

CHAPTER - V

SUMMATION

The present study encompasses the impact of the Naga women in society and in environment. The novels are deeply rooted in social, political and environmental milieu of that time. The novels strongly advocate that it is impossible to separate women from the Nature and society. The narration of the writer effectively reflects upon the lives of the Naga women and their valuable contribution to the Nature and society. She is one of the very few writers who have proposed efficiently that the Naga society and Nature will be transformed and reformed when women become catalysts amidst the predicaments and ordeals. The writing style of the author has touched upon all the important issues that extremely affected the lives of women in Nagaland. The theme of the novels gives a warning signal to the society which has the rays of patriarchal and matriarchal influence. For instance the novel *Bitter Wormwood* challenges both Patriarchal and matriarchal society.

The contribution of the author is unique and exuberant. Some novels are autobiographical in nature and some are historical in nature. The researcher has observed that she is open minded and ready for criticism. She has not showed an iota of prejudice in her writings even after experiencing and encountering sufferings in her native land. She has recorded the significance of Naga culture and custom. It is unique and speaks volumes of their primitive practices of the ancestors. The writings of Easterine Kire inspire women to question the existing system of gender discrimination and suppression. The Naga women are enslaved for decades by practicing their age old traditions, cultures, and customs which are obtained from their ancestors. They believed that their rich origin and primitive culture will create a perfect society. They

felt that their languages, religions, regions, customs, and traditions are distinct from one another. They transmitted these elements to their future generation without making any changes. They were not ready to make any changes in their traditions. Eventually it helped them amass power and basic rights of the innocent women. To curtail the effort of making changes in their culture, and custom they often said that the changes would bring curse on their village and on their generation. Hence the most important duty of elders was to teach their traditions and cultures in the dormitories in order to preserve their ethnic identity. The punishments were very severe for the violation of traditions. The staunch social practices for centuries did not encourage anyone to make changes in their custom and tradition. The customary laws and their traditions did not welcome to flourish equality and fraternity in society. The discriminatory laws suppressed the privileges and personal freedom of the Naga women.

The life lived in the conflict ridden society excluded women from all the social activities. It did not encourage them to play active role in their society. The women in the Naga society lived below poverty line before and after marriage. It is because they were depending upon their father, husband and sons for every single penny. They involved in agriculture, plantation and extraction of resources but the social structure did not allow them to save money for themselves. It made them remain in abject poverty for decades. Later the constant conflicts in the land forcibly migrated women at least once in their life time. The novel *A Naga Village Remembered* and *Mari* discuss the impact of migration. It has distorted their growth and identity. The impact of migration makes them feel that they are ineffective, coward, dependent and inferior to the Naga men.

The lives of women are under threat after the inception of industrialization, modernization, privatization and migration. The scientific growth has not changed their position rather increased the burden. Though they are in dire need of the basic necessities, the science and technology has not showed ways to reduce the plight and agony. The hostility among the tribes and the continuous bloodshed oozed out in the land affected women psychologically and physically. The tribal leaders who emerged in different times to save their culture and heritage enflamed hostility and rivalry among them. The ideologies of leaders caused more bloodshed and their policies were totally against the social growth. Hence the social conflict in Nagaland remains an unending problem. The First and Second World Wars increased innumerable problems in the lives of the Naga women. Till today the women are experiencing the effect of Two World Wars in various forms. The novel *Mari* describes the plight and agony of people during the time of Second World War. The participation of the Nagas in Two World Wars forced them to create a separate land to protect their culture and tradition.

The demand of independent nation was the main cause for civil war which has completely shattered the vision of women. The Naga folklore was translated by Easterine Kire unveils the sorrows and sufferings of the Naga women. It possessed various themes such as identity crisis, political conditions, social discrimination, culture and the close association of women with Nature. It was unfortunate that the Naga tribes did not have proper writing proficiency to save the important element of the stories and songs. So they depended on oral tradition. The vibrant themes of the stories were not emphatically communicated in the society through oral tradition.

