

Deracination Of Culture And Conflict In Easterine Kire's Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered

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Abstract

Easterine Kire is a 'Naga' writer who has dexterously illustrated the socio-cultural existence of the Naga people. She has illuminated the distinctiveness of Naga's oral culture, the folklore, traditional beliefs, and various superstitions predominant in Naga society. This paper examines the novel "Sky is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered", authored by the esteemed Naga writer Easterine Kire. It seeks to describe the copious ways in which cultural conflicts have nurtured a hybridized culture and to re-examine the history of Nagaland from an insider's perspective. Cultural dislodgment is a prominent theme in this novel. It analyses that how modernization and colonialism have affected the Naga people of Northeast India. Besides, the article aims to examine about how British colonialism and the spread of Christianity destroyed traditional Naga culture, including its customs, rituals, and sense of community.

Key Words: Colonialism, Enforcement, Cultural Conflict, Alienation and Memory

INTRODUCTION

Easterine Kire's Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered is a heart-breaking novel that encapsulates the torment of colonial annexation and the subsequent dislodgment of Naga culture. The story is set during the 1879–80 Battle of Khonoma and it narrates the Angami Naga community's doggedness in their exertions to uphold their identity in the face of British colonial belligerence. Kire has employed her poetic language and oral storytelling method and it redoes a suppressed past that is methodically omitted from official colonial documentation. The title, Sky Is My Father, represents that the Nagas' spiritual connection with environment and lineage and it illustrating a perspective in which land, sky, and spirit exist in harmony. The work explicitly illustrates the gradual erosion of home-grown Naga beliefs, practices, and communal structures due to the influence of Western religion, education, and administration. Kire has brought out the themes of recollection, struggle, and recuperation. Further, it emphasizes how deracination the evacuating of cultural identity serves as both a locus of loss and a foundation for rediscovery. Consequently, Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered serves as a crucial postcolonial work that reasserts the Naga people's voice, affirming their entitlement to remembrance, belonging, and self-definition of their history.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Easterine Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* is extensively considered as the first English-language novel from Nagaland. It develops the Naga people's literary voice. The novel describes oral histories, folklore, and cultural rites and it reconstructs indigenous memory against the backdrop of the British invasion of Khonoma in the 19th century. The novel serves as a counter-narrative to colonial historiography and reclaiming the agency of Naga communities and it emphasizes their resilience and confrontation, according to scholars like Sanatan Mandal and Smriti Singh (2022). Kire's narrative is embedded in traditional knowledge systems, where rituals, nature, and community are essential to the people's identity. Her work resists the expurgation of indigenous experience. Additionally, the text encircles on the context of postcolonial literature, principally in light of its assertion of home-grown epistemologies and opposition to prevailing colonial treatises.

Add-on, the critics advocate profound ecological sensibility and its function in bioregional storytelling. The Hindu College Gazette confers the novel emboldens "re-inhabitation through storytelling," highlighting the Naga people's material and spiritual ties to their land. Even though the novel reflects the ethnographic detail and cultural legitimacy, a few academicians point out that its structure gives more importance on collective and historical memory. According to feminist interpretations, the novel partly concentrates on male experiences, particularly in relation to resistance and warfare and it partially discusses women's roles in traditional society. *A Naga Village Remembered* underscores the general issues of colonialism, distinctiveness, and ecological belonging in addition to protect cultural memory.

Cultural Displacement

The term "cultural displacement" describes the feelings of loss, alienation, and identity crisis. *A Naga Village Remembered* illustrates this through the conflict between colonial modernism and Naga traditionalism. When the British arrived in Nagaland (state) and India, they brought with them more than just battle. They introduce new thinking, religious dogmas (Christianity), and governmental systems that destroyed the local political and spiritual structures.

Cultural eruption takes place when the British invades the Khonoma. The Naga people have felt happy to take part war culture. They are against a foreign force that aims to alter their social construction in addition to militarily subjugating them. "They arrived with their laws and their deity, and in their arrival, the essence of the village was fragmented" (Kire 67).

