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Invasion of Culture, Space, and Place: Climatic Crisis in the Poetry of Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih

Dr. N. Lakshmi

MA., MPhil., PhD., UGC-NET., MA (Psy), HoD, Department of English, A S D Government. Degree College for Women (A), Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. India. E-mail: lakshminbam@gmail.com, ORCID Id: 0000-0003-4891-8251

ABSTRACT: This paper will look into the connection between cultural invasion, spatial transformation, and climatic crisis in the poetry of Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, a well-known Khasi poet from Meghalaya, Northeast India. Embedded in the theoretical paradigms of ecocriticism, postcolonial ecocriticism, and environmental humanities, this paper will explore the possible effects of landscape transformation on Indigenous identity, culture, and the traditional ecological relationships. This paper will examine the notions of space and place as the important aspects of ecological experience, in which land is not only the physical resource but also the site of ancestral knowledge, community, and culture. Furthermore, this paper will explore how modernization, urbanization, and the changes in the environment might disrupt the traditional ecological relationships and increase the worries about cultural survival. Using qualitative textual analysis, this paper will situate the poetry of Nongkynrih into the larger conversation about Indigenous ecological knowledge and environmental justice

1. INTRODUCTION

Global warming has become one of the key environmental issues today that influences the environment, human communities, values, and life style. Despite the fact that climate change is usually viewed as facts and data connected with that issue, literature may be also considered as one of the ways to understand its cultural and emotional dimension. Particularly, poetry is the way to examine the relation of people to the environment and their relationship, showing how changes in the landscape affect the collective identity and memory. That helps to analyze the issue of climate change from the perspective of the Environmental Humanities. Thus, the notion of invasion of culture, space and place can be used in the analysis of how environmental change affects the identity of Indigenous population. Invasion in this case is understood not only as occupation of the territory but also as gradual transformation of the environment by means of urbanization, exploitation of natural resources and changing of the land use.

By changing a place that one knows, you change its importance as a storehouse of memories and knowledge. Environmental change due to climatic changes can make such changes more difficult by creating floods, droughts and other factors that affect the environment, even though they should be distinguished from the broader impact of development and social change. The Khasi cultural milieu of Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, a poet and writer from Meghalaya, provides an important literary context for exploring these relationships.

Nongkynrih's poetry revolves around cultural identity, language, place, history, and the shifting realities of modern times. In particular, the Khasi cultural context becomes very important since relationships with the land and community are influenced by unique cultural practices, social organization, and perceptions of belonging. Thus, an ecocritical reading of Nongkynrih's poetry may help to analyze how landscapes come to have cultural significance and how transformations in the physical environment can disrupt established relationships between people and place. In this paper, the connection between cultural change, spatial relocation, and climatic vulnerability in Nongkynrih's poetry will be analyzed. This research aims to determine how ideas about space and place can help to interpret the relationship between environmental change and Indigenous identity,

and the contribution of poetry to the discussion of ecological responsibility and cultural preservation. Instead of assuming that each description of landscape implies a direct response to climate change, the study makes the difference between climatic concerns and ecological/cultural fears that may create the context of environmental crisis.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach used for this paper will involve interpretative methodology through a detailed analysis of some poems from The Yearning of Seeds (2011) by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih. This research uses some of these primary texts such as "The Parking Lot," "An Evening by the Source of the Umkhrah River," "Rain Song 2000," "Kynshi" and "Killer Instincts," which have previously received consideration in some ecocritical works regarding the interactions of Khasi culture, environmental degradation and modernity. Ecocriticism will make possible the description of what environmental degradation means and its effects on the environment. Postcolonial ecocriticism will make possible the analysis of the domination, development, and marginalization of local knowledge.

In addition to an ecocritical approach, the other theoretical approaches that will inform this study are postcolonial ecocriticism and the geography of space and place. Three connected components are identified as such: invasion of cultural space because of changes in societal values and consumerism; physical modification of space due to urbanization and resource extraction; and climatic vulnerability as the ecological threat affecting the link between communities and their physical environment. The research makes the distinction between explicit depiction of the climate and weather and other environmental aspects. It does not suppose that all the cases of pollution, urbanization, and cultural processes happen as a result of climate change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This perspective is helpful for the analysis of how environmental destruction affects not only the physical world around us but also its cultural significance. For example, in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (1996) it is highlighted that literature and the physical environment should be examined together. Also, Lawrence Buell analyses in his The Environmental Imagination (1995) the representation of the more-than-human world and environmental obligations of humanity. In addition, in Rob Nixon's Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor (2011), it is discussed how environmental destruction takes place gradually and invisibly and leads to long-lasting effects on society and nature.

