of the blessing of the household is initiated by a dream seen by Keviselie. This proves the intensity of the importance given to dreams; dreams seem to make vital decisions in the lives of the villagers. The following paragraph describes the way of living that ensured a healthy state of affairs in the lives of the villagers:

Keviselie had had a dream. He had dreamt of the short-tailed gwi. It was a good dream. He felt ready to take a title soon. But before that he wanted to perform the Phichu pehie, the blessing of the house by the elders. He would do this to ensure that no calamity would overtake his household. So now it was a matter of meeting the elders from the Thepa clan and the Thevo clan to invite them to the blessing of his household. (16)

Animals, the part and parcel of this ecological system, prove to have impacts even in the dreams. The above extracted lines depict how the short-tailed gwi in the dream is considered to be a good sign and consequently results in one of the important events in the life of the person. The author, Easterine Kire also points out some of the important universal lessons like, “It is good to prepare well ahead of time” (17). These universal teachings and sayings that ensure a right kind of living are also followed by the people of Khonoma.

Kire has highlighted some more sayings and principles that should be strictly followed in life. One of such sayings by Vipiano in the fiction verbalizes the dreadful consequence of not sticking to those principles. It is reflected in the following words of Vipiano: “A man who lets brew drink him instead of he drinking it is no man”, she spoke aloud. (24)

The author has provided innumerable principles and good thoughts through which the villagers lead their lives. To them, these sayings act as guiding principles in order to maintain a right way of living. The following dialogue includes many such principles that suggest a life of values, morals and good habits:

“If you are at a community feast and take more than two pieces of meat, shame on you. Others will call you glutton, worse, they will think to themselves, ‘has no one taught this boy about greed?’ This is the key to right living- avoiding excess in anything- be content with your share of land and fields. People who move boundary stones bring death upon themselves. Every individual has a social obligation to the village. When you are a few years older and your hearts are strong within you, you will take responsibility of guarding the village while

others will go to earn a great name for our village. Your roles are different but each is as important as the other. Never be arrogant, respect yourself sufficiently so that you fulfil the responsibilities of manhood. But it is one thing to be responsible and quite another to be arrogant. A real man does not need to roar to show that he is a man.”... “Those boys are boisterous tonight. They should not exceed their boundaries and anger the spirits. Obscenity of speech does not prove anything, keep that in mind.” (25)

The impact of the spirits on which the villagers have deep faith, is also accountable in following a right way of life. Easterine Kire has also cited some incidents that uphold the supernatural beliefs in the life of the villagers. These stories have vehement impact on their lives. In this modern age of science and technology, even if it is difficult to consider and believe these supernatural encounters, the people of Khonoma have a tradition of story-telling based on true events and incidents that teach a lesson to each and every one of them. Leaving everyone in awe and amazement, these stories not only depict the very presence of the supernatural beings but also the people’s close association with nature. Despite the supernatural attitude to the Nature, the concept of spiritual ecology can be drawn in this reference. Matthew T. Fox’s essay “Creation Spirituality”, in Richard G. Botzler and Susan J. Armstrong edited anthology titled *Environment Ethics* has encapsulated this concept in the following words:

Fox proposes four paths to a spiritual ecology. The first is to experience the Divine in terms of delight, awe and wonder at being present in the world; it involves the intuition that creation is a blessing, and response of gratitude (Via Positiva). A second journey into a spiritual ecology comes through

experiencing darkness, deprivation, suffering, and pain (Via Negativa). Human experiences with these first two journeys lead to a rebirth of creativity (Via Creativa). A third path; this involves identifying new ecological virtues for living such as vegetarianism, recycling, relearning the sacredness of nature, defending creation through political action, and making new rituals to celebrate places, times, and being in nature. A fourth step, developed more fully elsewhere, is a transformation to a more compassionate society in which all beings love one another (Via Transformativa); such compassion includes the making of justice. (228)

The following story, even though sounds supernatural, depicts the concept of spiritual ecology encountered by the boy that lasted for his entire life:

Three children spirited away at different times had the most amazing stories to tell. The youngest was fed worms and roots of plants. He went missing for a week, and when they feared they would not find him alive, a man was struck by the children's laughter deep in the forests. He stepped out of the path till the voices grew nearer. When they were in full view of the man, he struggled not to cry out for the child's was so fair, a creature so beautiful he gasped inwardly at the sight. The pair went past him and as they rounded a corner, he shook himself out of the trance he had fallen into and rushed out after them. He pulled the human child aside and pushed away the spirit-child. All his life he would remember the look of pain and betrayal the spirit-child had given him before it disappeared. To his horror, the human child struggled out of his grasp and when he caught him again, he bit his arm till blood came out. He had no choice but to roundly slap him twice into submission and they made their way home in silence, the man holding on to the child firmly. The boy's

parents were overjoyed but he was sullen for many days, staring silently at the woods in the evenings for long periods at a time. When he grew old enough and was initiated into the age-group, he was exultant. Soon he joined his mates in age-group work at the fields and forests. But he loved to linger in the woods much longer than his mates and often they would have to call him several times when it was time to go home. (29)

S. Radhakrishnan has made an impeccable reflection of the relationship between nature and spirit. He has referred to the Orphics in the following paragraph. He says:

The Orphics say that we are the children of earth and of the starry heaven. Man is a mixture of earth and heaven, of dust and deity. The spirit in us is wrapped up in many non-spiritual layers. If we are lost in the series of objective happenings man's freedom is unmanifested. The subject becomes an object, mindless, unthinking, unfeeling. If man recovers his subjectivity, his inwardness, he is able to control the non-spiritual and use it for spiritual ends. There is no opposition between spirit and nature. Nature can be controlled by spirit. (102)

Again, the following paragraph extracted from the fiction, is a beautiful depiction of the villagers' sincere obedience to nature and the affinity with it. The intensity of this association is so much that it is difficult for us to grasp this relationship. Now-a-days, where, a calendar serves the purpose of knowing the days, dates, months, years, important events and festivals, the people of Khonoma determined the dates of important events by following the directions of the various elements of Nature. The following conversation between Lato and his mother delineates the unfathomable involvement of the people with nature:

“Three weeks to *Thekranyi* from today” she announced to Lato. “Really Apfu, how do you do it? How can you tell?” “Silly boy, it’s only a matter of counting the lunar cycle. Today is the first day of the new moon, that’s how I know.” (32)

Another example of the age old tradition of considering women as inferior is perfectly reflected in the following statement No self-respecting man ever revealed the talk of the *thehou* to their wives. (34)

Informing about or discussing regarding the *thehou* with wives is considered to be a disrespecting act for the men folk. This is also regarded as one of the keys to right living in which women are kept in darkness about any kind of meeting held in the *thehou*. By this, the author establishes the fact that women are not given the privilege to participate in the men talk because they are considered to be universally inefficient.

The author again deals with the role of the spirits in the lives of the villagers in the following line, “If you honour the spirits, they will bless you, if you defy them, you will learn how mortal man is” (41). To lead a better and smooth life, it is utmost necessary for the villagers of Khonoma to please the hidden spirits of nature and abide by the rules framed in accordance to those spirits. Thus, superstitions also play as one of the key factors to lead a righteous lifestyle. These superstitions are not only some inexplicable beliefs of the villagers but also some sudden and unexpected notions and attitudes towards a particular person or place. These superstitions act as reality and prove to have taken and saved many lives. The following extract from the fiction is a perfect reflection of these beliefs and notions:

The village was full of them, the unclean places of the forest, the dark water sources which were death to bathe in- how stories nestled in them but would never be told for

who would give up life to go near them and listen to their stories, no matter how sweet, how wonderful! There they stayed, dark brooding secrets each village hinted at but were powerless to disclose. There were the other things of the spirit, not strange, but clear truths with no mystery surrounding them, the truth that protected the people if they had lived their lives protecting those truths. Like the genna days, no one violates a genna day; they are told the story of Khriesenu, yielding to his love, took her to the forests on a genna day. She fell and broke her leg and died and when he carried her home he wept when he was walking in the valley but on every hill he crested he shouted “have killed a stag.” But alone, at home, he deeply mourned her death and having relented to her plea to disregard the genna. (42)

The story of Khriesenu in the above extract, even though raises a question on the authenticity of this supernatural belief, certifies the horrendous consequences when one acts against the taboos. As mentioned earlier, Kire has cited many valuable teachings followed in the tradition of the Khonoma village. Some attributes of human nature are considered to have ill effects on life. The author has referred to another saying which ensures a long lifeline:

“... Arrogance and pride kill. Be humble, heed the taboos and there is no reason why you should not have a full and long life.” (43)

There are taboos set for some particular days. Those days are called genna days. There are different types of genna days and one of them is described in the following dialogue between Bilie and her son:

“What is khunuo lievi Apfu?” he asked. Bilie patiently explained “It is a day on which it is taboo for us to work. If we work on this day, our crops will be damaged by insects, birds and animals.” (46)

Surviving in a world of modern scientific and logical world, the above described genna day can be interpreted as a break from the daily chores of life providing rest to the physical body so that one regains his or her energy to work without leaving a stone unturned. Nature is not only the physical world we survive in, it is also the world within us, the world that shapes our moods, feelings and emotions. Therefore, keeping in mind the innate world that exists in our body; these taboos are set to provide a healthy mind and physique, thus contributing to the keys to a right living.

Easterine Kire has also dealt with the beautiful ceremony of the sacred union, marriage. The following extract from the novel explicitly deals with all the rituals associated with marriage:

Early on the morning of the marriage, Levi's eldest aunt, was sent to the girl's house. She carried a spear, a chicken and salt. A little tension hovered over both households as each house strove to refrain from activities that were restricted. It was a long drawn out day. But after sunset, Peno's mother lifted her daughter's basket on to her back and softly said, "Go well, my daughter" and she began to walk to Levi's house accompanied by a girl-child and her age-mates. As they went, the young men of her age-group shouted, "Where is the house of Kelevizo? Tell us, where is Kelevizo's house?" Her mother had filled her basket with seed grains of different crops and a laden mug of brew. She was very nervous as they neared her husband's house. Twice she stumbled but she steadied herself and managed to walk to Levi's compound. At the threshold, Levi's aunt stood ready with a jug of brew and she poured it into the child-companion's mug. A big fowl, flapping its wings and cackling in protest was given to the child. Her husband's male relatives also gave an

equally big fowl to her age-mates as bride-price. They took the chicken and before leaving pronounced this blessing on the new householders:

This household will fetch and drink water from the water source as long as others are fetching and drinking of it.

They will be able to make a fire as long as others.

Their progeny shall be numerous,

As numerous as the progeny of spiders and crabs;

shall be blest with long life.

They shall live to be ancestors and grandparents and prosper in their life. (49-50)

The above extract not only deals with all the rituals performed during a marriage ceremony, but also with all the feeling and emotions associated with it. One of life's important decisions creates tension and fear at parting away from the dear ones. Therefore the ritual consists of all sorts of activities and functions that liven up the mind, body and soul. All the songs sung are a kind of blessing for the newly married couple. The involvement of the villagers, kith and kin is utmost necessary for a successful marriage and for a happy life of the married couple. In the whole process, we see nothing superficial, rather a sense of innate ecological consciousness. The ritual performed by the bride's mother depicts the sense of concern for the elements of nature without which it is impossible for the mankind to survive.