Kire depicts cultural displacement as an intricate ordeal resulting from war and colonialism. The novel illustrates the putrefying of the traditional fabric of Naga society, which is founded on oral traditions, communal living, and a spiritual connection to the land, due to foreign conflicts. Later on, the community starts to get its voice back. Her writing deals with not only just a historical novel but also a way to keep and fight against cultural change. The novel describes the cultural displacement in two ways: first, the people move on physically from their native place and second, the people have been displaced spiritually, cultural dislocation that war, colonialism, and the loss of indigenous identity cause. Kire shows how traditional life is troubled and how recollection can be a strong act of confrontation through the lens of memory, storytelling, and community trauma. According to Sanatan Mandal and Smriti Singh "land dispossession, cultural dispossession, colonial encroachment (especially British, missionary Christianity), and identity politics in the Angami Naga community".

Cultural displacement is a difficult and deep process that goes beyond just moving people from one place to another. It changes the traditional ways of doing things, beliefs, and

identities because of changes in politics, religion, or the economy. In the Naga communities of Northeast India, cultural displacement has grown into ostensible due to colonial annoyance, proselytizer endeavours, armed skirmish, and instantaneous modernization. This displacement is not just a thing of the past but it projects the memories of the people who have seen their village life, customs, and social systems change over time. Edward Said has expressed “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place.”

Cultural displacement is characterized as the attrition or alteration of indigenous cultural practices and values. It deals with colonization, coerced assimilation, migration, and modernization. James Clifford asserts that displacement does not equate to cultural eradication instead, it can lead to the reconfiguration of identities through memory, mobility, and hybridity. His concept of dwelling-in-travel pertains to indigenous groups that go across their identity amid historical backgrounds and contemporary realities. Megbowon Funmilola Kemi and Uwah Chijioke have expressed:

Culture is not stagnant, cultural habits and tradition change with time and most especially in an integrating world, cultural conflict and eventual displacement is inevitable. However, what is being displaced and the manner of displacement need to be of more concern to the indigenous society. The displacement of logically ideal, appealing and morally promoting indigenous culture and values will lead to total destabilization of the indigenous system, as compared to displacement of unappealing practice like the practice of the king’s horseman ritual suicide, which has relatively no positive identified impacts to the society. However, no matter how unappealing and illogical a culture may be, the acknowledgement, tolerance and respect for other people’s culture will promote coexistence thereby reducing possible conflict that may arise from cultural contacts. (137)

Arjun Appadurai has probed about how globalization affects the cultural flows and dislocations, which can lead to new kinds of identity. These frameworks assist the evolution of Naga identity as they intersect between traditional and contemporary state structures.

Indigenous Identity

The novel centres on the homegrown identity of the Angami Naga community in Northeast India. It is vital to acknowledge the loss of terrain and culture experienced by the Naga people under colonialism. This paper examines the colonialism in Nagaland through the lens of colonial discourse and it demonstrates that how British colonial expansion has overlaid in the notable Battle of Khonoma. This article states the concepts of postcolonial theorists, including Bill Ashcroft and Franz Fanon, to examine how indigenous populations oppose the white man’s encroachment on their territory and the cultural imperialism of Christianity.

A Naga Village Remembered presents historical representation. The story takes place during the first full-scale attack by British forces on Nagaland, which is a very busy time for small scuffles. They might see any outside interloping in their business as an invasion of their private lives. The simple villagers who defend their home from a large and armed foreign force. The narrator also acts as a historian, and without changing the facts too much (which are mostly the same when it comes to numbers and dates). The writer challenges the moral high ground of mainstream historical apologist accounts. It also shows different options and possibilities for an event that could have happened at the same time or not at all, and that were not recorded or reported on purpose.

History records on significant events that may have influenced subsequent developments. It analyses the motives and justifications that shape human behaviour within a specific context. History is often focused on a small number of people, but subaltern accounts include the general public, who are often ignored as being unimportant in shaping historical space. The novel emphasizes on the code of honour, ambitions, moral compass, and

resilience of the simple villagers. It isolates their own habitus and limited to interactions with a few neighbouring villages. It highlights their role in defying attack and peril. Thereby, the historical reinterpretations and the identification of gaps that history from below seeks to address.

