

NUMEROUS MANIFESTATIONS OF ECOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY FROM INDIA'S NORTHEAST

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Abstract

In contemporary North East India, English language poetry is characterized by voices of dissension and ethnic identity concerns. Indian writing interests in English throughout the country in the late 1980s led to a major milestone for writers writing in North-East India in English. The literature from the north-east of India abounds in environmental concerns. The tribes of these regions acknowledged the crucial role that nature played in nurturing and sustaining their generations and hence they learned and practised a way of life in tune with the natural environment over the course of years. In order to explore the region and understand Nagas in general and AoNagas in particular, the brief cultural and political history of Nagaland deepened its understanding of the myth of Ao, folklore, tradition and culture, to understand the current degradation, identity crisis, and conflict as represented in TemsulaAo's poetry in detail. Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih poetry is full of issues, from politically to environmentally, and answers to the demands of his place and time. Native to North East India, poets from this region are rooted, and they return to their roots in order to assert what they perceive to be very essential. They are filled with a strong yearning for the past.

Keywords: Ecology, Contemporary, Poetry, Poet, India, Northeast, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary North East India, English language poetry is characterized by voices of dissension and ethnic identity concerns. SaikatGuha criticizes the poetry that comes from the North East and believes that they are "the people of the disadvantaged, neglected and underdeveloped" voice. Indian writing interests in English throughout the country in the late 1980s led to a major milestone for writers writing in North-East India in English.

Although in many villages in the region there was always an undeniable strong literary tradition, lack of exposure left many of her works undervalued. If we speak of northeastern literature, the fact that in vernacular languages like Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri, Khasi, Mizo, Kokborok and others there is a well-established literary culture together with the increasing English language literature must not be overcome. A lot of authors are bilingual like Indira Goswami, Malsawmi Jacob, Desmond L.

Kharmawphlang and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih. As Nongkynrih noted, among the people of the Northeast, there had been a sense of literary tradition beginning with their tradition even prior to the entrance of Western learning in the region and education served to stimulate the literary culture among the people of the northeast.

Northeast India's poetry is diverse and has ancient traditions derived from the oral tradition of folk and folk melodies. These oral traditions were passed down from one generation to the next by chants, songs and stories in informal systems such as dormitories and other occasions. In fact, a lively storytelling tradition in many areas in northeast India has predominated thus far in literary outcome. Throughout creation stories, myths, and tradition incorporating indigenous knowledge, those oral traditions became significant identifiers of identity. Longkumer refers to the oral tradition of the Ao-Naga and states of the critical role that the Ao-naga has played in shaping its history, religion and social life. Their oral tradition has played a crucial role.

2. ECOCRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF POETRY FROM INDIA'S NORTHEAST

Ecocriticism, described as "an eclectic, multidisciplinary initiative which seeks to examine literature and other creative media's

environmental dimensions in a spirit of concern for the environment which is not confined to any particular method or commitment, assumes a profound status than that of simply another sort of literary criticism." Ecocriticism seeks to build on the creative and imaginative qualities of literature and associated arts to raise awareness of the challenges of environment today and believes that comprehending the problems of our environment may ultimately affect the way we live and respect nature. The ethos of ecocriticism is marked by serious ethical standing and a dedication to nature. William Rueckert introduced the term "ecocriticism" for the first time in his pioneering 1978 essay on ecocriticism, called "Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Ecocriticism." Rueckert's primary premise is that the ecosystem is in a crisis situation, mostly human in nature, and that urgent action is required to prevent future disasters involving humans and other animals.' However, Cheryl Glotfelty defined the term in 1996 as "a study of literature-the physical environment interaction."

She stressed that "ecocriticism takes the relationship between nature and culture as its focus, notably language and the cultural products of literature. It has a foot in literature, a foot in critical terms and a foot in land; it negotiates between humanity and humanity as a theoretical discourse." William Howarth describes in his essay "Some principles of

ecocriticism" in *The Ecocriticism Reader* the term Ecocritical as a blend of two terms, eco and critique, with its roots in Greek *oikos* meaning "home" and the "judge" critique. So the phrase "house judge" in tandem may sound unusual to someone interested in the writing of nature. Howarth explains though later by defining an ecocritical person as "a person who evaluates the advantages and faults of texts which reflect the impacts of culture on nature with a view to celebrating the nature of the dispossessed, and to putting political action at the expense of the evil." Similarly, Buell et al. argue that while literature that portrays environmental harm cannot fully transform society's environment-friendly life forms worldwide, "thinking about imagination can promptly raise concerns about the consequences of such choices and possible alternatives," eventually helping to alleviate the present crisis.