The theme for the study is derived from the writings of Easteine Kire which focused on the problems related to women and Nature in the Naga society. *A Naga*

Village Remembered (2003) was the first English novel from Nagaland. The author recorded some important historical events from 1832 to 1880 to show the resistant power of Nagas against British invasions. The narrative structure of the novel discussed the bravery of five hundred families who fought fiercely against the British regime. *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007) was a story about the young girl Dielieno who was the youngest child of her family. She was sent to her grandmother's house, but she hated her grandmother for being an orthodox woman. Finally she achieved her goal of education amidst predicaments.

Mari (2010) portrayed plight and agony of a Naga woman. The story revolved around Mari's life. She became the victim of Second World War. *Bitter Wormwood* (2011) documented the life of a young man. He was shot dead during the time of civil war. *When the River Sleeps* (2014) was a beautiful story about the journey of Vilie, in the forest. He entered into the forest to search for a precious stone without disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the forest. *Naga Folktale Retold* (2016) was revised and published for second time. The book contained varieties of the Naga folktales. *Son of the Thundercloud* (2016) was a unique story. The story revolved around Pelevotso who left his own village after losing his own family members in a famine. The novel was written based on the Naga Folktale. The story revealed their strong belief in Nature. It indicated how Nature and the Naga women were intertwined. It won the Hindu Prize. The novel *A Respectable Woman* (2019) reflected the personal experience of a woman who was insulted by the Naga men. She became a role model for the Naga women by overcoming the challenges of the society.

The book titled *Walking The Roadless Road* of Easterinre Kire in (2019) specifically explained many important events in which she recorded the comprehensive history of Naga tribes in the novel. She further explored the origin of

the Nagas, their early history in the forest, the fight among themselves in forming their own territories, the various struggles and the changes of the Nagas in the twenty first century. The book was divided into four sections. The first section of the book explored their geography and history. The second section of the book described the influence of Christianity in the Naga region. The third section deeply analysed the British invasion in the Naga Hills. These sections endowed with a detailed note on their life in the present twenty-first century and the important turning points in the history. The speciality of the book was that it carried the unwritten information on the Naga tribes.

The study critically examined the contribution of women to strengthen the Naga society and the environment. It was not easy to cull out women's role in other novels, but the literary style of the author made the job easy to evaluate the role of women from socio-environmental point of view. The author Easterine Kire provided ample evidence in her novels to know the status of the Naga women from different perspectives. The first chapter comprised of the basic historical background of the Naga society. The second chapter consisted of the elements of socio-political situation of Nagaland to know more about the position of women and Nature. The third chapter encompassed the impact of wars in the life of women and Nature. The fourth chapter explored the importance of Naga women and Nature through Naga folklore. The fifth chapter summarized all the chapters and proposed a new idea to empower the Naga society and Nature through women.

In the first chapter, the historical background, their belief system, their primitive cultures, practices, and their reverence towards Nature were critically analysed. The chapter reiterated the important behaviour and social system of the Nagas. It was highly difficult to comprehend the social systems and their behaviour

unless it was studied thoroughly. For instance the concept of head hunting and meat eating would be barbaric and unethical for the outsiders, but for them it was to maintain their identity. The study pointed out the significant indigenous practices to comprehend it completely. The narrative style of the author and the field methodology enabled the researcher to identify and analyse these peculiar practices and their behavioural system. Though many researchers were aware of their cultures and heritage through some historical books and articles, the present study brought out the rich cultures and heritage from the narrative of the author. The points were interpreted in a proper way to understand it easily.

The chapter reiterated that historical background, cultures and customs were important for all societies. So it should be preserved with the help of the modern technologies. Unless it was preserved safely, it would be difficult for the future generation to comprehend the uniqueness of the Naga tradition. The researcher found out that only some authors provided reliable sources about the Naga history and their cultural practices. For instance, J.H. Hutton, in the book titled *The Angami Nagas* illustrated the complete details about their cultures, primitive customs, social structure, religions, languages and social status of women. Arthur Swinson, in the book *Kohima*, described the battle of Kohima. It provided a detailed history of the Japanese invasions and the strong resistance of British-Naga soldiers in Kohima.

The second chapter of the study explored more on the position of the Naga women and the poor condition of Nature. The narrative style and the representation of the female characters brought out the psychological, physical and mental power of the Naga women. From the inception of the Naga society, the social system subdued women. They were not given chances to participate in politics and to enhance themselves in the field of education. They were deprived of equal status in the society.