The presence of spirits in the lives of the villagers of Khonoma is proved in almost everywhere in the fiction. The continuous normal interaction with the spirits of nature very much exists in their society. This harmonious interaction is considered to be one

of the keys of right living. The following lines depict the presence of these spirits as a normal situation in the lives of the inhabitants of the village of Khonoma:

“... Heed my words, Levi, this wood is your house-guardian in the night. It tells the spirits when they come and try to occupy the house, ‘I am master, the house belongs to me.’ Only then will they go away for the wood is a sure sign that the house is occupied.” (51)

Once again, the author has delineated the deep respect for the elders and the spirits in the lives of the villagers. Everything good that occurs in their lives is owed to the guidance of the elders and the unseen blessings of the spirits. The following lines speak everything:

“Thank you Apfu, whatever we have achieved, we owe to your guidance and the favour of the spirits.” “Then all will go well with you, my children.” (52)

Animal sacrifice, which is prevalent even in the modern times, is considered to be one of the most important keys to a right living. It is witnessed in almost all the rituals performed in the village of Khonoma. This animal sacrifice occurs in almost all the communities in India. Animal sacrifice is done in order to appease the unseen spirits and Gods so that the wishes of the people come true. There are innumerable instances of not only animal sacrifice, but also human sacrifice. These superstitious beliefs have not only taken uncountable innocent lives but also raised a sense of fear among the people. In spite of this lingering fear we see this practice of animal and human sacrifice existing in many corners of this country. But, Easterine Kire has given us the instances only of the animal sacrifices that exist in the village of Khonoma. The following extract from the novel talks of the presence of the practice of animal sacrifice prevalent in the village:

The priest spoke in a loud voice that could be heard outside: “We refuse to take disease, death or any ill encounter with spirits from any place and therefore we are substituting your life with this unblemished chicken which is greater than your life and we will appease the spirits with it, *kha kenie, dia, pengou, sorou.*” (54)

The above extract explicitly portrays the fact that substituting the life of an animal with the lives of the people proves the very superiority of man. But then, the priest has made a contradictory statement saying that the life of the chicken is greater than the life of the diseased person. This is contradictory because when time comes or when time demands, it is in the nature of human to sacrifice things of lesser importance. It is true that the life of the person is much important from the life of that chicken, but the statement acts as a euphemism to justify the animal sacrifice.

Another allusion to the spirits in the novel is reflected in the following extract where the speaker assumes that his illness is caused by the evil encounter with the spirits. This extract also proves the wrath of the spirits which shall hamper the lives of the villagers deeply:

“The water spot at Dzunha” he said with difficulty, “that place is unclean. I came by it three days ago and when I reached home I felt the fury of the spirit that I had encountered there. Keep away from Dzunha, son, keep away, the spirits are too strong there.”... “No, my son, listen. They are not content with causing sickness. They’ll not rest till they have taken a life, I saw that in them. Their spirits are great and fearless. Warn our people, you must.” (55)

The lives of the people, as it seems from the above dialogue of the elderly person, also rely on the moods of the spirits. Therefore, it is very necessary to abide by the

restrictions and appease the spirits. This is the key to right living; a key that is concerned with the Nature- concrete and abstract, concrete are the different elements and inhabitants of Nature and abstract are the supernatural elements of Nature, the spirits. Thus, the keys to right living have direct affiliation with the ecological surrounding of a person. Another key to a right living is the inhabitancy of fear, one of the inherent emotions deeply rooted in the nature of man. Easterine Kire has said, “Fear would itself be their protection in this generation.” (55)

Easterine Kire, in this fiction, has also referred to some magical and illogical and unjustifiable assumptions people make. This depicts the vital importance of the sixth sense inherited in every person. Here, Kire talks of the sixth sense of a mother. Levi, being the mouthpiece of Easterine Kire, the author, says in utter astonishment: “How strange women are to be able to tell if her next will be a girl-child or a boy-child!” (59)

Amalgamation of different culture and tradition, different viewpoints, attitudes towards life, etc. poses a challenge to the individuals to live in peace and harmony. Conflicts, in such a situation, are often witnessed in a community. It is a very critical process. In *Learning to Live Together in Peace and Harmony*, published by the UNESCO, this process has been described explicitly:

Learning to live together in peace and harmony is a dynamic, holistic and lifelong process through which mutual respect, understanding, caring and sharing, compassion, social responsibility, solidarity, acceptance and tolerance of diversity among individuals and groups (ethnic, social, cultural, religious, national and regional) are internalized and practised together to solve problems and to work towards a just and free, peaceful and democratic

society. This process begins with the development of inner peace in the minds and hearts of individuals engaged in the search for truth, knowledge and understanding of each other's cultures, and the appreciation of shared common values to achieve a better future. Learning to Live together in peace and harmony requires that quality of relationships at all levels is committed to peace, human rights, democracy and social justice in an ecologically sustainable environment. (4)

But, at the advancement of science and technology, at the advent of Christianity, and the introduction of education, a dynamics of ecocultural ethos was witnessed in almost all the communities and society in India. Even though the presence of spirit could not be replaced with any other elements or ideas or opinions, the village of Khonoma came across many changes. But then, along with the spirits, it made a clear introduction to the eternal soul of man, which is, again, an abstract form. Christianity, education, science and technology brought in the acceptance of a new religion, new God and the removal of age-old practices and traditions. In *Learning to Live Together in Peace and Harmony*, it is also said that:

Knowledge and understanding of each other's cultural traditions, beliefs and practices will contribute to an appreciation of shared values and aspirations, as well as an appreciation of each other's differences, thus contributing to the development of mutual respect and tolerance. (1)

A clash between the older and new generation was perceived during the time when changes and modifications were rising in many villages. At the shift in ideas, notions and attitudes towards everything, there were also many significant changes in the keys

to right living. The first reference to these changes affected by modernism, in this work of fiction, *A Naga Village Remembered*, is made in the following lines:

-Chaha spoke of the soul, that deathless part of man which was different from the spirit of man. The spirit of man was so easily lured away by spirits of the forest and spirits of unclean places for spirit will always hearken to spirit. But the soul, Chaha said, 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. (100)

The above lines, in future, will guide the people of Khonoma to view life in a different perspective. These lines will make their lives much smoother. At the clash between tradition and modernity, the people of new generation tried their best to justify their acceptance of the new religion, the very act which was despised by most of the elders in the village. By drawing a comparison between the old and new religion, the younger generation tried to prove the similarities these two religions shared. The values, morals, ethics and principles, taught in the old religion were also present in Christianity. S. Radhakrishnan has made a valid point about religion and science that have proved to be the cause for these changes:

Religion and science, faith and reason represent different sides of human nature. Each one of us is both religious and scientific. At best it is a matter of the distribution of emphasis. (101)

The following line by Kelevizo's son, Sato, who was the first person in the village to have been converted to Christianity, proves his unbending trial to convince his old father about this new religion: "...the new religion says, do not steal and do not lie, how is it so different from the old religion?" (101)

The generalised view that the people of Khonoma had on the British created a barrier in them to even accept the good side of the latter. Richard G. Botzler and Susan J. Armstrong commented on such an attitude in their introduction to the chapter entitled “Additional Religious and Cultural Perspectives”:

Making generalizations about diverse perspectives does not allow proper acknowledgement of the richness and variation of values found within each tradition. Common elements among some strands of each philosophy might not be generalizable to all. (251)

The wrath of the older generation over the new one, due to their diversion by accepting a different religion, the religion of the Whites who had killed many of their brothers and sisters, had reached its zenith. It has been proved by the attitude of Kelevizo who is a man of tradition and customs. The elders felt betrayed and stabbed. The following extract from the novel is heartrending as it clearly depicts utter disappointment accompanied by sorrow and regret, in the words of Levi. In the words of the author, Easterine Kire:

But his father’s rage has passed, and with a dry throat, Levi spoke “I’ll not kill you but I’ll no more say ‘I have another son.’ I have only one son now and he is Rokokhoto. Sato, do you know why I allowed you to go to the white man’s school? Do you know that I hoped you would learn the secret of his power and come back to me his art in battle? The white man is invincible. I have fought so many battles with the villages in the south and to our west. We always vanquished them. But the white man was different- we killed so many of his people, the more we killed, the angrier he became and, like a hornet disturbed, he always stung back. I have known no enemy like the white man. When your

brother and you chose to go to the white man's school how happy I was that my sons might finally learn his secret. But you have broken me today. How is it that you forget the man who fathered you and brought you up? How is it, my son, that you turn your back on all that we've taught you of what is good of our ways? How have we wronged you? If you were my enemy's son I would understand if you say 'you have wronged me' but you were my son and now you have made our enemy your father. The white man killed your grandfather's brother and your grandfather's house four times do you hear me Sato, four times! You will have blood of your ancestors on your hands." (102)

The above paragraph not only highlights the distance carved between a father and a son but also the deep mourning the father goes through at his son's loss of their ethnic tradition and culture. In the words of Levi, there is a sense of protecting the morals and values inherent in his tradition and he tries to justify his argument. His sense of moral philosophy falls under the category of meta-ethics. Richard G. Botzler and Susan J. Armstrong in the introduction to the chapter "Morality" explain the two types of moral philosophy. In their words:

Moral philosophy encompasses two main levels: meta-ethics and normative ethics. Meta-ethics is concerned with the justification of moral judgements, in other words, the correct method for answering moral questions, as well as a conceptual analysis of such moral crucial terms as value and rights-holder. Asking whether moral questions are ultimately to be answered by personal opinion or cultural bias is a meta-ethical inquiry. Normative ethics, on the other hand, concerns practical questions such as "What should I do?" and "Is it right for anyone to steal in such a situation?" An appropriate meta-ethical question would be "What is meant by 'right'?" Normative ethics is based on

some metaphysical vision of what is real and valuable, though this vision may only be implicitly assumed by the author rather than explicitly stated. (53)

But then, there were also people who liked to go deep into the matter and make unbiased judgements on the changes; whether the changes were for good or evil. These people fall under the category of normative ethics. One of them was Kovi, one of the seniors in the village. The following extract from the novel proves it:

Kovi was one man who pondered deeply over the teachings of the new religion. He saw there was a lot of good in it. But he did not feel it was appropriate for a man like him, an elder and a titled member of the village, to embrace the new religion. But he often watched the ostracism of the converts and wondered how things could have so changed in his lifetime. (105)

The above lines also depict the dilemma created in such people like Kovi, who, even though had many reasons to praise the new religion, could not take it up. He found it inappropriate, being a titled member of the village, to follow the teachings of the new religion. He seemed to be left in awe at the drastic changes in the villagers of Khonoma. Sato, the son of Levi left no stone unturned to prove the authenticity of the new religion that provided education. Another reference made to the sincere teachings of Lord Jesus is reflected in the following lines:

Instead they spoke of forgiveness and love: “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you and persecute you. We are not children of darkness, we are children of light, offspring of the true God- if we do not forgive how can they see the light of Isu in us?” (106)

As mentioned, dreams had a significant impact on the lives of the people. The assumptions made out of the dreams turn out to be mysteriously true. Interpreting

dreams is a kind of art and also is one of the keys to right living as these dreams act like the guardians to many important events in a person's life. In the following dialogue between Peno, Levi's wife and his son Roko, the authenticity of her assumption of her husband's death is perfectly reflected in her words:

“He's dead isn't he?” Peno asked in a very calm voice. “I'm not sure Apfu, the boy couldn't say.” “Roko, I dreamt I saw a great tree of the forest fall to the ground. The whole forest resounded with the crash of the falling tree. My son, I have been dreaming of death visiting our house for many days now. Help me get the house in order.” (110)

Dreams connote both evil and god messages. The dream seen by Peno turned out to be disastrous. She was confident in the supposition she drew out of her interpretation of the dream. Again, as a key to right living, it is the principle of the villagers not to break any taboos. When, Sato and Roko engaged in a heated argument over their dead father, Roko's wife shushed the latter saying, “Don't you know it is taboo to fight over a dead body?” (111)

Even at the death of a person, the villagers do not forget to call on the spirits. The importance of the spirits lingered even after modernism and different changes took over the village of Khonoma. At the death of Levi, the elders perform the ritual by praying to the spirits:

“... A great man has died today. A great spirit had been taken from our midst. We can only pray that the spirits will grant us a substitute, another warrior spirit to equal Levi's.” (112)

Like Kovi, the wife of the deceased Levi, Peno, could comprehend the virtuous motive of the new religion, his son, Sato has converted to. Peno is not in a dilemma

whether to adopt the new religion, because, even though she is aware of the nobility of Christianity, she is adamant in not betraying her dead husband, whom she loved and respected dearly. The following dialogue of Peno, uttered to Sato, depicts her sense of decent attitude towards life and towards the people she love:

“Sato, your ways are different, you are a warrior of a different kind and I begin to see that your way of peace is good, almost as good as the path your father chose. But do not speak what is in your heart today, my son. I can see you in your face that you are waiting for me to say these words so that you can invite me to walk in your way. I can only that it is not possible for me, my son. I cannot betray your father.” (114)

Respecting the dead is one of the keys to right living. Abiding by the values and tradition set by the ancestors prove to help in leading a smooth life with less hurdles and also help in combating those hurdles.