2.1 Environmental concerns in Northeast literature

The literature from the north-east of India abounds in environmental concerns. These include the rivers, the mountains, forests, wildlife, etc. and the multiplicity of ways in which the people in these locations interconnect with their own lives and cultures. They are lyrical reflections on how the peoples of these regions have long shared their inextricable bond with the natural world. Therefore, 'myths, geography and nature offer

the primary subjects in the distinctive difficulties of people here and tribal folklore.' The tribes of these regions acknowledged the crucial role that nature played in nurturing and sustaining their generations and hence they learned and practised a way of life in tune with the natural environment over the course of years. They 'practise a faith that is tangled between forest ecology and natural coexistence.' In the lap of nature are enshrined the rituals, beliefs, social values, festivals, songs of the Tribal Cultures, dances, ceremonies and different transactions of life.

3. CULTIVATED DECAY POETRY REPRESENTATION: TEMSULA AO

In order to explore the region and understand Nagas in general and AoNagas in particular, the brief cultural and political history of Nagaland deepened its understanding of the myth of Ao, folklore, tradition and culture, to understand the current degradation, identity crisis, and conflict as represented in TemsulaAo's poetry in detail. TemsulaAo, a leading Nagalan literary voice, is recognised by numerous names such as being a poet, a writer for short stories and an ethnographer. Her work is influenced by a profound appreciation of her rich cultural tradition and has firmly anchored in tribal traditions, including myths, stories, fables, rituals and beliefs that are an intrinsic part of the culture of Ao-Naga. It also has a strong impression of folklore. As custodian of her culture, she has a

role to play in protecting her oral traditions and cultural legacy and protecting them from the invasive forces of modernisation. It is an environmentalist. As a result, some of her poems portray the profound link between these societies and nature in their beliefs, traditions, festivals and rituals. In GJV Prasad's words, "TemsulaAo is singing from her terrain, often an objective correlative to her mental picture and, even more importantly, to the environmental ecology of the community, land changes reflect the damage done by her people, her rootlessness, her wounds, her pains." Her poetry portrays her honest attempt to return to her root and to re-establish a lost identity intricately linked to the hills and their lifestyles. But the present pitfall has been brought about by rebellion, bloodshed, corruption, excessive exploitation of natural resources and increasing disdain of traditional ways, and nature pays a high price for human aberrations. The poetry of Temsula is characterized by an insightful ecological sensitivity which makes it important to read and analyze ecologically.

4. POETRY OF KYNPHAM SING NONGKYNRIH

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih is a multilingual Shillong poet, fiction writer, and dramatist, and is a writer of Meghalaya both in the North East Hill University in Shillong and the Khasi indigenous tribe (the indigenous tribes of Meghalaya, and its spoken language).

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih poetry is full of issues, from politically to environmentally, and answers to the demands of his place and time. The essence of Khazar's culture and folklore are inherently characterised by the unique use of natural symbolism, cultural and literary reference. It bears witness to the unfavourable changes in the sensitive and ecocritical ecosystems of this region which have brought about a quick increase in urbanisation and industrialisation in the past several decades. "An Evening at the Source of the Umkhrah River" starts with the idyllic description of Umkhrah as it flows "winding through the hills" and its 'limpid water' and its "water bed with white sand" that has for its visitors "occasional fishers washing the clean earth from its strong foetus" But the poem abruptly concludes with an anti-climax of the poet in contrast with urban sordidness in rural utopia.

Nobody seems to notice that this clear stream, this shy damsel, and these melodious pines are all rolling down to the metropolis, where life itself is wallowing in filth and squalor. (13-16)

The final line expresses concern about the river's deteriorating condition. Two major rivers flow through Shillong, eventually draining their waters into Umiam Lake, which is notable for being the site of the first hydroelectric power project in Northeast India. The WahUmkhrah and WahUmshyrpi rivers are the two main rivers that flow through

Shillong, eventually draining their waters into the Umiam Lake. In addition to providing nourishment for the residents of Shillong and surrounding areas for centuries, the two rivers, Umkhrah and Umshyrpi, are entirely responsible for supplying energy to the entire city. Shillong's rivers have long served as a source of pride for the city, which has numerous neighbourhoods named after them. WahUmkhrah also has mythological significance, which is worth mentioning. It is believed by the Khasi tribe that the river is one of nine mythical streams that flowed from Shillong Peak, the supreme god of the tribe, and drained into the sea. In recent years, increasing pressures from population growth, industrialization, and urbanisation have taken their toll on the river's health, which has been reduced to an open drain during the summer months, with all of the city's waste and industrial waste being dumped into it with little or no processing.