Through the lens of colonial discourse, this study examines the scenario of colonialism in Nagaland to describe how the British colonial encroachment creates the legendary Battle of Khonoma, fought between the British Government and the village of Khonoma. Taking insights from postcolonial theorists like Bill Ashcroft, Franz Fanon, and others, this article further discusses how the native people not only bear the white man's burden but also attempt to dismantle the compartmentalized colonial system through their reaction to the colonial encroachment to their land and cultural colonialism of Christianity.

The novel narrates the perspective of the hamlet and its dwellers regarding the Battle of Khonoma, which happened in 1879 between the British and the valiant warriors of Khonoma. It narrates the events preceding and succeeding the conflict. It venerates the unadorned, conventional lifestyle and the resilience of the people, while endeavouring to rectify the narrative of homogenized accounts that laud the imperial forces and their officers. The narrative registers Achebe's description of a realm brimming with ceremonials, proscriptions, communal laws, deities, and spirits, culminating in the peculiar advent of the White man. The novel encompasses the "politics of the people," which remains unchronicled in history.

The fact, Khonoma had concords with many villages and it shows that they fully aware of their surroundings. This is very different from what most ethnologists and even the average person from the 'mainstream' would like to think of them as: a rough, murderous, uncivilized people who only know mindless aggression. The village is recognized as a 'warrior village' because the mountains protect as natural garrisons and they are trusted to help other villages in battle.

When talking about the Nagas' tribal customs and the old-fashioned values they still hold, the debate between nature and nurture comes to the fore. The idea of 'thehou' as a dormitory for different age groups to learn about nature and the stories that are an important part of their lives and experiences effectively turns it into a sacred school. The young boys (no girls or women are allowed there) listen intently and respectfully to the elders who tell them stories and customs, which are closely related to the stories and the setting of those stories. It is hard to understand how important stories are to an oral society from the outside. Literacy, as opposed to orality, somehow makes this kind of life easier to understand. However, the importance of literature to a literate society does not lessen the importance of stories to an oral community. Brown has rightly pointed out "Culture as the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It exists a person, values, beliefs, explanatory systems and behaviours which are learned in the family and other social groups" (122).

The topography of Khonoma is introduced by Kire. It becomes clear that a martial ethnic community living in a naturally protected village is just as real as it is imaginary, like something out of an epic adventure, except that it really exists on maps:

Khonoma nestles among mountains that are as high as 7,000 feet; a little village on a small hillock cradled by gaunt mountains that form a natural fortress. Hidden from human view by the mountainous barrier, Khonoma can be seen only from one direction in the northern Angami region between Meriema and Chieswema. Although her size of 500 houses in the 1800s was rather average among Angami villages, her fame spread far and wide as a warrior village. (Kire vii)

The British has shown their interested in Burma, there is more activity around Khonoma at the beginning of the 1800s. The British expedition of the 1830s aimed to establish a

route from Manipur to Assam via Naga territories to safeguard their populace from a Burmese incursion. People thought it was an invasion, and warriors with spears fought hard to keep the British from accessing their territories. They dislodged boulders upon the intruders; but, the contemporary armaments of the British forces proved overwhelming. There was a continuous discharge of musketry (Kire viii).

The author describes her novel as a window into the formation of cultural identity that unites tribes in communities with shared characteristics that are frequently overlooked in history as lacking honourable motivation. Homi K. Bhabha says that “cultural identity is neither fixed essence nor simple evolutionary form... it is a process of becoming as much as of being.” The narrative meticulously documents the cultural life. It illustrates the inherent sense of honour and deep love of independence. Joy Das has rightly pointed out “Ethno-spirituality, belief systems, customs, and how these serve as resistance to colonial modernity in Northeast Indian literature”.