Easterine Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* is a specimen of right way of living. Pertaining to the deep Nature, the novel proves to be a text of ecological concern. The morals, values, tradition and culture in order to lead a decent living, are directed towards the nature: nature physical and nature abstract. The ecology of human mind, body and soul is also taken into consideration while framing the rules and regulations for a right living. Kire, in this novel, has beautifully depicted the dynamics of ecocultural ethos; how the keys to a right living in the stunning village of Khonoma, came across many significant changes at the arrival of the Whites. The culture associated with the nature that helped an authentic existence was taken over by the culture introduced by the British. Education and Christianity proved to be the new keys to right living. The association with nature that sent the people of Khonoma

mysterious messages and guided them with many important decisions of life was replaced by reason and practicality as introduced by the colonisers.

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CHAPTER IV

A DISTURBED DESTINY: MAMANG DAI'S *THE BLACK HILL*

Destiny is a predetermined state conditioned by the will of the Creator. Being irresistible in nature, destiny is the invincible state for a living or non-living being. Destiny is always concerned with the future or the fate of a person that is culminated by the various events taking place. Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*, albeit a historical fiction, deals with the disturbed destiny of three important characters whose lives are conditioned by the ghastly events that take place turning their world upside down. Describing life, Guy Finley concludes his following statements with the true meaning of destiny:

It is a Law: Not of Man's or of Woman's — but of Life. Before you can have a different life; before you can be happier, wiser, more at peace and in quiet command of yourself, you must first be different. Being is everything. What is Being? Everything on Earth and in the heavens has Being because — animated or not — all forms are an expression of one great Intelligent, Creative Energy. Even a common rock has Being of a sort. Similarly, all manner of Beings — from rocks to roses — to you and I — all unique expressions of this One Great Energy — possess a nature. The nature of a rock is determined by the natural forces acting upon it. Both the rock's nature — and its destiny — are pre-determined. Its Being is without choice. One day it will be dust. (1)

In the preface to this moving fact-fiction, *The Black Hill*, Mamang Dai has made a clear attempt to showcase the gloomy happenings that occurred in the 'black' hill,

home of the Abor and the Mishmee tribes. She cautions us with the sad endings of the three protagonists of the story: Father Krick, Kajinsha, and Gimur. The following lines are a proof of the depressing destiny these three people finally met with:

... and one day I came upon a black hill. It is a deserted site, so bleak and sad, and it is here that my eyes fall on an abandoned hut, half burnt, where shafts of light pierce through the roof like golden arrows. There is no one in the house, but in deep silence I sense a presence, as if someone has come in and lit a candle. A closed book is opening. Someone is speaking to me from the past and the words are clear as day: A man, a woman, and a priest. This is their story. (ix-x)

The very phrase 'black hill' depicts the heartbreaking and miserable fate of some of the people of these two tribes that resided in the hill. Black signifies darkness; and this hill accounts the dark fate of the three innocent people.

Father Nicolas Krick, the French priest who came to the hills of Arunachal Pradesh with a mission to reach Tibet and spread the words of Lord Jesus, encountered with a lot of misfortunes during his journey in this unknown land of 'black hill'. He was destined to go through innumerable hardships and to meet a pathetic end. His search for eternal divinity demanded his sacrifice. Therefore, the author says:

More than the challenge of carrying the gospel to unknown places of the world Krick was seeking an experience of the passionate union with the divine. He knew this union would come through the path of love and service. And for that he would have to leave his safe habitat and take flight into the wide sky. What lay beyond he did not know. (16)

Father Krick was unaware of what destiny had in store for him. Leaving everything up to the Almighty, Krick treaded to the mysterious land of the Abor and Mismee tribes; and what came after that was already pre-destined.

Destiny, sometimes, was considered to be the consequence of some happenings or events. The tribesmen usually believed that people meet certain fates due to some unusual occurrences or due to some of their deeds. These assumptions are, indubitably, superstitious in nature. There are many incidents in the novel that speak of such assumptions. One of them is the story of the death of Gimur's father:

Gimur was six years old when her father who had been fit and healthy had suddenly collapsed on the village road and died. 'It is the work of the white devils,' someone had cried. Her father, they said, had fought a war somewhere, the British had forced him to help them, and now they were getting rid of him. 'Wherever the migluns go they bring death and outrage!' Other men had taken up the cry and the village was seething with shock and rage until another man, Lendem's uncle, had said, 'No! It was not true. The migluns had not killed him.' He, Gimur's father, had been ill. 'I do not know what illness had eating him,' the uncle had continued, 'but he told me he had been struck by visions. He had said that a bad time was coming and that this dread followed him in his dreams.' (19)

It was very unscientific on the part of the villagers to have accounted the death of Gimur's father with the arrival of the British. According to them, he met with his sudden death because of the advent of the migluns. His destiny was determined by something very unreasonable. However, Lendem's uncle made a justified point when he said that the reason of the death of Gimur's father was some kind of illness. But, he

also mentioned about the visions Gimur's father had had before his death. Those visions acted as a warning of the coming of something evil. The fact that he was destined to meet with sudden death, was informed by those visions. He knew that something bad was going to happen in his life that would make a lot of difference. Thus, it is possible to make a faint picture of our destiny by some of the superstitious beliefs, as in, the visions.

Destiny plays the same old safe bet. It is possible to meet with something strange and unexpected with the games played by destiny. There are some inexplicable things that connect with the unknown. This very nature of destiny is explained by the thoughts of Gimur:

How strange! Thought Gimur. The past was not so distant from the present after all. It was as if they were all bound by the name of a place she had never seen. (23)

In this historical novel, Mamang Dai has drawn in the references of the idea of good and evil (mostly evil) that shape most of the events in the novel. This idea of good and evil that exists in the mighty nature, dreams, visions, some happenings, actions etc facilitate in determining the kind of destiny one shall meet with. Even though it sounds superstitious, this is the way the ancient tribesmen of the community of Abor and Mishmee, dealt with destiny. There are many incidents in the novel that depict the idea of evil and how the lives of the particular persons take a one-eighty. The following paragraph talks of one of the beliefs, which is refuted by the daring Gimur:

No matter what everyone said about the evil spirits lurking there, she felt drawn to that patch of forest, a secret place hidden most of the day behind a

thin mist that crept down the hill and engulfed the land as if the ravine and the river had dissolved into thin air. (30)

It was believed that visiting some forbidden places shall bring misfortunes to the person. This might bring a disturbed destiny. The life of Gimur took many turns, good and evil and it was believed that her breaking of many taboos resulted in her pathetic and heartrending destiny.

Nature plays a vital role in shaping the course of our destiny. Nature guides us, not only metaphorically, but also physically. The short physical journeys of destiny are supervised by the instructions of nature. In the following case, we see Kajinsha follows the instructions of the natural elements, as in the river, the animals and the birds to reach his destination. Without following them, he had the every possibility of losing himself and Gimur in the wild. Thus, not following the instructions of Nature or failure to read these instructions, shall lead to a disturbed destiny of the two human souls, Kajinsha and Gimur. It is reflected in the following dialogue of Kajinsha: 'If we follow the river we will reach my home,' Kajinsha said to Gimur. 'And all animals and birds have a map. We can follow in their path.' (35)

To lead a perfect life, or a life without much hurdles, society binds some rules and regulations for its members. Keeping in mind the emotional relationship among its members, the society has some customs and traditions that vary from community to community. There are also some taboos and restrictions in the society to maintain peace and harmony. Similarly, there are also some duties and obligations one needs to perform in certain occasions. It is reflected in one of such incidents in the novel:

Every girl is an asset to her family and a man taking her away in marriage must compensate her parents for depriving them of a daughter. This was the customary bride price called a-re gelik. (45)

It was one of the most necessary customs of the Abor and Mishmee tribe and the violation of this custom is considered to bring evil and disturbed consequences. Another such instance of the rules and regulations bound by the tribesmen is regarding the 'inter-tribe' marriages. Mamang Dai has said: "Inter-tribe relationships were a betrayal to the community and girls marrying outsiders were spurned, useless like mustard seeds scattered to the winds."(45-46)

Gimur, one of the protagonists of the novel, is seen to have broken many rules and regulations set by her community. She, being an Abor, elopes with Kajinsha, who is a Mishmee. This very act of Gimur facilitates many misfortunes that awaited her in her near future. She is stripped of every happiness she experienced after living with Kajinsha. At the end of the novel, her existence flickered like the burning end of a cigarette. Her actions brought her down to ashes, and thus, she encountered with a disturbed destiny. Similarly, the words of Moi, echoed the bleak future of Gimur, who was a free bird. These lines of Moi are a perfect reflection of what was denied by Gimur:

Moi's words were a foretaste of what was to come if she remained in the village. 'A woman must obey,' she told Gimur. 'If a woman looks after the house, prepares food and feeds her husband and children she will be loved, and she will be happy.' (48)

The nature or the characteristics of destiny is very unpredictable. Destiny has the power to turn one's world into topsy-turvy. In the novel, the local priest or the shaman gives a perfect description of the trait of the destined life one leads:

But most of all Gimur knew this from the words of the shaman who told them that in every life there is a turning point when, suddenly the records of the past deeds- all the words, thoughts and dreams and everything else that moved a person along a certain path- all of these would one day be placed before them. This is time standing still, the moment of choice. And after that, felt Gimur, there remained only one thing to do- fly. (49)

The fate of women is considered to be pre-destined. There are general assumptions regarding the destiny of women. The lives of women undergo a lot of hardships, yet their sacrifice and hard work are not acknowledged. The already carved destiny of women is acutely represented in the following lines:

Women were anonymous, forgotten in the story of blood lines. But every once in a while there was a sudden bend in the road, a separate heartbeat that made someone into a wild woman; a wild gene embedded in the marrow, like a destiny waiting to be nudged into an all or nothing passion. (63)

Gimur, the wild and free bird, known for breaking taboos, is seen roaming across the river side. It is inauspicious for a woman to go near water. A similar allusion is made in Dai's another famous novel, *Legends of Pensam*. It is said that a woman is forbidden to go near water when evening descends in order to avoid being victims of the water spirits. The following line depicts the audacity of Gimur to break the taboos and also depicts the fear of the consequences that will contribute to her disturbed

destiny: “A woman was supposed to avoid water and she had already broken enough taboos wading across streams and river beds in the middle of the night.” (64)

The Black Hill, by Mamang Dai, is a historical fiction, full of mysterious stories and events that depict not only the people’s deep association with ecology, but also the baffling destiny of the people. Dai has pointed out one story that delineates the puzzling culture linked with the elements of nature and human beings. This culture is seen to shape the destiny of the three people involved in the following story:

Kajinsha pointed at a big rock. 'Once', he said, 'a man and his wife had no children. So they went to a powerful kambring who performed a puja and then a daughter was born to them. But in the tug of war between man and spirits, the girl was claimed by the spirit of a bird and she had to go and live with him. Before going away forever she returned once, accompanied by a tiger, to pay the bride price, and her spirit husband helped to clear the fields in the form of a mighty wind. Her parents were sad but there was nothing they could do about it. Their daughter told them that every day she would spread her red garment on that rock there,' Kajinsha pointed, 'and every morning a cock would crow to let her parents know that she was alive and well. For four years the old couple looked at the rock and saw their daughter's bright cloth spread out on it. Then one day the rock was bare.' Kajinsha stopped. 'So we disappear. Who remembers?' (66)

Interestingly, it is also seen that the spirit bird performs the ritual of the humans, the ritual of bride-price. The relationship of the mysterious nature with the man folk creates awe.