5. NUMEROUS MANIFESTATIONS OF ECOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY

Contemporary English poetry from India's northeastern region offers a diverse range of voices. This poem is both a poetic representation of an individual's lyrical self and a storey that encompasses the entire inhabitants of the region. Photographs of mountains, hills, rivers, myths and tales of the region, as well as images of multi-ethnic

inhabitants of the region, are presented in this montage. Its topic matter extends from geography to politics, myths and folklore, and ecology, among other things. Poetry from this region of the country is distinguished by its concern for the environment. Identity crises and a sense of alienation are two of the most prominent elements of contemporary politics in the Northeast, particularly in the United States. There has been an intentional use of ecology as a means of asserting one's identity in the works of the poets of this region, which has been documented.

Experimentalism in style, technique, subject matter, and language is evident in the works of contemporary poets from this region, whether they write in Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri, English, or any of the region's vernacular dialects. They appear to have done substantial reading of modern world literature, having "cut their teeth on Lorca, Seferis, Arghezi and Neruda as well as the hard-edged modernists of the Third World," as one critic put it. Their poetry is concerned with the psychological and social difficulties of modern life and existence, and it appears to be concerned with the subjective reality and situation of their people in particular, as well as the plight of humanity in general, as well. The eight various states of the region, despite the widespread inclination to lump them all together under the rubric of the "Northeast," are vastly diverse from one another in terms of tradition, culture, language, and religious beliefs and practices. In this

context, it would be a grave injustice, particularly in academic discourse, to homogenize poetry, or any literary genre for that matter, from this region, which is inhabited by a diverse conglomeration of peoples with a diverse *mélange* of traditions, cultures, languages and religions, to homogenize poetry, or any literary genre, from this region. Although these writers are diverse, it is conceivable to identify some common ground, some shared beliefs, and some similar concerns among them despite their differences. Aside from a variety of issues such as identity crisis, the search for roots, or the contemporary socio-political atmosphere of the region, it is the ecology of the region, as well as an ecological concern, that appears to be the primary factor in bringing these multi-ethnic writers together on a common platform.

One gets the impression that the authors of contemporary English poetry from Northeast India have made a conscious effort to incorporate environmental concerns into their works when reading their ecology. Their desire for identity, roots, and traditional values culture, which they believe has been lost in the hushed uproar of industrialization and urbanization, appears to play a vital part in their quest for meaning and purpose. “Northeast India is one of South Asia's last unexplored landmasses, and throughout much of the twentieth century, these sparsely populated regions were a magnet for large-scale migration from the rest of the

subcontinent to the region. The protected discrimination regime...was enacted in part as a response to these demographic shifts in the population. In many tribal communities, the process of transition from shifting cultivation to established agriculture, from clan sovereignty of land to land commercialization, urbanization, and cultural change linked with the process of ‘modernization’ has already begun, and the process will continue (italics mine). The overwhelming presence of nature in the works of virtually all of these poets, sometimes imaginatively, sometimes romantically, but most of the time deliberately, demonstrates that ecology is important in providing a common ground for these poets or in tying them together as a group. These artists' works also express their deep concern for a variety of environmental challenges, including as large-scale deforestation, coal and uranium mining, ethnic conflict, insurgency and counter-insurgency operations, all of which contribute to the degradation of the ecology. Their poetry passionately pushes for the preservation of the region's ecology since, in their tradition, this would be the most effective means of maintaining their land, their indigenous traditions and cultures, and, above all, their identity.

6. CONCLUSION

Native to North East India, poets from this region are rooted, and they return to their roots in order to assert what they perceive to be very

essential. They are filled with a strong yearning for the past. They talk about their origin and creation myths, customs, rituals, festivals, and dances, all of which are rooted in their past, their country, and their people. Aside from that, they speak of their ancestors, their ideals, and the differences between the past and today. A poetic consciousness inspired by a strong love and care for their indigenous cultures, traditions, and fragile habitats is shown through an Ecocritical analysis of the two poets chosen for research, namely, TemsulaAo and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, according to the findings of the study. Theirs is a lyrical voice that uses the power of lyric to increase environmental awareness among the peoples of these regions, and they call on them to apprehend and check the demonic forces of urbanization that are posing a serious threat to our very existence on this world. These works serve as an urgent reminder to indigenous people of their rich cultural legacy, which includes sustainable practises and traditions, which they must protect and preserve.

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