Colonial Rule

World War II violently has changed the way of life for the Naga people in Nagaland, forcing them to leave their homes and communities. The war doesn't just move people around; it also stops the cultural practices that make Naga identity, like oral storytelling, community rituals, and traditional songs. Colonial rule and the imposition of foreign religions and educational systems have led to the erosion of Naga identity both prior to and subsequent to the war. British rule had already begun to weaken traditional beliefs; the war sped up this process. Frantz Fanon has described “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.”

The novel employs memory and storytelling as mechanisms to recover a lost heritage and combat cultural erasure in the face of displacement. Remembering is a big part of how the novel is put together. Oral narration is like traditional storytelling because it gives a voice to people who don't have one. Telling stories can help people heal and keep their sense of self.

The writer has painted a haunting picture of cultural displacement, showing how war and colonialism tear apart the fabric of indigenous life and how memory can put it back together. By telling the story of a forgotten village in a world war, she gives us more than just a history lesson; she gives us a warning. Not only do we need to keep artefacts and buildings safe, but we also need to keep telling and retelling the stories that make a people whole.

Exploitation

The British also has made the people work as labourers. The book shows how bad things were for the people of Khonoma, who are not paid well for their work as labourers or sometimes not at all because they fought more than the other villages and resisted the British. They also helped the other villages fight back against the British attacks. The British government is upset about the raids by the village of Khonoma and tells political agent Damanant to deal with the problem. Damanant was annoyed that Khonoma wouldn't give in to the British government. They strongly opposed his forcible collection, which made him very angry. He decides to talk things over, but if that doesn't work, he will destroy the village so that no one else will think about starting a revolution. The Khonoma warriors, on the other hand, said they would not negotiate. “We are not going to be coolies anymore for the white men” (106), and they were ready for full-scale war.

Christian Missionaries

The British colonization of the area has an effect on Khonoma's culture and politics. The British government has backed the American Baptist Mission's efforts to convert the Naga

tribes, who loved war. The Christian missionaries think that they are better than everyone else and came to conquer the “other world” through Christianity. They contemplate that they can do this by getting rid of the native people’s traditional ways of life and values. In the novel, Kire talks about Dr Sidney Rivenburg, a real white man who has run a Mission school in Kohima and used to check on people’s health. People used to call him the old sahib because he had lived in the Naga hills for a long time, where he came to serve his god. Rivenburg took care of his patients and told them about the Gospel of Christ as part of his mission.

The novel describes about Nisier, the second Angami man to convert and the first to do so in Khonoma. In the story, Sato, the son of Levi who used to go to Mission School of Rivenburg, decides to get baptised and follow Isu (Jesus Christ). The book shows how a small Khonoma village that used to stand together against the British is now split up because of Christianity. “The Christians built their homes on the new site across the river... Some of the people in their village had already verbally abused many of them” (144). It is undeniable that education, modernity, health services introduced by missionaries, and the cessation of head-hunting practices had a positive impact; however, through conversion, the British successfully fragmented the cohesive community.

Kire also notes, though, that Christianity has become a part of Nagaland’s culture. In *A Naga Village Remembered*, Sato looks at Christianity and his old religion and finds that they have some things in common. “He thought of Isu on the cross as a chicken sacrifice that was much bigger than all the Angamis’ chicken sacrifices.” Isu was the chicken that was killed so that man could be free from disease and the problems that spirits could cause him” (139). Sato’s comparison of the two religions exemplifies hybridity.

The nativised form of Christianity, wherein Naga worshippers identified elements within their own culture that resonate with Christian teachings, led to a hybrid Christianity that undermines the supremacy of Christianity. Imsong writes, “The Christian missionaries’ only goal was to spread the gospel and evangelize... the introduction of education, church structure, and a common language all contributed to the articulation of ethnic Naga identity”. (62). Odyuo asserts that “Most of the Nagas today are no longer illiterate; even if they are, they are no longer confined to an unchanging world” (Heneise 53).

The American missionaries’ efforts to convert the natives and teach them to read and write, along with the colonizer’s desire to take over the Naga Hills and control the government, led to big changes in the way things were set up. The fight for independence changed the lives of the natives, and new influences came from outside. These big changes broke down many of the old traditions and replaced them with a mix of different cultures.