All mentioned works are relevant to the poetry of Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih where the transformation of landscapes can be understood in terms of development, urbanization, cultural transformations and destruction of connections between people and places. Thus, the idea of invasion can be understood not only as physical invasion but as cultural invasion when the memory of the community and traditional relationships with land and place are disrupted. It should be noted that the environmental changes reflected in poetry should be associated with climatic crisis only when there is textual evidence for this interpretation. Indian English poets such as Gieve Patel's "On Killing a Tree," Dilip Chitre's "The Felling of the Banyan Tree," and Rajagopal Parthasarathy's "River, Once" provide important comparative angles in terms of the destruction of nature and the change of place. In Patel's poem, the act of killing a tree is described in an aggressive manner, thereby dispelling the notion that nature can be easily subdued and destroyed. In the poem by Chitre, the felling of the banyan tree is connected to the destruction of family roots and memories and thereby, ecology is tied to culture in this particular instance. It is possible to compare Parthasarathy's poem to the others since it can be seen as an illustration of the changing relationship between the people and the natural world around them.

All three poems can be used to contextualize Nongkynrih's poetry into a larger Indian tradition where the trees, the rivers and the landscapes serve not only as a physical setting but as much as cultural heritage. n that sense, the research into Northeast Indian poetry takes the analysis closer to the main issues of this thesis. First of all, it should be noted that in her article "An Ecocritical Reading of Poetry from India's Northeast" (2017), Suman Sigroha analyzes the ways in which industrialization, urbanization and consumer culture influence the relations between the local Indigenous people and nature. Second, Sayantan Chakraborty explores the correlation between Khasi Hills' culture and the exploitation of natural resources in his paper entitled "Khasi Hills and Khasi Culture: Reconnection in Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's The Yearning of Seeds".

These papers are especially important in the context of this research since they focus on the connection between ecological and cultural issues. In this regard, a relatively new comparative analysis by Raju Sudam Patil and Somnath J. Ghotekar is worth mentioning. It explores the role of river images in the poetry of Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and Mamang Dai.

Similar concerns have been raised regarding Southeast Asian literature, where some literary texts portray landscapes as places storing the memories and vulnerability of the environment. In the Philippines, one such study on the topic is "The Surviving Sunset of Manila Bay and the Ethics of Environmental Justice in Philippine Ecopoetry," by Rina Garcia Chua in 2021.The paper discusses the role played by ecopoetics in addressing environmental inequalities and promoting ecological justice. In the same country, Jan Raen Carlo Mijaro Ledesma discusses ecological relations in some poems from the book Sustaining the Archipelago in 2024. The poem Taburos Han Dagat (2014) written by Victor N. Sugbo, in terms of memory, loss, and ecology, is another example that should be considered: the poems combine nature images with the experience of one's home, nostalgia and the aftermath of an environmental disaster. Such examples enlarge the comparative context of Nongkynrih's poetry, because environmental degradation is seen as a threat not only to the ecosystem but also to cultural legacy and feelings of a community towards their place.

The combined effect of the aforementioned studies may help us understand that the invasion of culture, space and place is based on the following three interrelated processes: the physical transformation of the landscapes, consumerist and developmental invasion of indigenous ways of life, and the erosion of the ecological memory. Indian poems like Patel's "On Killing a Tree" and Chitre's "The Felling of the Banyan Tree" reveal the violence of ecological devastation and its cultural implications, while Southeast Asian eco-poetry stresses the issues of environmental justice, community memory and vulnerability of places. The Yearning of Seeds by Nongkynrih represents those issues in relation to the Khasi landscape, culture and environment. However, the previous research offers an appropriate theoretical background, while this project can make a contribution to it by analyzing in detail the issue of the invasion of space and place in the context of climatic crisis revealed in the selected poems. Such an approach should differentiate climate change from other kinds of environmental destruction and reveal their connection in terms of close reading.