Dreams play a significant role in almost all the communities of the world. They are used to interpret the course of our lives. Dreams also caution us with something evil that's going to happen in future. Regarding dreams, Michael Duff Newton has referred to Karl Jung and has also given his own opinions:

Jung said, "Dreams embody suppressed wishes and fears but may also give expression to inescapable truths which are not illusions or wild fantasies." Sometimes these truths are couched in metaphoric puzzles and represented as archetypal images during our dreams. Dream symbols are culturally generalized and dream glossaries are not immune to this prejudice. Each person should use their own intuition to delineate the meaning of a dream. (24)

Dream catchers are those people who are specialized in interpreting dreams. The following line talks of the shaman, who could read the dreams:

There were enough dreams floating along this stretch of the river, wanting to be caught. The shaman was the catcher of dreams. Only he could read the dreams and tell stories to reveal something to us about our lives and feelings. (67)

Destiny plays eccentric games. Gimur recognises one of such games played by destiny:

Everyone had been in it together, but they had not recognised one another. 'How strange,' Gimur thought, 'that we should be all tied together like this, like floating pieces of thread suddenly caught and entangled by the same wind that has blown around us for a time long before any of us were born.' (68)

When Gimur was in flight with Kajinsha, she was totally unaware of the fact that she would travel back through the same hill, but in a completely different condition. She is

ignorant about what destiny has in store for her. It would be strange for her when she would return to her village through the same paths she had walked and run while eloping with Kajinsha. The following paragraph is evident that destiny brings surprising self-realizations in man. It proves how destiny blindfolds our ignorance and we realize our stupid choices we made in the past. The life of Gimur is a perfect example that establishes this weird nature of destiny. The following paragraph describes it all:

It would be years later, when she was standing sick and lonely on a black hill that the answer would suddenly come to her. Weeping, and clutching handfuls of grass and mud, she would tell herself: 'This is what it is. This is the secret that has hidden itself from me for so long. I was so blind and foolish. I could not see! All this time my heart and its longing have been tied up with these features- these hills, this sunset, this cold dawn and icy wind. The land has bred this. We are one. This is my desire. My life!' But that day was far away yet, to be reached after long journeys of the body and the heart. For now, she was in flight. (70-71)

Guy Finley says:

But human nature, your nature, is not fixed. It can be transformed. That's what makes us special above all of God's countless expressions. And this fact empowers us in a very special way. It means, that as a feature of our Being, each of us is created with the power to choose our own destiny. (2)

In another incident, we come across Kajinsha interpreting a dream he had seen.

One morning Kajinsha awoke long before daybreak and lay still, thinking. A dream had broken his sleep and he was trying to remember what it was. A river came to his

mind. He and Gimur were swimming and her skirt was ballooning out in the water some distance away from them. They were both laughing as it floated away and he was watching her when something splashed in the opposite bank. He saw two people, too far away to be more than indistinct shapes, and they were tugging at a long piece of cane floating in the water. But then he realised it looked like a snake. He thought of calling out to Gimur to swim out of the river, but his voice would not come. He tried to swim towards her, to hide her, but he felt the current pulling him back. She was still laughing and trying to splash water at him. He felt a gush of wind and a bird whistled past him calling him in a fearful staccato song. It was the loud cry of the unseen bird that had awakened him. His heart was beating. The cry of a bird at night was a bad omen. Kajinsha seized a piece of burning wood from the night's fire and stepping out of the house, he hurled it into the open. 'There!' he thought. When he came back in Gimur was watching him through half opened eyes:

'What are you doing?' She asked.

'I had a dream about a river. I was trying to hide you because some people were there.'

'Even in your dreams!' She lifted her arms. 'You are always hiding everything!' It always surprised her how superstitious he was. He believed in signs and omens and sometimes he would not go out because he had had a bad dream. (76-77)

Dreams send us messages and we work accordingly. Destiny is carved by the interpretation of these dreams. Even though it sounds superstitious, the people of ancient time believed in them. It is also seen that the actions of Kajinsha in his dreams are specimens of his character. It is evident from the words of Gimur. Reality is

reflected even in the dreams. Again, Dai has cited another example of how destiny is determined by the interpretation of dreams. These events in the novel surprisingly prove the superstitious assumptions people of the tribes make:

One night Gimur had a dream. She saw a river and its surface was covered with a flock of white birds. They were a heaving white mass that suddenly rose up, all together, with their beaks open, and flew straight past her in a dense stream. Their bellies skimmed the water and she saw their bodies straining forward with a frightening determination. They were shrieking but there was no sound. She woke up and knew without a doubt that someone dear to her had died in her village. (132)

Through this dream, she has made the assumption that someone near and dear to her has died in her village. Surprisingly, in the later part of the novel, we see that when Gimur returns to her village in a devastating state, she gets the news of her mother's death. Thus, the dream she had seen in Kajinsha's village, brought her the message of the disturbed destiny her mother, who was far away from her, had met. The significance of dreams, thus, is unavoidable.

The presence of evil in nature, in some events, etc is considered as signs one should take into consideration. They act as omens. These omens symbolize the condition of one's destiny. There are innumerable examples of how these symbols are interpreted and the depth of impact they lay on people's lives. One of such evil signs is described in the following incident:

One day when she was in the hut fetching salt out of a big bamboo tube, Gimur felt a sharp, shooting pain in her lower abdomen. She doubled over, gasping, and the salt spilled from her hand. Some fell on her foot.

'Hai!' she thought. 'It is a bad sign.' She was more worried about the salt than the pain, and straightening up slowly she carried the salt out to the two mithuns. (82-83)

As mentioned earlier, some events in a person's life may also prove to be evil that might have a direct impact on his/her destiny. When something evil or unfortunate happened in the village, the people consider it as the result of some past evil event or omens. In the novel, we find the statement, "Chief Zumsha had already declared that all outsiders were an ill omen" (148). The misfortunes that befall on the villagers during the arrival of the foreigners were believed to be the consequence of the influx of the outsiders in their territory. But, another of such events is the 'birth of twins', which, in opposition to the tribal culture, is considered lucky in many other communities in India. In this historical fiction, Gimur gave birth to twins, and this created a whirlpool of tensions. Mamang Dai has given an adroit presentation of this situation created in the life of Gimur:

The birth of twins was unlucky. Her friends would have avoided her and no one would have woven cloth with her for the fear of giving birth to twins. Among some tribes twins were killed at birth. And it was believed that the souls of children who died at birth went to a middle world under the earth. Sometimes these children joined hands and danced and when they did this it caused an earthquake. (85)

Thus, we see, the birth of twins is also superstitiously concerned with the occurrence of earthquakes. Nevertheless, one of the two kids that Gimur gave birth to died at the time of birth. The other one, who survived, was named Siengbow and he was feeble. Here, we can draw in the incident of the spilling of salt by Gimur which was

considered evil. That incident could have been a sort of warning of the approaching of something evil in her life. Thus, the evil signs and omen are often connected with destiny.

Again, invoking the spirits of Nature falls under the umbrella of superstitious beliefs. These spirits of nature are considered to shape the destiny of people. The people of the Abor and the Mishmee tribes have a strong faith on these spirits who have miraculous effects on their lives. To avoid a disturbed destiny, these people pray to these spirits for their blessings. When Gimur gave birth to twins, she is seen calling the spirits for help. The following paragraph from the novel proves the statement:

In that instant, Gimur promised herself that she would defeat this curse that had befallen her. She knew joy was not given just like that. A voice had always warned her that joy could be snatched away from anyone at anytime by something unnatural like a strange bird swooping down from the sky. But whatever had happened was done and finished. She had left everything to come here and build a home. Now she had to make it worthwhile. She must live, 'Save me, spirits of the sky and stones of the great mountains!' she prayed. 'Come to my rescue. Help me to endure and nurse my baby. Make him strong.' (86)

Father Krick, like Gimur, had never imagined that destiny would locate him at the same place but in different situations. He never knew that the paths he would cross to reach Tibet would prove to create a disturbed destiny for him. It is figured out in the following line:

It was an opportunity, and Krick took it- never imagining that he would soon pass this way again, but under the most severe and changed conditions. (88)

One of the characteristics of future is uncertainty. When Gimur and Father Krick met they never knew that they would meet again, this was the game destiny played with everyone. The author writes:“It was a meeting they would both recall many times in the days ahead, and they would meet again...”(101)

Destiny brings some unexpected changes in the lives of the people. The decisions we take in present may turn out to have disastrous impact on our future which we are totally ignorant of. In the novel, if we consider the relationship of Kajinsha and Gimur, we can point out the drastic changes in their relationship in the later part of the story. Gimur, who decided to leave everything behind for the love of Kajinsha, seemed to repent for her decision. The conjugal life of Kajinsha and Gimur has taken a weird shape. It changed both of them a lot in character. The mental and physical changes in Gimur were also visible. The following extract from the novel proves this harsh reality of destiny:

So much had happened since the last summer. Gimur was a changed woman. Her face was thinner and there were shadows under her eyes. Her hair, once worn straight and short just above her ear lobes, was now long and dressed in the style of the Kmaan women, except that she did not wear a silver bandeau but fastened it up in a loose coil with a long silver pin. The baby was sleeping inside. They had named him Siengbow after a legendary ancestor, but Kajinsha still shied away from holding him. Siengbow was always covered up in a blanket and once or twice when he had tried to remove the heavy clothing saying the child was too hot Gimur had snapped at him and pulled the clothes back from his hand. She had a silent and resolute manner, as if waiting for something, and it made Kajinsha frown, for he felt there was something hidden in her eyes. They were the same people, yes, standing together like

this, but deep in his heart Kajinsha knew something had happened to their lives. A curtain had fallen between them. (102-103)

It is evident from the above extract that destiny has played a cruel game in the lives of Kajinsha and Gimur. The decisions they have taken and the choices they have made in their past have turned against them. Betrayal to their respective communities proved heavy on their present lives.

Father Krick, who left everything behind in the service of the Almighty, did not know what destiny had in store for him. When he started, he did not have the least ability to fathom the intensity of the hurdles his was going to face in his journey to Tibet. Father Krick was unable to comprehend the tricks of destiny. The following paragraph from the novel describes the pathetic condition of Father Krick:

It was not long before Krick's porters deserted him. He felt his heart sink at the thought of entering the forests that lay between him and the plains of Assam and to pass through the Mishmee territory again. They would want gifts, and if he offered none they would hound him all the way until he could produce something. What could he give them? He had no money except for a few Tibetan coins. The clothes on his back and a blanket were all that he now possessed. (135)

Another extract from the novel describes the pitiable condition of Father Nicolas Krick that has been imposed on him by destiny:

There had been days in Sommeu when he thought he would die of starvation. In the absence of Norbu his Tibetan host Marpa had barely acknowledged his presence. Krick had been given black, dirty rice and when he had asked for

some food, the man had shouted, 'So you don't like what you are given? Then you shall have nothing!'

Remembering that scene Krick could still feel his face burning with humiliation. It had hurt him deeply... (135)

The disturbed destiny of Father Krick left him with humiliation and stripped him off everything he had.