British Imperialism

In this novel, she delineates about how imperialism came to the Naga Hills and how the British has affected the Angami tribe of Nagaland. It highlights the transformations in culture and society resulting from British colonialism, the introduction of Christianity, literacy, and Western education. The author also writes about the rules, customs, ceremonies, and rituals of Angami life, giving the reader a glimpse into their culture. According to Thong,

Naga Culture is the way of life of the Nagas, the inherited behaviours and thoughts of their forefathers, passed on to the new generation through oral traditions, day-to-day practices, and conservative lifestyles in the form of customs, traditions, norms, and values acquired through time, change, innovation, evolution, and growth; contact, diffusion, integration, imitation, and acculturation. (8)

Kire illustrates about how the Nagas changed from living in closed tribes to living under colonial rule and following a new religion. These things changed the way people lived together so much that it could never go back to the way it was. Three generations Kovi,

Levi, and Sato go through this change. The novel starts with Kovi's view of village life, which is full of old cultural practices: "Even as he walked outside in the morning, he saw the women coming back ... he thought, "Ah, the old ways are good. Our women do us proud when they are so eager to keep their fathers' teachings" (1). People follow the religious beliefs that have been passed down through generations without question.

The novel has brought to light the history of the last battle between the British colonial troops and the Khonoma native warriors. Her works show a rich cultural history. Her work shows how the Naga culture, which has been based on traditions for hundreds of years and it is changed controlled by the British Empire. After that, it has to deal with even more problems during the fight for self-determination, which lasted for decades.

The main character, Kovi, has to give up his own life to take care of his family. He acts like a good father when his pregnant wife gets sick. Even though he firmly believes that women should help with childbirth, he waits patiently for the naming ceremony. When the baby cries out, "Kovi quickly smeared saliva on his finger and touched it to his son's forehead with the word first it means that the baby is his" (5). In a patriarchal society, it serves to ensure adherence to the community's ritualistic values. Identity is unequivocally established by birth and it leads to the widespread practice of family members designating and naming a 'newborn', since it elucidates the criteria by which individuals are culturally recognized as belonging to a specific clan.

Easterine Kire narrates the tale by depicting the quotidian responsibilities of Kovi, a native elder whose existence is intricately linked to the village's endeavours. He experiences satisfaction at observing women returning in small groups, their baskets laden with firewood in the early morning. Kovi's insightful observations regarding ladies venturing out before dawn to get firewood for the day provide a vivid depiction of village life. Although it was not yet light, Kovi observed smoke ascending from the residences on the slopes and the still-obsured dwellings in the valley. This indicated that breakfast was being made. Kire distinguishes herself among indigenous authors addressing communal understanding by her narratives that advocate the fundamental optimism of communal values. She fosters community connections by referencing elders possessing moral authority. The elder is responsible to make awareness of the youngster about their Naga's community. In "Kichuki", a facility where young men acquire various practical skills, artistic abilities, and the oral history of their culture, elder individuals consistently instruct Levi and his peers about communal conduct and lifestyle.

Importance of Naga Culture

In the novel, the tribes do anything to protect their village and culture. They always show an indestructible fighting spirit when it comes to stop outside forces from entering their territory. Many tribal people die in the battle and they determine to work hard to protect their people and culture so that they don't fall into the trap of outsiders and Christianity. The men are highly brave, self-sufficient, and work hard. Their fathers and grandfathers' stories of triumph give them motivation or inspiration. Men constantly try to pass on their culture, traditions, and rituals to the next generation. Sherif Trask and Hamon expresses "Cultural Diversity refers to differences in beliefs; practices and attitudes that exist in families and individuals and which stem from cultural background" (4).