They were criticized and condemned by the elders of the society for defying laws. The society was completely dominated by men. They were not allowed to make decisions in the house as well as in the public forum. It made them psychologically imbalanced and mentally stressed. The Nature and the social structure were completely spoiled in Nagaland due to mass migration, conflicts, increase of population, and the growth of science and technology. The narration of the novels revealed that the position of women and Nature were in danger.

The anthropologists and sociologists proposed many ways to overcome the dangerous conditions. They felt that if women were encouraged to excel in politics, education and economy, their sorrows and sufferings would be reduced. It is pertinent to note that, Easterine Kire was little different from all the anthropologists and sociologists. She touched the root cause of problems in order to find a permanent solution. She proposed in her novels that women empowerment would not be possible unless the society started respecting her emotions and feelings. The society should come forward to accept that she was also a human being, born of flesh and blood.

The novels *A Terrible Matriarchy* and *A Respectable Woman* advocated strongly these ideas. In both of these novels, Dielieno and Kevinuo the protagonists were demanding for self respect. Deilieno and Kevinuo were excellent in studies, but they were completely ignored in the society. They were not respected hence they began to fight for their identity in home as well as in society. Kevinuo remained as spinster even at thirty five. She purposely wanted to remain as spinster because a Naga society would not respect a woman who was unmarried. She wanted to break these cultures. These points were powerfully demonstrated by the author in the novel *When the River Sleeps*. Vilie, the protagonist respected women and Nature equally. The novel taught a lesson that when society started respecting women, it would lead

to save society and Nature. Though he was with a girl and walked through the forest he never had an intention to fulfil his own desire. He knew that respect and social recognition would change the position of women and Nature. The author proved the concept in the novel *A Respectable Woman*. The society supported and encouraged only men in the field of education. Thus, few Naga male doctors emerged during war. For the first time, a Naga woman Khrielieu Kire enrolled her name for MBBS. “It was in 1952 that Khrielieu Kire became the first Naga lady doctor” (51). It is because, she was respected and recognized in the field of education. It was the great inspiration for Kevinuo, the protagonist. She decided to follow her foot path and decided to become a powerful teacher in the future.

The third chapter of the thesis explored the period of conflict from 1832 to 1964. The conflict in Nagaland had three phases. The first phase of conflict was among them during the time of their settlement in the hills. The second phase of conflict was between the Nagas and British administration. The third phase of conflict was between the Nagas and Indian administration. The three phases of war devastated the life of Naga men. The death of Naga men highly affected the lives of Naga women. The women became widows as well as forced to carry the family burdens on their shoulders. It was very difficult for them to resume their life after the war because the war made them psychologically, physically, and economically weak. At the same time, during the time of war, a big transition took place in the lives of women. Earlier, the social system made women depend on men for financial matters. After the war, the women learnt to lead their lives without depending upon men. They began to work by toiling hard in their agricultural land. Though the land became unfertile due to continuous conflicts, the hard work of women in the agricultural land made it more fertile. It is important to note that when women began to play role of catalysts, the

society as well the Nature changed drastically. Easterine Kire strongly emphasized it in many of her novels.

In the novel *Bitter Wormwood*, Mose the protagonist was born and brought up in the agricultural family. After the death sudden of his father, his own grandmother and mother started working day and night in the land to provide him a comfortable life. He was also accompanied by them in his free time to work in the land. They resumed agriculture soon after the Second World War. Though Two World Wars made considerable damages in their lives, the commitment and the hard work of women made the land fertile. Followed by the Two World Wars, the people were completely frustrated with the civil war.

In the civil war more than men women suffered a lot. The bitter experiences of the civil war and past events forced women to take arms and ammunitions. Finally the author taught a big lesson to the world through the life of Mose. When he was in a pool of blood, he felt that war would never give any solution to a problem. The enemies should be forgiven. The attitude of forgiving and forgetting the enemies should be sown in the hearts of the young generation. The Naga society never taught them to forgive and forget the enemies. The primitive culture and custom taught them to take revenge on the enemies. If the head of the enemy was brought, the warrior was praised to skies. But the narration of the author was breaking the old custom and culture. Her novels promoted peace and harmony through various characters. For instance, Mose joined in the factional group to take revenge on the Indian soldiers, but he regretted for it at the end.