Unlike the other communities of the world, the communities of the tribes follow a different way of life. The other communities of the world have their holy books to guide them. These books are supposed to help them in the time of need. But, people like Kajinsha, the people of the tribes, do not follow any written books. Their destiny is guided by the messages from the nature, from the land they live in. Kajinsha being the mouthpiece of the author, Mamang Dai, talk of the difference between his beliefs and that of the priest's:

Kajinsha said, 'The Tibetan lamas have books and you read your book for knowledge of God. We read the land. The land is our book. Everything here on this hill, the grass and rocks and stones is saying something. And what falls from the sky- rain, thunder and lightning- are also the voices of the spirits telling us something. It is how we have learnt what is good and what is sweet or bitter, by living here and remembering what happens during the day and night, every day, for hundreds of years.' Kajinsha's arms swept the landscape. 'The time we have is what we call our life. It is how I stand, hunt, sleep, breathe. Who knows when life will end, and how death will come- by fire, water, a falling tree, illness, or from the hand of an enemy? But whether one

will live a long life, a successful life, these are not considerations. The desire is to live!' (140)

Kajinsha has beautifully pointed out the difference between his people and the people like Father Krick. He has placed the importance of land in their lives; it acted as their guidance in every moment of their survival. The ethics concerned with the land is highly positioned in the tradition and culture of the villagers. Aldo Leopold makes a comment on the land ethic in his essay "The Land Ethic":

A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is an effort to understand and preserve this capacity. (419)

The intrinsic relationship of man with the land determines the health of the latter. By Kajinsha's words, it is proved that, they not only benefit themselves from the land but also take utmost care of it by their continuous engagement with the various elements of the land. The history of man is shaped by the destiny of all the people living in a particular era or period of time. Kajinsha's following statement summarizes everything that a man undergoes in his/her lifetime:

Was this not the history of man, he thought, always wavering between knowing and not knowing, always on the edge between darkness and light? (145)

The above line depicts the life of man where our destiny makes us dwell between knowledge and ignorance. Again, spirits, as spoken earlier, have a deep impact on the lives of the tribesmen. The tracks of life are affected by the moods of the different spirits that reside in the Nature. It is reflected in the following line: "'Sssh...' she said,

ever cautious. It was unlucky to laugh loudly. Evil spirits might hear and become jealous. “157)

The destiny of Father Krick, as portrayed by the author proves to be the most daunting one. He had undergone many unexpected conditions in his spiritual journey. His noble deed took him to the swiveling states of his survival. The following extract delineates the topsy-turvy circumstances in his hazardous travel:

He was being stripped of everything in that jungle... Many times he stumbled and fell on his knees and prayed. Here am I, he thought, the itinerant preacher with folded hands crying for deliverance. Where is the path? Show me the way! Lift me up with your mercy. But there was no response... His mind played tricks on him. He wanted to laugh and cry at the same time. (160)

Destiny, that provides Gimur with the happiest of her times with Kajinsha, now offers her with the bitterest of times. Destiny, now, snatches the symbol of love between Gimur and Kajinsha. Destiny killed Siengbow, the only son of Gimur and Kajinsha. Gimur, out of despair, questions all the forces of nature. She questions the so-called presence of God, in which the white priest, Father Krick believed. The following paragraph from the novel depicts the heartrending and deplorable condition of the mother, Gimur, destiny had inflicted on her:

Awesa now crouched beside her. He tried to touch Siengbow but she hit out at his hands panting and staring at him with wild eyes until Awesa jumped up and ran away from her, tearing his hair and uttering rasping cries punctuated by long wails. Now they were two figures robbed of every ounce of control, weeping and howling in the wilderness. Little Siengbow was dead in her arms and she was dying with him, begging the sky and the wind and the breaking

day to take her away from this sad earth. What had killed him, she did not know. Why did he die? When she had left the house she had thought, who needs this world, who needs God? I have my son! She thought about the words of the priest. Kajinsha had told her that he had spoken about a God who could make the dead live again. Where was this God? She wanted to believe. She kissed Siengbow's hands, buried her head against his chest and rubbed his feet. 'My darling beloved child!' (164)

Life and death are the two most important truths. And everything that happens in between is destiny. Michael Duff Newton says:

Surviving the loss of a love is one of life's hardest trials. It is well known that the process of grief survival involves going through the initial shock, then coping with denial, anger, depression and finally arriving at some sort of acceptance. Each one of these stages of emotional turmoil varies in length of time and intensity from months up to years. Losing someone with whom we had a deep bond can bring such despair that it feels as though we are in a bottomless pit where escape is impossible because death seems so final. (12)

Mamang Dai, through the words of Gimur, gives us the perfect definition of life:

Gimur had to smile. 'Nothing will happen to me,' she said. 'I will live and I will die and that is what will happen to everyone.' (169)

What has been done can never be undone. The fortunes and misfortunes provided by destiny can never be altered. As death is the ultimate truth of life, Gimur, in her following statement proves the conflicting temperament of destiny:

'... The miri says we came from a land beyond the skies. It is there we will return when we die. So be it. Every prayer, every ritual is a knot. This is the

way we measure time. But all the prayers and rituals will not erase what has happened. This is fixed forever as another knot in my life.' (172)

Until now, everything that the author has written regarding the spirits, and how they affect the destiny of the people, as believed by the Abor tribe, is encapsulated in the following lines:

...- all rituals have their roots in tradition. This was the tradition of the Abor who believed that everything that happened to a man was controlled by good and evil spirits. It was man's obligation to pay heed to and respect the unknown and unseen. (186)

Mamang Dai has given a bright example of the heights of superstitious beliefs people of the tribe hold on to. When a part of the village of the Abor tribe caught fire, instead of extinguishing the fire with water, they started shouting and yelling at the 'fire demons' who was supposed to ignite the fire. Only after Father Krick strongly ordered them to use water, the people of Mebo came to relief. This scene is adroitly presented by the author in the following lines:

It was a pandemonium. The fire was indeed a demon with grotesque arms and legs twisting higher and higher in the wind and shooting bright sparks into tears as if determined to burn the village to the ground. It was a battle with a mighty enemy. Everyone was involved and everyone cursed with fire with screams and threats as they ran back and forth carrying water until at last a shout of triumph went up as the flames spluttered and died down into a black mound of charcoal. The fire demon had been slain but something else had been ignited. There was fear in the eyes of women as they went back to their houses and a silence among the men stood there panting after their exertions.

In the middle of the afternoon Lendem came to him. 'Padari,' he said, 'you are my friend. I have enjoyed your stay with us. You are a good man, but now...'

'Now, yes?'

'The fire... It is not a good sign. The kebang has decided that you must leave.'

(188)

As mentioned earlier, some misfortunes in the present is considered to be the result of some past events which are taken to be evil signs. Similarly, the catching up of fire in the village was thought to be ignited by the arrival of the white men. Therefore, at the end of the conversation, we see, Father Krick is asked by Lendem to leave the village. We also witness the fear in the eyes of the people of Mebo after the fire had been put out. Those fear indicated the fear at the presence of the white man in their village.

No matter how much Lendem had loved Gimur, destiny had already decided on the union of Gimur and Kajinsha. Lendem had the noble ability to treasure his feelings for Gimur and thus he also had to compromise with the situation destiny had laid on him. And Gimur was destined to make full use of the friendship Lendem provided her. It is clearly evident in the following lines:

She knew Lendem was sad to see her go away but he hid his feelings behind a cheerful face. Sometimes I have played with you, she wanted to tell him. I wanted to make you jealous and I wanted you to think of me as unpredictable and wild so that you would be forever bound to me if I kept you in suspense. But here is the truth. I have needed you but I do not love you. I need your friendship. In a way, yes, I need you to let me use you. Is this fair? (198)

Nothing is fair or unfair in the game played by destiny. No one can change what destiny has in store for us. The number of trials to prevent something evil will prove

to be futile if destiny has already decided for us. When Kajinsha, who was a good human being tried to do something for the survival of the noble priest, Father Krick, he failed, because a disturbed destiny had been awaiting him from the very beginning.

This is very apparent in the following extract:

thought he would cross the river to meet the priest and tell him to leave the valley. He had done it once before and no matter if the priest felt betrayed, he would do it again. He had thoughts of a peaceful life, of work and labour and love. No more bloodshed, he wanted to shout, but he knew from the example of his father that words created unrest and provoked wars. (230)

The only way to survive the wrath of destiny is to trust one's instincts. Since, destiny holds everything, we are uncertain about the future. Unpredictability is the only word to describe the blow of destiny. Therefore, in the novel, we see Gimur remembering the words of her dead aunt and of her dead mother. Her thoughts are reflected in the following lines of the novel:

All the words of her dead aunt Moi, and the premonitions and cryptic warnings of Nago returned to her in a rush of remembrance. What had her mother told her? 'Trust your instincts. It is the way to survive.' Yes. Gimur squeezed her eyes tighter. 'Hold fast. Believe that anything can happen.' (238)

Disturbed destiny cuts one like a knife. It has the capacity to pierce through one's life and to destroy everything that comes in its way. Father Krick was killed in spite of his motto to do something good for the society by spreading the words of Christ. But destiny has already penned down his misfortune. The feeling of despair and utter helplessness experienced by Kajinsha who failed to save the life of Krick from the murderers, screams in pain and despises Krick for his decision to stay in the black hill

and his choice to serve his God. Mamang Dai has beautifully portrayed the scene in the following words:

But now, more than all this Kajinsha felt his anger rising up against the priest. 'Why did you come back?' He wanted to shout. 'Now look what has happened, just because of your stupid God and your Tibet! Tibet! Now you are dead! Where is your God now? Ah...! Priest, you should have waited for me! What does it matter what a man believes, if it is the same or different from your beliefs, as long as he has a life that he knows and loves?' (249)

Mamang Dai has cited another case that upholds the significance of dreams in the life of a person. In the following incident, through dreams, she highlights the message of evil omen carried in those dreams. This incident talks about Kajinsha, who despite being a good person, meets his sad destiny, of which he had been warned in his dreams:

He had seen his father in a dream. The old man was saying something but he could not hear his words because of the loud chirping of birds. He had woken up wondering if the birds were real or a part of his dream. The sound of birds could be a bad omen. Sometimes he thought he heard the hills echoing: revenge, revenge! Two men had been killed and he felt the need to perform rituals to cleanse his household of all that had happened. Their hands had touched blood and the flesh of the dead. If his father were alive he would have called the kambring and. invoked gods to protect them from bad spirits and the revenge of the priests who had been killed. Benevolent spirits, loving mother, sky father, hear the words of the living: We offer sacrifice! Do not let death enter this house! (258)

Here, Kajinsha remembers his father, who would have called the village priest to invoke the spirits of the nature in order to bless his family on the account of the murder of the two innocent priests. Again, at the time of distress and when tension lurked in the life of Kajinsha and Gimur, he remembers the words of his dead father:

One morning, when the cold made them wince, Kajinsha said, 'I remember my father's words. "This is how it is," he said, "one day the wind blows snow from the mountains then the next day it is warm and dry. One day there is food enough to break the smoking rack and another night the rack is empty. Our lives are like this. We don't know how long anything will last. Even the sky changes colour. But there are more things to be afraid of than dying.'" (262)

This is the impeccable description of the uncertainty and instability, a disturbed destiny provides the people. This is the way of life. Kajinsha, Gimur and Father Krick went through many hurdles and sufferings in their journey. They are immortalized by their disturbed destinies they encountered. Robin Sharma, the author of the bestselling book, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, has made an apt comment on the people who go through intense pain and suffering:

Those who have endured great suffering are generally the ones who evolve into great beings... Those who have endured adversity become humbled by life, and as a result, are more open, compassionate and real. (3)

Mamang Dai, being an ecologically concerned writer, has not only given a historical account of the lost information about the vital incidents that occurred in the 'black hill', but also depicted the culture and tradition associated with the villagers at the time of the arrival of the British. By preserving the lost history of the small villages of the Abor and the Mishmee tribes in the form of *The Black Hill*, Dai has epitomized

the eternity of the three characters: Kajinsha, Gimur and Father Nicolas Krick. The disturbances in the lives of these three people, accompanied by spiritual growth within their selves, led to a destiny that bound them together with an unbreakable thread. *The Black Hill*, as the name suggests, reported all the black events in the lives of these three souls and thus justified its title, proving that the disturbed destinies collaborated in writing a terrific history of the Abor and the Mishmee tribes.