The villager's act of remembrance in the novel reveals the colonial politics that used discipline and civilization to silence native cultures. The individual and cultural recollections of shared historical experiences coincide with the religious and cultural changes enforced by the British. The clash between the local culture and the colonial is revisited through the process of recollections. An old man talks about his own and his community's adventures and tells the younger generation stories that reflect the values of his native culture. The moral schoolings given to the boys in the dormitory are meant to

help them learn how to get along with others. For example, "If you are at a community feast and take more than two pieces of meat, shame on you... this is the key to living right: don't go overboard with anything. Be happy with what you have, like land and fields. Everyone in the village has a social duty to the village" (30). The lessons and stories shared at the dormitory gathering are the result of ancient wisdom that keeps the culture alive. The writer has reflected:

The younger men were taught the rituals of the war, for it had been a long time since the village had gone to war against another village. The new age groups were ignorant of man's role on the battle field. The preparation for the battle gripped the village. And it ran its course like a fever around the village, this urge to go to war ... He turned to it as to a former mistress, all thoughts of a family flown from him. His wife didn't chide him but she pressed down her fear on the nights he stayed away from home. When Levi says I have work, and leave. She never asked a question when he was called away, nor did she try to stop him going. This was part of being a warrior's wife. Long ago her mother in-law had warned her about this but she had still said yes, she would be Levi's wife. (86- 87).

The novel has reflected the power structures that keep colonialism going by remembering the past. This goes against the common story that Christianity took over the Nagas' religion. The story deliberately challenges the colonial ideas that people like Sato have taken in. It examines the colonization of the mind, one must acknowledge how Christianity, as a colonial instrument, has been employed to impose Western values and beliefs upon the Naga community.

Some of the common themes in modern English writing from northeast India are identity crisis, feeling of alienation, racial discrimination, cultural and religious conflicts, gender politics, insurgency, and environmental degradation. Writers from this area have written about these important issues in their books from different points of view. Mahato has opined "Taboos, rituals, tradition; the author shows how everyday cultural practices in Sky Is My Father embody indigenous belief and cultural heritage" (99-107).

THEORETICAL FRAMING: TRAUMA, POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY, AND MEMORY

Easterine Kire's *Sky Is My Father* can be examined through trauma theory, postcolonial studies, and memory studies and it elucidates the experience of deracination and the processes of cultural reclamation in the narrative. The brutality of colonial intrusion, covering military muggings, land expropriation, and missionary conversion, represents a shared and intergenerational trauma for the Naga populace. Fanon's observations on the psychological effects of colonial subjugation are pertinent, as individuals and communities navigate the complexities of loss, resistance, and adaptation. The trauma is not exclusively physical and it incorporates cultural and spiritual dimensions, illustrating the rupture of traditional belief systems and social structures (Das 17 and Mahato 105).

Postcolonial theory positions Kire's oeuvre as a counter-narrative to prevailing colonial narratives. Kire destabilises the dichotomy of civilized/primitive and colonizer/colonized, typically reinforced in colonial historiography, by centring the viewpoints, recollections, and oral traditions of the Nagas (Chaterji 14). The literature serves as cultural resistance, restoring indigenous knowledge systems and it affirms the moral and ethical foundations of Naga culture in opposition to the erasure inflicted by imperial modernity.

Memory studies elucidate how Kire establishes cultural continuity in the face of change. Utilising Assmann's notion of cultural memory and Erll's structure of literary and narrative memory. The novel illustrates how the communal recollection of rituals, oral traditions, and historical events sustains identity across generations (Mandal and Singh 22; Padhiyar

87). Memory functions as a reservoir of pain and a wellspring of resilience, allowing the group to endure external stresses while preserving social cohesion. Kire's narrative thus serves as an act of memory repair, transforming literature into a medium for historical awareness and cultural preservation. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o asserts that "the most formidable weapon employed and routinely deployed by imperialism against collective resistance is the cultural bomb."

This theoretical framework synthesises trauma theory, postcolonial critique, and memory studies, emphasises that *Sky Is My Father* transcends mere historical fiction. This narrative documents and analyses cultural trauma, reinforces Naga identity, and illustrates how storytelling serves as a mechanism for resistance, preservation, and empowerment (Das 17; Rupkatha Journal 3; Mahato 105).

