

An Ecological Discourse on Naga Spiritual Cosmology: Defining through Oral Narratives and Easterine Kire's Select Novels

Medongunuo Ngone and Imwapangla Imsong*

Department of English Nagaland University Meriema: Nagaland

Received : 28 November 2017

Abstract

The Nagas are synonymously called the Hill people. Nagas have always been deeply seated in rituals, beliefs and practices, and the fear of unknown deities and spirits has constantly controlled their activities. In the Naga spiritual cosmology, Nature in itself was a strong spiritual entity. Forests, trees, water, even birds and animals and all elements of nature as such, had spiritual significance in the Naga society. Another aspect of the Naga spirituality was the belief in the plurality of souls and their varied forms. The Oral tradition also speaks of how men, spirits and animals coexisted as brothers at the earliest of times. Different elements of Nature were also considered as a medium of communion with the spiritual. Therefore, Nature was not just a means of sustenance for the Nagas, but the very culture which defines their identity was a synthesis of their relationship with nature and belief in the divine in Nature.

Nagas' affinity with Nature is found strongly embedded in the oral tradition so also in the post colonial Naga writings such as the novels of Easterine Kire. In view of this, Easterine Kire's *When the River Sleeps* and *A Naga Village Remembered* along with Naga oral narratives will be taken into account to define the spiritual cosmology of the Nagas from an ecological perspective. This entire paper, as the title suggests, is a discourse on the inter-connectedness of Naga spiritual belief and Nature.

Keywords: Naga, Spiritual Cosmology, Oral Narratives, Nature, Taboos/gennas

Introduction

Nagaland has often been characterized as a repository of culture. One unique feature of this culture is its association with Nature. Nature, with all its entities, has always played a pivotal role in shaping the culture of the people, their beliefs and customs, thoughts and practices, common behavioral pattern and traits, even fears and affinities and its destruction has also been associated with the degradation of man and this stands truest in the context of Naga cultural milieu. The Nagas

are synonymously called the hill people, and the mountain is their habitat. According to V. Nienu, in his book *Naga Cultural Milieu: An Adaptation to Mountain Ecosystem*, "the mountains and rivers of their land, combined with the indigenous flora and fauna, shaped the Naga life, and culture to a great extent. Consequently, for the Naga people, the mountains are more than just a habitat; rather, the mountains are a sacred vicinage- a sacred landscape and heritage that helped forge Naga

*Corresponding author: imsongwapang11@gmail.com