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CHAPTER V

MULTIPLE OBSESSIONS IN ANJUM HASAN'S *LUNATIC IN MY HEAD*

Obsession is something that is associated with both mental and physical state of a being. The human body, which is the home for all sorts of attributes a person has, has a culture of its own. This ecoculture may have some changes with the period of time. But, while considering a type of obsession that a man has, this ecoculture might not change. To justify how obsession falls under the culture associated with nature, remarks of Frederick Turner are relevant. He says:

The Renaissance poet Sir Philip Sidney, author of the *Arcadia*, defines art as the imitation of nature. He does not mean that the artist imitates what nature merely is, as a photographer copies the visual externals of a scene, but rather imitates what nature does, that is, generate a living and a self-developing order. Human art, he maintains, can better the current productions of nature, but precisely because human art is a natural process. Shakespeare says the same in *The Winter's Tale*. The shepherdess Perdita has just declared that she won't have carnations or "streak'd gillyvors" in her garden because, like some American environmentalists, she disapproves of the fact that they have been bred and hybridized by genetic technology.... (340)

It is shown that the nature of a man is directly related to ecology. The dynamics that occurs in the nature of a man falls under ecology. It is also said by Tessy K. George:

It is argued that there has to be a thorough revision not only in the relationship of man to nature but also of man to man. What is required is an uncompromising struggle against domination-- domination in man's

relationship with nature as well as in man's relationship with his fellow beings. There exist in the present society unwarranted hierarchies and hegemonies which have been legitimised, often, in the name of nature. Social ecology focuses on a progressive agenda for the demolition of the stratified structure and unjustifiable discriminations existing in society. The social ecologists point out that our relationship within the human society as well as our relationship with the non-human nature has been normatively organized by a complex historical process leading to the sedimentation of domination at various levels. (31)

Hence, the relationship of man to man reflects in the relationship of man with nature. Thus, ecoculture does not depend only on nature but also the whole being of a man. It is further reflected in the following lines of Tessy K. George:

The project for the mastery of external nature through technology requires persistent mastery and denial of internal nature. It is the policy of apprehension and conversion of non-human nature that has led to the impoverishment and pollution of the environment to such a dangerous extent. The suppression of inner nature is a logical correlate of the domination of external nature. The consequences of the denial of inner nature are more disastrous than those of the subjugation of external nature. The repression of humanity's joyful and spontaneous instincts affects the quality of life and the welfare of the community as a whole. Bertrand Russell's observation about the English society of his time is in consonance with the argument of the Frankfurt school: "I do not think any student of economic history can doubt that the average of happiness in England in the early nineteenth century was lower than it had been a hundred years earlier, and this was due almost

entirely to scientific technique” (30-31). Half-a-century more of science and technology does not seem to have made the face of human society any brighter. (36)

Now, the different types of obsession a man has, have a great deal of impact on the ecoculture associated with man. To define obsession, we can quote Scott Kiloby:

Think of obsession as a very intense craving energy that seems to overtake the body and mind in an unconscious way. You can even think of cravings and obsessions as existing on a continuum. Cravings can appear in increasing intensity from mild to moderate until they cross a certain threshold of intensity. At that point, they're obsessions. Obsessions often lead to compulsive, addictive “acting out” behaviour and even relapse while in recovery. (2)

Obsession leads to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) which is defined by Preetika Chandna as:

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder, characterized by repetitive unwanted obsessions and compulsions, with a prevalence of 0.5-1% to 4% in childhood and adolescence. The exact pathogenesis of OCD remains uncertain but multiple components such as hereditary/genetic, cognitive, biological, environmental and behavioural factors have been implicated. (1)

Anjum Hasan has beautifully depicted the sense of obsession people usually have. Through her characters, she has made an adroit presentation of how a kind of obsession makes a difference in everything that surrounds him or her. Consistent

unfaithfulness can be considered to be a kind of obsession, where a person, knowing that his or her infidelity can devastate another person's life, does not hesitate to be persistent with the habit. The following lines are the novel's first reference to obsession:

Nibedita had a persistently unfaithful husband. The tortuous paths her troubles had taken over the last year, plots and sub-plots that Firdaus could never keep track of, made the subject a staple topic of staff room discussions. (11)

The last line also suggests that the sorrowful state of Nibedita has become an interesting topic of discussion among the staff members, including the victim. It seems, talking about the problems and the staff members feigning to empathize with Nivedita have become a kind of obsession for everyone. Continuation of a monotonous life without any changes may also be considered to be a kind of obsession, where the person despite repeating the same things everyday without even realizing it. An interesting example is given by Hasan depicting the obsession with monotony is about a colleague of Firdaus, Flossie Sharma. In the words of Hasan:

Firdaus thought of Flossie Sharma as an almost-nun. She was the oldest teacher in the college, a forthright spinster who loved to gossip and tacitly dared the other teachers to reconcile this with what everyone agreed was her impressive command over English literature. What Flossie shared most with the nuns was respect for tradition. Each morning of every working day of her life for the last thirty years, she had set out for college from her little cottage in Risa Colony. In her handbag would inevitably be an aluminum tiffin box with two parathas and a little pile of fried vegetables rapidly growing cold. She lived alone. On Sundays she watched television with her maid. (13)

The monotony lingers not only with the daily time table of Miss Sharma, but also with her food habits. The lack of zeal to create innovations or an indolent attitude, pose as barriers in bringing any kind of changes in life. Miss. Sharma did not find any necessity to bring about any alterations in her routine, which is a sure case of obsession. Obsession with soaps and serials telecasted in the television is one of the most common addictions in the world of science and technology. Engrossing oneself with the fictional and virtual world of romance, crime and fantasy, people, especially women are seen making it a fascination. Hassan has made stunning example of such an obsession when she talks of Aman Moondy's mother. In the words of Hasan:

She watched soaps wearing an expression of careful consideration, as if what the characters were saying held some personal significance for her. No one knew why she watched these serials- long-drawn out dramas that ran into hundreds of episodes involving pliant daughters-in-law, wronged wives, scheming men and bitchy women. They were remote from her world and she was never heard to discuss them. Yet they occupied her intensely, and Aman would feel strangely relieved to see her before the television in the little room that even sunny days never brightened. Her absorption in the made-up lives of these over-dressed men and women moderated some of the impatience that Aman inevitably felt towards his mother. (17)

Even though reality was a far thing to be discovered in these daily dramas, Aman's mother did not hesitate to engage her time in watching them. Hasan has also given a subtle description about the interior of the little room which is never lighted by the rays of the sun; a gloomy atmosphere to which the family members were accustomed to. They were leading a life, devoid of any natural elements, thus, culminating to weird obsessions like watching the meaningless, superficial dramas in the television.

It is evident from the fact that they have not made any necessary changes in that gloomy environment and are obsessed with such an environment. Absence of a natural touch in their lives results in boredom that they cannot avoid living in. The rigorous use of scientific inventions has overshadowed the importance of nature in the lives of people of this modern age. Addiction to music can be another obsession. Hassan has dealt explicitly with this form of obsession. There is a term in French for this obsession with music called “melomanie”. Through the characters like Aman, Ribhor, and Ibomcha, Hassan has given a view of the western music. She has depicted how Aman Moondy was obsessed with the English rock band Pink Floyd. The following lines extracted from the novel are the first reference to Aman’s obsession with music and Pink Floyd, who dealt with progressive and psychedelic rock music:

Aman wrote to Pink Floyd now and then, asking them about how Syd Barrett - the mad dysfunctional ex-member of the band - was doing, giving them his views on how their albums compared with one another, and sending them accounts of what he believed were Floyd-like dreams where detailed narratives involving Sherlock Holmes, nuclear reactors and beautiful, unsuspecting girls were set against a pastoral English backdrop. His last letter had described a particularly complex dream encapsulated in the lines: 'She kept climbing into the cloud view that pearled her very anointed shouts of an ancient church-tower. The crowd and the countdown. It's too late because everyone is dressed to the nines for that terrible mistake.' Aman was trying to perfect a style that would capture his surreal dreams, dreams so surreal he was convinced that the enlightened members of Pink Floyd would find their own music reflected in them. (21)

It is evident from the above paragraph that Aman, with his obsession, has written

many letters to the band in the past. The paragraph also depicts how his obsession has resulted in an assumption that the members of the band might find a likeness with his surreal ideas and dreams Aman mentions in his letters. The intensity of his obsession is perfectly reflected in those lines. Again, in the following lines, Hasan has given the description of the same obsession with music. This time, she has included one of Aman's closest friends, Ribor, and music binds them together, despite of all the differences. The obsession with music proves to break all the barriers that the Khasis had set up between them and the non-Khasis, Aman being the non-khasi and Ribor being a Khasi. The following lines depict the attachment of Ribor and Aman with music and how they are lost in it:

Ribor looked at him and grinned. Aman regretted that Ribor didn't really read: his concept of high literature was Jim Morrison's American Prayer. Yet they could talk music and think music together, and moments like these bound them up in a way Aman wished to somehow acknowledge but didn't know how to. He felt the universal electricity surge through him that Waters described, that awareness of a holistic world - a place possible to imagine from the perspectives of satellites and radios and wars and news as *one* place. (34)

The above lines also delineate the acknowledgement of this speciality of friendship that Aman recognizes. He tries to find a way to acknowledge this special bond of musical friendship that they share. In the novel, we will come across many such instances that depict these people's obsession with music.

Another type of obsession discussed by Hasan is the obsession with one self. Through the character of Sharon, the author deals with how people are unaware of the real world and are just engrossed in their own world: families, ties and relationships. The

words used in the following lines from the book depict the self-obsession of Sharon:

Sharon consistently talked about her family; they seemed to form a chorus in her head - their voices and views, their likes and dislikes creeping up on her with dependable regularity. But then she had a classy family, thought Firdaus, who never mentioned hers. (52)

Again, it is also seen in the above lines that Firdaus stands as a complete contrast to Sharon. Firdaus exempts herself from discussing anything about her family. Her obsessive aversion from her family and family matters contributes to the mental breakdown she has in due course of the novel. In the following line, Hasan depicts the one more contrasting characteristic between Sharon and Firdaus. When Sharon expresses her astonishment at Firdaus' virginity, and opines that sexual intercourse is very much necessary for a healthy relationship, Firdaus disagrees saying that, "Sharon, not all of us have the same obsessions. There could be other perfectly good reasons why people come together." (56)

Hasan has again portrayed Aman's obsession with music. He engages himself in contemplating regarding the different genres music, their different bands and about the ideal time for listening them. The following paragraph describes Aman's world that is preoccupied with music and his indifference to the other activities that occur in his surroundings:

Aman sat at his desk, listening to Rush, and conducting an imaginary debate with critics of the band. At night the world shrunk to his room and the smells of his mother's cooking and distant rustle of his father's Shillong Times. Rush isn't for morons, he thought. It isn't for those who worship commercial crap and trivia. It isn't for Banshan, the preacher. It's the thinking man's band.