Narrative Reclamation: Oral Traditions, Rituals, Memory

In *Sky Is My Father*, Easterine Kire not only chronicles the dislocation of Naga culture but also actively reclaims it by preserving oral traditions, rituals, and collective memory. The novel emphasises rituals and festivals, including merit feasts, ancestor worship, and seasonal festivities, depicting them as integral to village life and as means of preserving social solidarity. Kire depicts the cattle-feeding ceremony, a communal occasion that delineates social hierarchy and strengthens relationships: "The village convened to celebrate the contributions of the eldest son...feasting, drumming, and chants resonated across the hills, reaffirming the lineage of each household" (*Sky Is My Father* 72). Mahato notes that Kire depicts "the complex network of Naga cultural codes—taboos, feasts, and rites—which modernity progressively displaces" (Mahato 105). These rituals are portrayed as dynamic practices that encapsulate ethical and spiritual values governing communal existence.

Oral traditions, folktales, mythologies, and genealogy, serve as narrative mechanisms to counteract historical obliteration. Kire intertwines narratives of ancestors, valorous actions, and regional legends, aiding villages in maintaining their identity and collective memory. The narrative of Khonoma's valiant battle against invaders is recounted in many episodes, highlighting bravery, honour, and communal unity (*Sky Is My Father* 134). Rupkatha Journal observes that Kire used "imagined ethnography" to convert oral narratives into cultural memory, so allowing the text to preserve traditions threatened by colonial and missionary influences ("Imagined Ethnography and Cultural Strategies" 3).

Characters often reminisce about ancestral traditions and village narratives, grounding their identity despite the psychological and cultural disruptions produced by colonialism. The protagonist visualises the traditional proscription against damaging specific trees or rivers, recognising that these customs maintain natural equilibrium and societal cohesion (*Sky Is My Father* 91). This underscores that this memory work embodies an "ethno-spiritual consciousness that reclaims indigeneity from the peripheries of postcolonial discourse" (Das 17). Padhiyar asserts that Kire conjures "a sense of ecotopia—where land, ancestors, and myth converge into a moral geography opposing colonial desacralization" (Padhiyar 87).

Kire redefines memory, ritual, and oral tradition as dynamic forces of cultural resistance through these methods. Despite the disturbances caused by colonial encroachment and missionary impact, cultural customs endure, preserving community identity and moral harmony. Kire intricately integrates rites, oral traditions, and recollections into the narrative, creating a textual space that preserves Naga heritage and guarantees that future generations maintain a link to their ancestral wisdom.

Colonial Invasion and Erosion of Tradition

Easterine Kire effectively illustrates the destabilising effects of British colonial expansion on Khonoma hamlet, emphasising the material and psychological repercussions of

invasion. The British military action is characterised by the incineration of residences, coerced relocation, and the enforcement of new legislation and it exemplifies the tangible expressions of colonial subjugation. Kire observes: “the thatch roofs ignited readily, whereas the house posts required an extended duration to incinerate entirely... only charred posts and ashes persisted, darkening the entire area.” This was the retribution for a haughty populace that had audaciously sought to govern their own fates” (*Sky Is My Father* 108). This tableau records historical violence and symbolises the obliteration of cultural underpinnings, with physical structures serving as metaphors for conventional social and spiritual order.

The entrance of Christian missionaries exacerbates the decline of local practices. Converts are seen as intermediaries of external ideologies, frequently dismissing traditional customs and rites as “pagan.” With the passage of time, elders and customary leaders undergo a decline in authority, resulting in the disintegration of the social order based on traditional standards. Mahato asserts that “the complex network of Naga cultural codes—taboos, feasts, and rites—which modernity consistently undermines” underscores the nuanced yet widespread cultural degradation (Mahato 105). Mandal and Singh assert that Kire’s novel “disturbs the colonial archive by reinterpreting the Naga resistance through oral memory and local expressions,” demonstrating how narrative serves as a countermeasure to cultural obliteration (Mandal and Singh 22).