In the study, the researcher found out that though the author narrated so many incidents of war and other conflicts, the theme of her novels never encouraged

violence. She always supported non-violence. She mentioned about Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation in the preface of her book *Bitter Wormwood* to promote non-violence in every nook and corner of Nagaland. The salient features of her novels, entreated the whole world to keep peace and harmony at home and society because still the impact of wars was disturbing the growth of the state. Even today, they cannot walk freely after dusk. If anyone is found wandering in the streets, the person will be arrested under suspicion. The state is cordoned off by the military force round the clock.

The fourth chapter critically analysed the oral narratives of the Nagas. The oral narratives were told by men and women in different times. It demonstrated their cultures, identity and social system of the Nagas. The folk tales and folk songs were transmitted from one generation to another generation orally by the elders of the society. They passed their belief system, cultural practices, wisdom and knowledge through the folklore. Whenever they gathered around the firewood on some auspicious occasions, they sang songs, staged their cultural dances with their primitive dresses narrated the stories of the past. The elements of the folk tales were often discussed in dormitories. They followed dormitory system both for boys and girls. They were asked to remain in dormitories to know the folk narratives, songs, proverbs, riddles, music, dance, drama, painting and art. It inspired the youngsters maintain their primitive cultural practices.

The author Easterine Kire also took effort to transmit the Naga folk tales and folk songs to the present generation through her writings. She did not make any changes while writing it. But her stories and songs depicted the power of women and Nature. The women were portrayed as creators, protectors and destroyers. The study brought out certain factors through the book *Naga Folktales Retold*. The book

contained plenty of stories about the women such as losing of women identity in the society and the plight and agony of women. The main objective of this chapter was to know the contribution of women in the field of agriculture, economy, celebration of rituals and solving problems in the society. Secondly, it studied the position of widows and elderly women. According to the Naga custom, women were prohibited to participate in politics and they were not encouraged to make any decision of their own. The writings of Easterine Kire were something remarkable. She collected and transcribed many stories in order to recognize the wisdom and knowledge of the elderly women and widows. They were projected as peace maker between villages in many of her stories. Thirdly, it explored the role of Nature and the close association of women with the Nature. The Naga state was surrounded by beautiful valleys, dangerous curves, highest mountains, long rivers and dense forest. Since they had good rainfall throughout the year, it has rich flora and fauna.

The Naga people lived with the Nature. They were not living in concrete houses; rather their houses were by cane. They made all the furniture and other musical instruments from the bamboos in the forest. While cooking food in the house, they put bamboo shoot as one of the ingredients. In some crucial occasion, they used leaves as medicine. The trees, animals and fruits in the forest supported the Naga women enrich their economy. These elements were highlighted in the novel *Naga Folktale Retold*. The researcher found out that the author brought out two important features through the novel such as the predicament of women and Nature in the dominant society and the close association of women with the Nature. Most importantly, the author redressed cleverly the lost stories and songs of the Nagas and she preserved it in the form of books now.

The fifth chapter comprised of all the other chapters and proposed a new solution to the problem of subjugation of women and Nature. The researcher, through the novels, found out that women were discriminated not only in Nagaland, but also all over the world. But the magnitude of discrimination was little higher in Nagaland. They had to fight every minute to keep their dignity and identity. They were filled with power and energy, but the ideology of male chauvinism did not allow them to make an incredible mark.

The women who were living in rural and urban areas experienced the subjugation in a different level. Both in the city and in the rural areas the position of women was same. In the present world, women who are economically sound in the town also live under the clutches. They cannot live a life without the support of men. They are educated, economically safe and sound. They participate in politics and help the family member to make some important decisions, but still they are living in slavery. They are not free to fulfil their whims and fancies. The main purpose of the study was to find out the root cause for the slavery. The important reason for their subjugation was they were not respected as human beings. They were not equally respected as male in society.

The Naga society judged men and women in a different way. The mistakes of a man were not widely projected in society, whereas the mistakes of a woman were often criticized vehemently in public. Further, she was blamed for not following the norms of society. It was a kind of colonization. The British kings and queens colonized the entire India and restricted Indians. They were not allowed to express freely their feelings and emotions. They considered that Indians were incapable of doing any work. They appointed some masters to look after them. So they considered themselves as masters and Indians as slaves. They forced Indians to do all the menial

jobs. They were severely punished for disobeying laws. The whites left from India in 1947, but still today the people hold the elements of colonization. Even today men feel happy while dominating women. The gender domination in India is so common in all the states.