Discussion

Invasion of Culture: Modernity and the Erosion of Indigenous Values

Inherent to culture are the contexts in which communities develop their cultural practices, knowledge, and identity. For the Khasi community, natural environment is vital not only for physical needs but also as an environment in which cultural practice, community cohesion, and values attached to heritage are inherent.As such, when modern consumerist culture and commercial development change the dynamic of this relationship, environmental change cannot be divorced from cultural change. In the essay "Khasi Hills and Khasi Culture: Reconnection in Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's The Yearning of Seeds," Sayantan Chakraborty presents a useful critical framework for making this point.

Sayantan Chakraborty describes how Nongkynrih explores the Khasi traditions and connection to the use of natural resources in the area to show why it is best to reconnect culture to nature (Chakraborty, 2020). Such a framework suggests that cultural invasion does not have to be the complete loss of a tradition. It can also take the form of a more subtle process whereby traditional values are displaced by consumerist and commercial values, along with the belief that the environment is something to be exploited rather than preserved. Such a process results in the degradation of the land and the communities which protect the environment. The beliefs which have culturally existed for the ensuring protection of nature and the indigenous would receive a setback.

It can thus, be argued that the poetry of Nongkynrih is a form of cultural criticism. Unlike modernity as a concept that focuses on progress, ecocriticism analyses the complexities and costs involved in it. The need to preserve ecological knowledge within Khasi culture is important for the reasons that it provides alternative interpretations of the relationship between man and nature. It does not necessitate the romanticization of indigenous societies but rather the preservation of cultural knowledge in light of present-day environmental challenges.

Invasion of Space and Place: Urbanisation and Ecological Displacement

It is crucial to note the difference between space and place in terms of environmental issues discussed in the poetry of Nongkynrih. Space is physical and can be organized by way of planning, building, and economy. On the other hand, place gains significance from the experiences, culture, and connections. This means that when a place is transformed, it undergoes not only physical changes but also those related to the experiences and identity of the place.

"The Parking Lot" is especially valuable for this purpose. Critics have highlighted the involvement of the poem in issues of urban planning and ecological insensitivity in the making of Shillong. In this respect, the parking lot can be viewed as a metaphor

for the priorities of urbanization – land is reorganized to provide room for more infrastructure and transport. Ecocriticism raises questions about the ecological and cultural value of the area when the commercial and administrative needs are prioritized above the environmental ones.

The relationship between the poem and the argument presented here is the relation between the change in the physical environment and the experience of the place. Urbanization might result in the decrease in green areas, change in the drainage system, increase in pollution, and pressure on the environment. However, in the region that is subjected to heavy rains and landslides, improper construction and the lack of vegetation may also be the source of environmental issues. However, these issues are a result of multiple factors, and the presence of these factors cannot be attributed to climate change alone.

This is because the poem raises the question of ecological displacement. They can still live in the same geographical location, while the community-nature connection might have been broken. When land becomes more organized economically, its cultural value becomes less obvious. Nongkynrih's poetic engagement with urban transformation therefore, allows space and place to be examined as both ecological and cultural concerns.

Rivers, Rain, and Climatic Vulnerability

Water is a crucial component in the ecological imagination of Northeast India. Water sustains the people and the landscape; it influences culture and history. It is a natural resource: Rain fall and the rivers are very significant in Meghalaya thanks to the occurrence of high rainfall, the terrain and the various hilly slopes. In poetry, water and weather are capable of symbolizing nourishment, continuity, uncertainty, and environmental vulnerability.

Poems by Nongkynrih, "An Evening by the Source of the Umkhrah River," "Rain Song 2000," and "Kynshi," serve as good examples for analyzing the significance of water and weather in literature. These poems are analyzed in relation to Nongkynrih's ecological imagination and the connection between Khasi culture and environmental issues. Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's eco-poetry makes use of rivers as important spiritual, cultural, and ecological indicators that capture the pain and the transition of the Khasi Hills from an unspoiled paradise to an urban wasteland.