The synergistic impact of military aggression and missionary influence exemplifies the dual operation of colonialism on both external and internal fronts. The Naga people confront external violence and pressure, while internal ideological and theological transformations undermine the village’s moral and social structure. Kire’s focus on these processes highlights the gradual yet significant uprooting of Naga culture, indicating that colonisation entails not merely physical domination but also cultural and spiritual encroachment. Kire underscores the tenacity of local populations when confronted with such circumstances. Chaterji notes that the novel serves as a “postcolonial counter-memory text that undermines the civilized/primitive dichotomy established by colonial historiography” (Chaterji 14), demonstrating that the Naga community actively negotiates and fights colonial imposition.

Internal Conflict: Tradition vs Change

Although external pressures from colonial invasion and missionary endeavours jeopardise Naga civilisation, Easterine Kire’s *Sky Is My Father* underscores that internal discord within Khonoma is equally destabilising. These conflicts stem from the friction between traditionalists, who seek to maintain ancestral rituals, clan hierarchies, and oral traditions, and converts or younger people, who adopt Christian doctrines, literacy, and Western education. This ideological conflict undermines both personal identity and social unity.

Kire depicts characters ensnared in this tension, contemplating the psychological and ethical quandaries they encounter. One protagonist grapples with engaging in ancestral rituals that contradict his newly embraced Christian beliefs: “He remembered the chants and the offerings, yet a voice within told him that these acts were no longer righteous” (*Sky Is My Father* 85). This internalised conflict demonstrates how colonial and missionary interventions generate a moral and spiritual void, compelling individuals to choose between their ancestral identities and newly imposed religious systems.

This underscores that this contradiction is crucial to Kire’s “ethno-spiritual consciousness that reclaims indigeneity from the periphery of postcolonial discourse” (Das 17). The novel illustrates that conversion and education do not simply supplant tradition. They engender alienation and fragmentation as villagers navigate the tension between modernity and the grounding influence of ancestral norms. Certain characters attempt to resolve the two

realms, while others encounter alienation or remorse, highlighting the human toll of cultural transformation.

This internal tension is also evident in social structures and gender roles. Elders and ritual specialists, usually in positions of leadership, see a diminishment of their status due to converts who contest their legitimacy. Junior members frequently serve as catalysts for transformation, adopting novel ethical frameworks, which results in generational discord. Mandal and Singh assert that *Kire* "disturbs the colonial archive by reinterpreting the Naga resistance through oral memory and local expressions," emphasising that internal bargaining constitutes a type of cultural resistance" (Mandal and Singh 22).

Kire ultimately portrays the conflict between tradition and progress as intricate and multifarious. It is not merely a tale of defeat or victory but a psychological and social negotiation, wherein the Naga community must reconcile continuity with adaptation. It emphasises that cultural uprooting transpires not alone by external compulsion but also through internal ideological and ethical conflicts, which significantly influence identity and collective memory. Stuart Hall aptly asserts that "cultural identity is not a static essence, but a positioning." It is perpetually formed within representation.

CONCLUSION

Easterine Kire's Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered examines cultural dislocation and strife. The work depicts how colonial invasion, missionary influence, and internal ideological conflicts have been presented. *Kire* illustrates the intricate human toll of cultural displacement through graphic descriptions of military aggression, religious transformation, and intergenerational conflicts, highlighting both collective and personal hardships. The novel at once functions as a means of cultural preservation and a form of resistance. *Kire* preserves Naga legacy and affirms the persistence of indigenous identity by integrating oral traditions, rituals, and collective memory into the narrative. The depiction of internal struggles, the aplomb between tradition and transformation.

The narrative aligns with trauma studies, postcolonial critique, and memory theory, illustrating how literature serves as a repository for historical consciousness and cultural preservation. *Kire* converts historical trauma into resistance literature, amplifying the voices of marginalised populations and reclaiming narratives that colonial modernity aimed to obliterate. Ultimately, *Sky Is My Father* asserts that despite the disruptions produced by external oppression and internal conflict, cultural memory persists. The work shows the tenacity, adaptation, and continuing strength of Naga identity, illustrating that even during deracination, tradition, memory, and communal ideals persist as essential sources of continuity and empowerment.

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