The selected novel enkindles the young Naga women to break the age old ideologies and concepts and encourages them to embrace some new ideologies of respecting and recognizing themselves before and after marriage. It is the right time to change our attitude towards women and Nature. The people all over India feel that they are civilized and most reformed people of the world in the modern era. The people do not know the real meaning of the word civilization. For them, civilization means embracing the western culture.

A civilized person will not dominate or subdue others. But in civilized India, the women are completely dominated and subdued. They are poorly recognized and respected in some remote villages and towns. If she breaks the law, she is condemned, cornered and criticised. In the society, males justified their domination. They justified that they were not dominating women, but they were protecting them and show them a right path. It is important to note that they did not protect, rather they completely spoiled and ruined the innate characters of women. It paved the ways for losing their individuality and identity. Psychologically, they became too weak to go out after dusk. When they were bodily and mentally affected, they were reluctant to come out from the slavery. They strongly believed that the decisions of men would always be perfect for their life. It made the women to depend on men solely. When a man starts respecting a woman naturally, the society will begin to respect them. When a society begins to respect women, the entire nation will respect. When a nation respects women, the entire world will learn to respect women.

The three core chapters of the study also reiterated the same ideas strongly. The Naga men thought that they were superior to women. The society taught them that they were born with superior identity. Hence, some women also preferred for a male child because they felt that the birth of male child was a blessing and birth of female child was a burden. In the novel, *A Terrible Matriarchy* the author strongly insisted upon these ideas. The grandmother of the protagonist Dielieno felt that the birth of male children was a blessing, because they would protect the families. Whereas the birth of female children was a burden, because they were born to protect other houses.

Dielieno, the protagonist sadly said to her mother, “You say that grandmother loved me but I know that she held it against me that I was a girl, not a boy. I used to feel I was being punished for being born a girl. For many years, I hated it so much I wished that I was not a girl” (249). But at the end of the novel she became a powerful woman after realizing her capability. Thus being a woman, Easterine Kire realized that women possessed tremendous power and energy to create a society without any discrimination. Easterine Kire issued a clarion call to the young Naga women to come forward in order to restructure and reorganize the social system. Since the old social structures and traditions ruined the past and present lives of women and Nature completely, she kindled the young Naga women to create a new social system to promote equality and fraternity. Further they must be ready to come out with new ideologies to recreate the world and to reread the history and religious books for the sake of future generation even after the marriage.

The concept of male domination in India is so strong. The society is not ready to recognize the uniqueness of women. The social system has completely exploited their talents. Thus the researcher realizes that the call for catalysts is not only for Naga

women, but also women in all over the world. To become a catalyst is not easy, because women should realize their self respect, self confidence and potentials. When she begins to realize her self confidence, self respect and potentials, soon they will become catalysts for the society and environment. Certainly the thought of Easterine Kire, will bring together the scattered women under an umbrella to create a new society without any discrimination, oppression and subjugation. When they become catalysts they will regain the lost glory, power, culture, intelligence, wisdom, history, religion, language, skill of administering the home and society. Therefore it is clear that when women become catalysts, the structure of the society will be modified and the shape of the environment will be beautified.

The study contained certain significant features. First and foremost, it focused on the concept of gender discrimination, gender struggles, sharing of power, social change and proposes solution to save environment. The study analysed systematically the works of Easterine Kire. She was born in Nagaland and at present settled in Norway after experiencing sorrows and suffering in her own life. She was threatened by factional group members as well as by the Indian army for narrating some unknown incidents, which was hidden at the time of civil war. She did not favour anyone in her novels. She called spade a spade. She chose a middle path while writing the real incidents. The study considered woman as a catalyst for society and environment. It is a new venture in the field of literature.. Finally, the researchers who have done their theses on the novels of Easterine Kire applied either feminism or some eco-feminism theories to find out the root cause of the problem in order to uplift the status of women. The present thesis applied eco-feminism theory, trauma theory and folklore theory to analyse the life of Naga women as well as proposes some solution to overcome the problems.