Talking Heads is good when it's rainy and blurred and the band's exuberance, its sharp ironies take the vagueness out of things. Dire Straits is for days of soft blue skies and knife-edged shadows, days of light-heartedness and hope and driving somewhere on a straight black road. Frank Zappa is the liberation of a screeching masculine howl. And Pink Floyd being Pink Floyd does not need a particular time of day or mood to appreciate. (60)

Aman was obsessed with the distance created between him and his parents. The generation gap and the dissimilarities in taste of music and the parents' lack of true concern for their only child, their failure to acknowledge his talents distanced them from Aman. This is perfectly reflected in the following lines extracted from the novel:

Aman heard them out – his father indulgent and tending to lapse into generalities, his mother anxious and repetitive. His sense of distance from them had a history. At seven, he realised that they didn't really care about what lay inside the books they bought him, at ten he stopped showing them his poems, at thirteen he started writing a diary in which till date he had never made any reference to them. Once it had been established that his father felt nothing for rock music and that he shared little of his father's hardy, gird-your-loins sort of philosophy, Aman did not see the point of discussions like these. (65)

The differences between the son and the parents created a strong sense of obsession with this indifference. They were all accustomed with the things that separated them. Hasan, being born and brought up in the Scotland of the East, renders the lucid and exquisite beauty of Shillong and the way the residents are emotionally attached to it. The aestheticism associated with the obsession with the beauty of Shillong has let

people behave in a particular way. In the following paragraph, Hasan has painted the scenic beauty of this paradise city of Shillong and how it has affected and shaped the emotions of Aman:

The street gave way to a long flight of stone steps, which Aman climbed down slowly, smoking his cigarette, breathing in with it the town's clear night air, cold and spiked with the smell of wet pine trees. This town, he thought, longing. Concordella lived somewhere in this town. He loved Shillong the way he loved her – shyly, hesitantly, not sure if he was not entitled to. At home in his room, he was not able to conjure her up, but when he roamed the streets he was aware of her presence and the idea of seeing her again would inevitably form the motif of these walks. (65)

The above lines suggest that the ambience created from the beauty of the place generates in him the eagerness to think about Concordella, the girl with whom Aman is secretly in love with. It is seen that he is obsessed with this secret love for her. Hasan returns to her favourite topic of the obsession with music. Now, she describes how Ribor and Imbomcha, despite all the differences were united by music. It also speaks in a nutshell, how music has created a special bond among these group of people. Music is the only topic that preoccupied their discussions. Music proved to be an obsession for these people. It is highlighted in the following lines extracted from the novel:

The music was what united Ribor with baby-faced Ibomcha, waking up in his bare house, seeing yesterday's jeans hanging from a peg on the wall, yesterday's empty bottles of beer by the window. The music was what united them both with Bodha, poet and musician, sitting on his bed, trying out a

couple of chords on his guitar, ignoring his mother's calls for breakfast. The music was what brought Aman into the circle, disillusioned and sad, putting a tape of *Atom Heart Mother* into his player. (69)

Another interesting type of obsession that Hasan talks of is the habit of telling lies. Through the character of Sophie, the ten year old protagonist of the novel, Hasan has explicitly exploited this trait of lying. The following paragraph justifies Sophie's obsession with effortless lying:

Sophie was more than an effortless liar: she felt that it was incumbent on her to lie, that the truth was often so shabby and unconvincing that she needed to embellish it merely in order to have something interesting to say. (75)

In the above extracted lines, it is seen how Sophie, the effortless liar, justifies her act of lying. Her obsession with lying does not allow her to consider this act as immoral. Rather, she enjoys this very vicious act of lying. Whole throughout the novel, it is seen that Sophie is engaged in continuous lying. Her effortless lying created no suspicion in any of the listeners in the novel. She is in a world of fantasy where she creates her own story and world of her being an orphan and an adopted child. She never hesitated to deliver this fantasized story to the people as her real story of life. She had literally crossed the heights of lying. One of other common obsessions that Hasan talks of is the habit of smoking. Through the character of David Rockwell, the author has interestingly portrayed this habit of smoking, a kind of obsession that is seriously injurious to health. The following dialogue between Bodha, friend of Aman and David Rockwell talks of this obsession:

“Smoking's not good. I use to smoke a lot myself,” said the man.

“Your name?” asked Bodha, raising one eyebrow.

“David Rockwell. Actually, I get nerbous when I see someone smoking. Brings back old memories, te.” (110)

The activity of smoking, as depicted in the above conversation, is seen to have laid an emotional impact on the man as it makes him nostalgic. His obsession with smoking is associated with some memories that make him nervous. David’s sense of obsession with smoking is perfectly described in the following lines where Sander L. Gilman has shared the views of Davis:

Davis refuses to see any somatic roots of obsession: it is for him a cultural phenomenon. In his conclusion he even discounts the function of mental pain in distinguishing between ‘good’ obsessions (the Protestant work ethic) and ‘bad’ obsessions (such as obsessive thoughts or compulsive acts). Psychic pain for him is no proof of the ‘reality’ of diagnostic categories such as OCD:

Pain and suffering, however, cannot be the proof of anything other than pain and suffering. The intensity of one’s pain doesn’t change paradigms or treatments, just as a child’s crying at night shouldn’t alter the list of needs the child has even if the child doesn’t cry. (p. 241)

Here the project does run into a conceptual as well as an ethical dead end. (433-434)

Again, Hasan discusses some of the weird obsessions that are very much prominent in the present generation. One of the basic traits of this generation is to try their best to earn money, even if they lack job satisfaction. And in the process of trying for things that they do not love, they end up miserably; there is a great emotional breakdown. What Hasan tries to depict here is the obsession of the youth with this ridiculous

process of trying for something that they are not meant to be. And even when it is seen that they achieve the same, they are not able to lead a life of peace and happiness. Aman Moondy is the stunning example of this obsession. It is reflected in the following lines, where his friends express their shock at his trying hard for something he is not meant to be, or in which he is least interested:

“Hell, man – this chap’s studying for the IAS. It’s hard to believe, no, looking at him? He’s taking the IAS exam for the second time. Instead he should write on music. He’s an expert on music, that chap. Instead of giving us all that dope about Pink Floyd, he should write it down and send it to the *New Musical Express*.” (112)

The deep concern of the friends for Aman is also reflected in the above lines. They are seen making right judgments on him, whereas Aman seems to fail to acknowledge his true interest through which he can make a living and be happy.

Addiction to monotonous life as mentioned earlier is depicted again through the character of Mrs. Moondy. Obsessed with her monotonous lifestyle she is burdened with the thoughts of her son for his career. Her obsession with boredom does not allow her to think something out of the box. She fails to grasp the power of music and how it has a vehement impact on her son. It limits her thoughts and her ideas remain conventional, when she feels that music is meant to listen to only during leisure. Hasan tries to depict the futile concern for their children and their addiction to impose a life on them:

Mrs. Moondy lay half asleep in the dimly lit bedroom, hearing the faint sounds of her son’s cassette player. She couldn’t understand why he needed music while he studied. Listening to music suggested something light-hearted and

romantic to her, something you did occasionally, when you were in a pleasant mood and wanted to prolong that mood. But music was Aman's silence – it was the background against which everything else happened. No wonder he had failed the first attempt. Drowsiness overtook her. The anxiety grew diffuse and became a generalised sense of discomfort as she drifted in and out of sleep. More and more, Mrs. Moondy woke up from her naps feeling confused. In that borderline between sleep and waking, her mind would of its own accord replay random scenes from her life, scenes that, shorn of context, appeared absurd and melancholy. (161)

The melancholic life that Mrs. Moondy was leading generated all sorts of futile thoughts; this is one of the results of the obsession with boredom and conventionality. The following extracted lines also speak of her same obsession that result in her conventional thoughts and worries for her son, Aman:

She opened her eyes and returned to her favourite subject – her son's future. She sensed strongly that he was going to fail again...

She felt as if they were marooned in a cold and unfeeling place, all three of them. Her husband was, as always, absorbed in his work. He kept to his routine with manic regularity, steadfastly refusing to be waylaid by questions about whether his son was a failure or his wife slowly dying of fatigue. He was deaf to the world... (163)

These above lines also talk of Mr. Moondy's monotonous absentmindedness that leads to the lack of concern for his son and his wife. This absentmindedness is the result of his obsession with his work.

Aman's obsession with music and particularly with Pink Floyd leads to his wild

assumptions about the band. He strongly feels that his letters to the band in which he has jotted down his feelings and emotions have inspired the band in composing the lyrics of their songs. He feels that his transcendental and psychedelic thoughts and views are reflected in their recent songs. The following dialogue among Aman, Ibomcha and Ribor depicts the very obsession of Aman for Pink Floyd and music:

“Listen to this: ‘The submarines search for meaning beneath, / And high above history is written with rockets in the bright atomic sky, / While soldiers keep fighting their doomed wars, / Their doomed, their cynical wars.’ I sent this to him. I wrote this in my letter to Waters two years ago and something he sang just now made me realise that this runs through this entire album.”

Ibomcha stood up and shouted, “Let’s call *The Shillong Times!*”

That’s amazing, man. Rewind the tape. I want to hear the exact lines,” said Ribor.

“No, it’s not that he’s used my words... that’s not what I meant.”

“Then?” asked Ribor puzzled.

Ibomcha sat down again.

“It’s the *spirit* of the album that reflects those words. That’s what it is.”

“You mean the thought of the album after reading your letter?”

“Maybe. There is a clear correspondence between the album and these lines... the same kind of imagination is at work in both.”

...

“I knew it,” said Aman, looking at the lines in his notebook again, tugging at

his hair, and walking in rapid circles around the room. “I always knew there was some kind of incredible spiritual connection between us.” He took up his letter and tore it, dramatically, into two, then four, then eight pieces and let them swirl to the floor.

“*This* is why he hasn’t written to me, you see. There is something far more subtle going on. I need to send him a worthy response to this. What was I *thinking*? What can he possibly write me in a letter except polite nothings. Whereas this... this is big-time, man. This is a unique gift, a gesture of communion, a poet to poet thing. And to think I could have almost missed it.”

(170)

Aman also feels that he has a spiritual connection with the band. The whole conversation among these three friends delineates the obsession of Aman with Pink Floyd and how it makes him a poet. The ultimate sense of satisfaction and happiness is reflected in the tone of Aman when he talks of his deep association with the band.

Sophie’s obsession with lying makes her to create her own world of utter fantasy where she assumes herself to be an orphan and then to an adopted child of her parents. She is indulged in making her own stories filled with lies. She is so much engrossed in her false stories that she believes her parents to be the foster parents. The following lines extracted from the novel depict her cracked state of mind caused by her obsession:

It never mattered to Sophie what her real parents were actually like or how they might be an improvement on her current ones. The novelty of it was enough, the novelty of starting a new life with people who did not know Sophie, yet whose unfamiliar and therefore thrilling existence she could

comfortably slide into because she was, after all, their child. (172)

The lines also depict that Sophie finds happiness and excitement in her world of fancy. She imagines herself to meet her 'real' parents and live with them as their daughter starting a new life. Her obsession with effortless lying gave her way to make serious assumptions about her own life and her real parents. In the novel, it is seen that she does not even hesitate to narrate this false story of her life as an adopted child to her friends. At a point of time in the novel, she thought of sharing this 'sad' story of her life with her teacher. Sophie's obsession with lying is differentiated from the obsessions the elders have. The mental state of a child is quite different from that of an adult. Thus, Preetika Chandna says:

The diagnosis of OCD in young people is broadly similar to adults (as per Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) IV TR and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) diagnostic criteria). However, children are less likely to have insight into the illogicality of their obsessions and compulsions and may also conceal the compulsions from parents/adults, thus avoiding detection. (2)

Anjum Hasan, through the character of Firdaus Ansari, has given a beautifully sad picture of the breakdown from an extreme obsession. Firdaus, who works as an English teacher in a women's college, has lost her parents in an accident, stays with her old grandfather, has been pursuing her M.Phil degree under a notorious professor, is of age to get married, is in love with a Manipuri guy, Ibomcha, much younger to her and who is seriously fed up of the life she is leading, gives in to her frustration. Her colleagues back in the college, with whom she is darn irritated, her stagnant position in writing her thesis, the creepy behaviour of her supervisor and her

complicated relationship with Ibomcha boil her head with aggravation. This resulted in the strong outburst she had in the later part of the novel. The following extracted lines are a reflection of her vehement explosion of all the dissatisfaction she had in her life until then:

She tore two pages of failed openings out of her notebook and put them aside trying to make a fresh start on a clean page.