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih highlights the ecological degeneration of the Dam side it was mentioned in "An Evening by the Source of the Umkhrah river" as Umiam Lake. In the poem, the poet says, (The Yearning of Seeds 2011):

> Patrolling its banks are occasional fishermen;
>
> washing the clean earth from their sturdy feet,
>
> are country maidens, blushing and giggling
>
> on smooth, swarthy water-worn stones. (Lines 5-8)

Except that, but Nongkynrih finishes quite differently. Here, he shows us the river's. dirty condition as the vehicle passes through the city:

> Nobody cares that this limpid water,
>
> the bashful maidens, the tuneful pines
>
> are rolling down to the city
>
> where life itself wallows in the filth. (Lines 13-16)

The use of ecocriticism by Nongkynrih is not only about lamenting the destruction of the environment, but rather it is about using indigenous cosmology and animism as a narrative in opposition to capitalism. The Loktak project is one of the key ecological problems in Manipur, like the. Hydro-electric project at Umiam Lake, in Meghalaya. In this poem the poet unveils the ecocentrism culture of his community and shows his yearning feeling when he was a kid, days when everything was so simple quiet peaceful, and natural. People lived harmoniously with nature. Modernization disrupts the harmony of nature, as shown through the peace and the poet laments:

> No more do I hear the morning sounds of home:
>
> birds warbling, cicadas whining, crows cawing,

chickens yapping about the yard and my uncle

readying for the cement factory (Lines 4-7)

Nongkynrih's poetry makes use of rivers as living and feeling witnesses of the destruction of the environment injustice. Increased sedimentation and rains are an allegorical SOS the death of the rivers, such as the Umkhrah and the Kynshi, is also the death of community, a loss of cultural memory and a destruction of ecological balance.

So, ecocriticism gives us the opportunity of examining the significance of a river and rains in the physical environment and in the mind of man. Rivers are not just a natural feature of the land; they maintain the ecology, mark the habitat and boost the poetic sensations of the dwellings. Same here rains function as the bearer of ecological regeneration, but if they spoil the water bodies, cause deforestation, instigate construction activities and change the climate, they too represent the fragility of man.

The idea of climatic crisis acquires a special relevance when one speaks about these relations in the face of global climate change. The modified rainfall patterns and heavy precipitation may put even more stress on fragile environments and communities. However, for the literary analysis to become valid, textual support is required from the poem before it can be stated to represent climate change. The importance of Nongkynrih's poems resides in their ability to make people think about how fragile the relations between the environment and humans really are.

Slow Violence and the Gradual Transformation of the Environment

The theory of "slow violence" proposed by Rob Nixon provides a valuable tool for analyzing environmental destruction that evolves over time rather than happens at once. Unlike an instant disaster, slow violence can be normalized due to common practices, business development, extraction of resources, and degradation of ecosystems. The impacts of such slow process can be felt especially hard by people whose identity and means of survival are strongly linked to the environment. The theory of slow violence can be applied to the analysis of the issues described by Nongkynrih in his criticism of urbanization and neglect of the environment. The gradual loss of the green areas, pollution of the water sources and alteration of landscapes may affect the ecological balance.

Cultural impacts are equally significant. Where environmental degradation has resulted in alterations in the environment where traditional knowledge and practices are maintained, environmental destruction may be understood as a form of cultural disruption. Changes in a familiar environment may lead to a break in the generational bond with the environment, and emphasis on development may neglect the indigenous viewpoint. However, care needs to be taken in applying slow violence. Environmental degradation, cultural change, and climate change are linked, but separate phenomena. This paper adopts Nixon's theory to explore the gradual and cumulative aspects of environmental change, but does not imply that all instances of social or ecological change in Meghalaya have a single source.

Poetry as Environmental Resistance and Cultural Renewal

The poetry of Nongkynrih can be read as an act of resistance against the presumption that in development one should necessarily exploit the nature without limits. With respect to the connection between the poet and Khasi Hills, cultural memory and changes in the environment, there is a great chance to question the priorities that govern present-day approach to land management. Invasion of natural space with developmental activities is vividly depicted in Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's "The Parking Lot," where the poet puts into sharp perspective the paradox of global environmental discussion in face of a local destruction: "At Nan Polok / the parking lot / humbles down / hundreds of our proudest / pines" (Nongkynrih 4-5). The image of humble pines discloses the paradox between people's public concern with environmental protection and actual priorities of the urban development. This spatial invasion acquires additional dimension in the course of becoming cultural invasion. Since forests and hills are not just the elements of the material world but the parts of the environment of Indigenous peoples through which the identity is shaped and preserved.