But the blank sheet was more daunting than the sight of row upon row of crossed-out . Mother Rudolphe had returned to the cold anonymity of her portrait on the staff room wall and there was nothing that Firdaus could say about her. She flung her pen across the room. It struck the mirror of her dresser and fell clattering among her lipsticks and creams. Then silence, and the muted sound of the drizzle on the roof. Firdaus screamed, a thin, protracted howl, then felt the sobs rising in her throat at terrible sound of her own scream. She began crying as if she were in a physical pain, cleaving to each sob, realising it gradually, painfully, her face contorted with the effort. Her fingers twisted the closed notebook and she flung it the way she had flung the pen. She got off the bed, weeping with rage, and began picking up the objects from her dresser and smashing them to the floor. A bottle of perfume broke, plastic jars rolled under the bed. She stamped on fallen lipsticks with her bare foot, trying to crack them. Then she pulled a pair of scissors from the drawer of her dresser, went to her wardrobe and blindly pulled out all that she could grab there, hanging or folded on shelves. Still sobbing, she began cutting up her clothes, slashing through saris, ripping blouses apart after she had cut halfway through them, working her scissors on the thick sleeve of a denim jacket, cutting up her panties halfway down the middle. She flung each ripped

piece of clothing to the floor, among the spreading puddle of perfume, broken glass bangles and leaking jars of hair oil and moisturiser. (224-225)

This behaviour of Firdaus, as depicted in the above lines, is clearly the outcome of her lingering frustration on her circumstances and on the people surrounding her. Her obsession with this terrific boredom and with the dissatisfying people around her had strangled her voice that she was supposed to raise against the injustice and continuous bothering done towards her. It seems that the thread of her toleration breaks and she is out of control. The very scene describes by Hasan tells a lot about the ecology of human mind, body and spirit. In the words of Scott Kiloby:

Obsession isn't just thought-based. Our bodies are very active in moments of obsession. Heat, tension, vibration, anxiety, fear, and other energies rise up in the body whenever we're obsessing about our addictive substance or activity. Our throats may close. Our chests may tighten. Our stomachs may clinch. Without knowing what's actually happening within our bodies, we tend to oversimplify obsession, believing it's just a "thought problem."

By treating it only as a thought problem, we erroneously believe we can appeal to logic and reasoning (more thoughts) to free ourselves from obsession. This is a vicious, nonproductive cycle where the thought-based personal will is only trying to overcome itself. This cycle ignores what's really happening within the body. (3)

It is, thus, proved that the obsession of Firdaus laid a direct impact on her physical body. This massive explosion of Firdaus cools her down and at the end of the novel we see her making definite decisions. She continues her relationship with Ibomcha and is happy about it. She changes her supervisor and starts afresh with her research.

Hasan, in the novel *Lunatic in my Head*, discusses the last and the most prominent kind of obsession some people or some communities have; this is the obsession with an intense sense of hatred for people belonging to different communities. Through the character of Max, Ribor's elder brother, Hasan depicts this condemnable obsession and also highlights the difference between a person like Max and others, who are very cosmopolitan in nature, like Ribor. This obsession with the hatred results not only in verbal abuses but also physical abuses. In the novel we come across Max crossing the limits of this dangerous obsession when he kills an outsider for not giving him money. The following extract from the novel gives a lucid picture of the pitiable condition of the outsiders and how they are treated by the local people of Shillong:

“You fucking dkhar,” he said and punched. His lips trembled. “Go home dkhar,” he said and punched again. His anger seemed to have made him inarticulate. “Go!” he said and crust his fist into the very same spot in Bodha's ribs again, ribs that Bodha was sure had cracked the impact, so acutely did they hurt. But Bodha made no attempt to fight back, trying instead to say something in protest to the boy who silenced his every attempt to speak with another punch. “I have a gun,” was the boy's fourth statement, and it was only then that Bodha's friends (whose attention had wandered away from the boys once they noticed that Bodha seemed to be having a friendly conversation with them) gathered around the duo, Ribor pulling the youth away, while Aman pleaded with Bodha to tell him what it was he had said that had caused the fight...

“This is what happens,” he shouted back at Bodha. “This is what happens when you mess with me. You have guts? Come! You have guts?” he said beckoning to Bodha with one finger.

... Ribor said to Bodha. “That’s Max, my brother, and he shot a man in Laitumkhrah last week.” (241)

This horrible situation is faced almost by every non-Khasi staying in Shillong. Whole throughout the novel, in many circumstances, we come across Max creating a fuss with the non-Khasis. We first see him misbehaving with the Hindi speaking hawker and eating without even paying a single pie. This threatening behaviour of Max paralyses the hawker and he abstains himself from fighting against the unfair approach. In the above extracted paragraph, it is also evident that his obsession with this hatred for the non-Khasis ignited in him the fire to shot a man to death. In a similar manner, he also attacks Bodha because of the ideological clash, and threatens him saying that he has a gun. Hasan has condemned this nature of Max, a mouthpiece of many other Khasis in Shillong, and thus depicts the vulnerability involved in these hatred actions and speeches.

Anjum Hasan, in her novel, *Lunatic in my Head*, gives an adroit presentation of multiple obsessions experienced by people and how they affect them and also the people associated with them. We can see a presence of aestheticism in her description of the beauty of Shillong and in the types of obsession she has dealt with. The inner self of a person is an integral part of the ecosystem as it affects its surroundings and the green Nature to a larger extent. Studying the behaviour of humans, that forms this ecosystem falls under ecology. Hasan has perfectly dealt with this aspect of ecosystem and proved to be an eco-critic. *Lunatic in my Head* not only deals with the inner selves of the people but also with the outer crust of them.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Everything a man does is associated with the Nature, Nature that not only consists of all the elements of Mother Earth but also of the conscience and the energy of a man. We are all made up of energy and this energy is moulded by the thoughts we generate. The being of a man is the storehouse of all these thoughts. Therefore, all the feelings and emotions, and all the actions of a man are generated from this very being. And the study of this being also falls under ecology. Anger, love, hatred, calm, valour, and other human attributes constitute an ecology. The dynamics of ecocultural ethos are not only concerned with the changes in the culture a man shares with the Mother Nature, but also with the changes that take place within a man, both emotionally and physically. The attributes of man and the various changes that take place in those attributes have an impact on the surrounding. The attempt in each chapter was to find the dynamics of this ecocultural ethos present in the Nature and the man.

The first chapter of this dissertation introduces the topic of research and the selected authors, their works and the select fictional narratives dealt with. This chapter also defines the important words of the title: Dynamics, ecoculture and ethos. It also establishes the relation between the topic and select works of fiction.

In the second chapter, the two prominent authors of Assam namely, Indira Goswami and Mitra Phukan, have been discussed. Indira Goswami's *The Man from Chinnamasta* and her short story collection *The Shadow of Kamakhya* and Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* have been looked into from an ecological point of view. Goswami, being an eco-humanist and a feminist, in *The Man from Chinnamasta*, has depicted the sufferings and subjugation of women and also clearly

depicted the protest against the brutal animal sacrifice in the name of religion. The chapter has explicitly dealt with the womanist and feminist characters present in the novel and how there has been changes in their attributes. It has been tried to prove how these characters affect the ecological system in general. Then, Goswami's short story collection *The Shadow of Kamakhya*, is a collection of heartrending stories that have also been interpreted from womanist and feminist perspectives. The different female characters in the stories are either womanist or feminist, most of them being the former. We see that the disturbances in the lives of the women are also reflected in the lives of the innocent animals killed for sacrifice. These two works of fiction, with a strong ecological implication, depict the changes that occurred in this stereotyped culture of subjugating women and animals for fulfilling their own superstitious beliefs. Again, *The Collector's Wife* by Mitra Phukan, has also been interpreted from the ecological point of view, and how the culture within the female characters changes according the period of time. The mental tension in the lives of these women characters are also reflected in the nature. These three works of fiction have many more aspects to be dealt with. *The Man from Chinnamasta* can be interpreted solely on the basis of the animal sacrifice. The other aspects are such as: culture associated with the worshipping of Maa Kamakhya, the superstitious beliefs and the position and the role of the British in Assam. Again, *The Shadow of Kamakhya* has numerous more aspects. Insurgency, poverty, the annual floods in Assam, prostitution, and some more aspects of life and society are also reflected. *The Collector's Wife* by Mitra Phukan mentions of insurgency, a prominent crisis in Assam. The novel looks at the frail education system in Assam. The number of frequent strikes held by the students, social workers and different militant groups in Assam, demanding something or the

other, lays a deep impact on educational and economic condition of the state. Thus, it can also prove to be a scope for another topic of discussion.

In the third chapter, Easterine Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* has been taken for interpretation. From an ecological perspective, a thorough detailing of the changes that took place in the village of Khonoma, changes in culture, attitude towards life and the nature, adoption of a new religion, introduction to education in the life of the villagers of Khonoma has been done in this chapter. There are some more aspects in the novel that can be dealt with explicitly are: the political turmoil between the villagers of Khonoma and other nearby tribes and also the British troops. The other interesting aspect that can be dealt with is the idea of good and evil reflected in the different traditional activities and superstitious beliefs discussed in the novel. The novel can also be analyzed from historical perspective combining history with folk life and environmental aspects.

The fourth chapter deals with Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*. The main aspect dealt is the destiny of the characters of the novel. From an ecological angle, the discussion in this chapter is based on the different changes that took place in the lives of the three important characters and how it created a difference in everything and every people around them. There are some other aspects in this historical fiction that can be dealt with. *The Black Hill* has a numerous reference to the idea of good and evil, a cultural and traditional belief followed by the village of Abor and Mishmee tribe. A historical account of Father Nicolas Krick and the villagers can also be dealt upon. Another aspect of the novel is its title; one can deal with the appropriation of the title *The Black Hill*. The attitude of the natives towards the foreigners can also be an aspect in the novel that can be discussed. Another aspect that can be dealt with in the novel is the love between the two protagonists, Kajinsha and Gimur. The depiction of this

unsuccessful love affair between these two crazy lovers in the novel can also be a field of research. Their changing attitude towards each other and their heartrending parting at the end of the novel matter much from psychoanalytic perspectives.

Lunatic in my Head, Anjum Hasan's debut novel explores the ecological aspect of the human mind and body, interpreting different types of obsession a man has and how it affects others. The culture inherent within a man, the culture of communicating with oneself, that also shapes the different kinds of obsession. The languidness of life in the sub-urban Shillong, a hub of cosmopolitanism, is reflected throughout the novel. The characters in the novel go through various ecological changes that also result in behavioural changes. The most important aspect in the novel is the continuous strivings of the three characters, along with few others to belong to the larger umbrella. There is a broader scope that also includes the attitude of the Khasis towards the non-Khasis or *dhkars* in Shillong. The struggle of the non-Khasis to create a sense of belongingness among the Khasis is perfectly reflected in the novel. This is the irony of a cosmopolitan city. Again, Shillong being the hub of Western rock music, Hasan, in this work of fiction, has made explicit reference to the classic rock bands, such as, Pink Floyd, Jefferson Airplane, Dire Straits, etc. The chapters in this research have deliberately concentrated on the topic "Dynamics of Ecocultural Ethos: A Study of Select Fictional Narratives of Five Women Fictionists from Northeast India". The dynamism reflected in the ecocultural characteristics associated with Man and Nature has been presented in each chapter.

Once upon a time women's education was not encouraged anywhere and women were treated as eternal subalterns. The advent of European modernity into Indian society and subsequent transition of Indian society has resulted in upliftment of status of women. Women's independent ideas are getting reflected in their writings. Like other

provinces of India, in Northeast part India many women writers have come up and the select authors discussed in this dissertation have contributed significantly to Indian English Fiction and their works have been analyzed from various perspectives which have added new feathers to Indian English Literary Criticism.

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