"Only Strange Flowers Have Come to Bloom" is an examination of cultural dislocation through the juxtaposition of natural sounds that are familiar to the poet against the strange noises brought about by the changes in the town. "No more do I hear the morning sounds of home: / birds warbling, cicadas whining, crows cawing, / chickens yapping about the yard and my uncle / readying for the cement factory" (Nongkynrih 6–7). The substitution of natural sounds with the arrival of the cement factory is a representation of the intrusion of industrial modernity into the lives of the people. Therefore, Nongkynrih draws the correlation between the physical invasion of space and cultural dislocation. The relationship between spatial invasion and

climatic crisis is further illustrated in "Rain Song 2000," where the disruption in weather conditions is depicted through the suffering of the natural environment: "so why is the sky weeping / a river of unseasonable tears? / Why is the wind shrieking night and day / and pines beating their chests in pain?" (Nongkynrih 39–40).

By personifying nature, the sky, wind and pine become witnesses to ecological imbalance, turning unnatural weather into a symbol of collective distress of environment. The reader is encouraged to view the climatic problem in connection with the other problems of the region, although imagery in the poems cannot be used to provide scientific proof of the climate change. The destruction associated with extractive development is described even more directly in "Kynshi" where "Pines like filth are lifted from woodlands in truckloads. / Hills lose their summer green, / blasted into rocks, / into pebble and sand" (Nongkynrih 44). The use of degrading imagery in which trees are compared to "filth" shows how commercial exploitation deprives nature of its inherent value, while the blasting of the hills represents the transformation of the natural environment into the commodities.

Thus, these two poems show the interrelated aspects because development enters the natural environment, industrialization affects culture, and environmental destruction exacerbates the vulnerability of both places and people. In her 2017 study, of Northeast Indian poetry, Suman Sigroha, analyzes the environmental issues discussed by poets Nongkynrih and Temsula Ao in the context of the influence of industrialization, urbanization, and consumer culture on the life of the indigenous population and its connection with nature.

This literary research confirms that regional poetry can raise environmental consciousness by demonstrating the cultural consequences of ecological exploitation. Resistance in this case should not be understood as a denial of any kind of modern development but rather as a criticism of the paradigms of progress that ignore environmental concerns, cultural heritage, and public involvement.

Poems can make all this possible by emphasizing the ecological dimension of the places that are often seen merely as economically useful. Therefore, the concept of renewal becomes very important to this theoretical framework. Ecological and cultural preservation needs far more than just yearning for the past landscape. Renewal of the connection between the community and its immediate surroundings is needed, taking into account the culture of the indigenous peoples, ecology, and sustainable planning. The issue is raised in Nongkynrih's poetry.

Findings

Ecocriticism, cultural geography, and environmental justice offer an analysis of Nongkynrih's poems that result in four main conclusions. First, there is a link between cultural invasion and ecological devastation. The replacement of indigenous values with consumerist values may undermine traditional understanding of the connection between people and nature. Thus, cultural preservation is also important for environmental sustainability. Second, the transformation of space influences the concept of place. For instance, "The Parking Lot" serves as a good illustration of the way urban development can be perceived as a threat to ecological sensitivity. The transformation of land may have both physical and non-physical consequences.

Next, climatic vulnerability is also a factor that enhances environmental concerns. Poetry pertaining to rivers, rain, and the local landscape becomes a chance to consider the connection between the environment and community. Nevertheless, the distinction must be made that climate change has to be separated from other factors that lead to destruction of the environment and climatic interpretation has to be textual. Moreover, poetry becomes an act of resistance against environmental degradation and cultural rebirth. Through engaging with Khasi landscapes and tradition in poetry, Nongkynrih motivates his readers to think about development without a sense of ecology and culture.

Thus, considering all these observations, one can interpret the invasion of culture, space, and place in terms of a connected process that involves changes to the environment, culture, and conflicting ideas of development.

CONCLUSION

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's poetic works provide a unique way of analyzing the inter-connections between Indigenous identity, environmental degradation, and the evolution of landscapes in Northeast India. Works like "The Parking Lot," "Rain Song 2000," and "Kynshi" may be analyzed from the ecocriticism perspective with regard to how altered landscapes challenge ecological responsibility and culture affiliation issues.

The idea of climatic crisis broadens the notion of environmental crisis as it focuses on the vulnerability of landscapes that have been under threat because of development and ecologic pollution. Ultimately, Kynpham's poetic works call for rethinking progress in terms of cultural memory, indigenous knowledge, and ecological preservation. Preservation of the landscape is impossible without the conservation of culture connections and the environment itself.

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