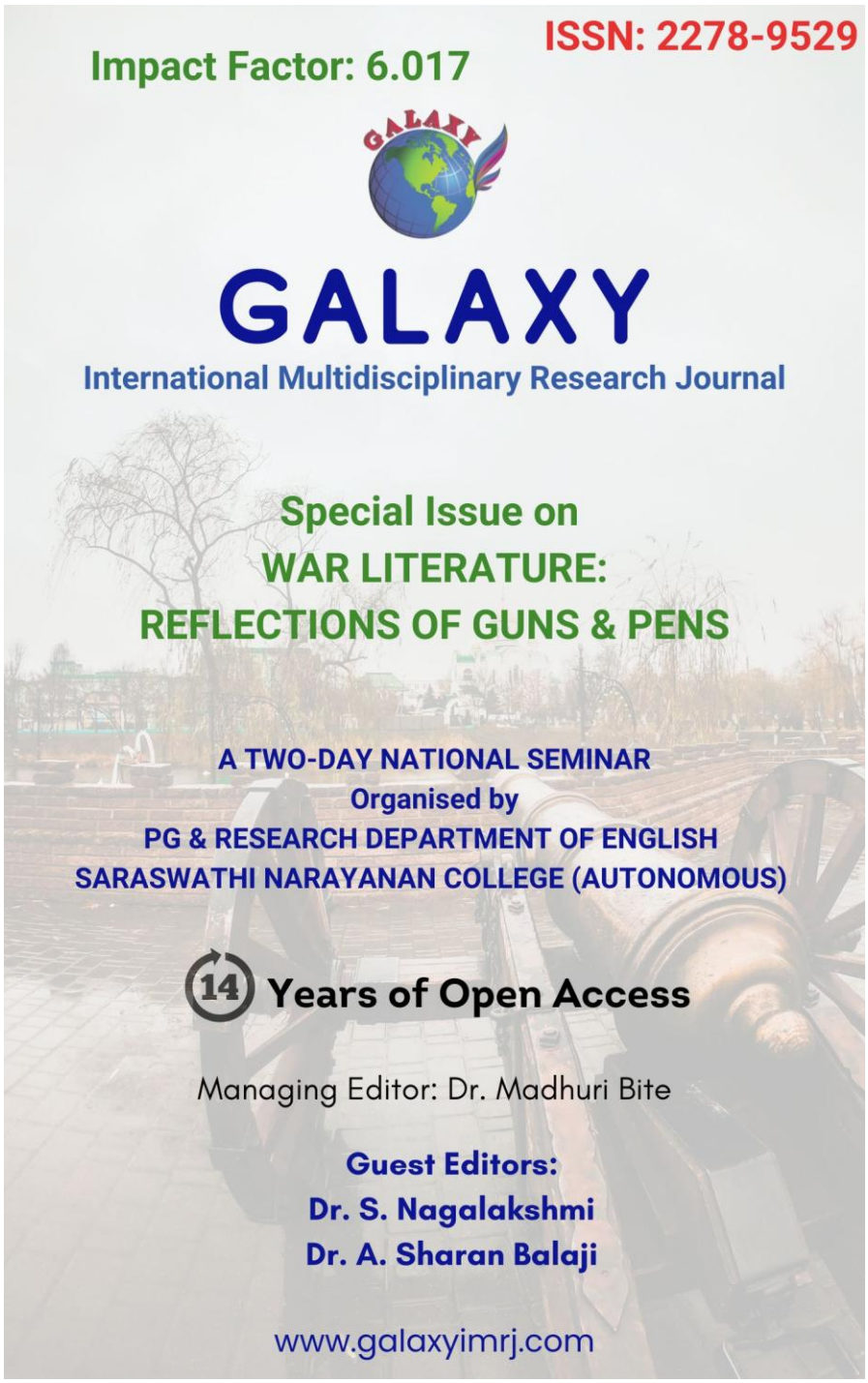


About Us: http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/
Archive: http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/
Contact Us: http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/
Editorial Board: http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/
Submission: http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/
FAQ: http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/

The Battle of Kohima in Naga Literature: A Study of *Mari*

Kavitha. J
Research Scholar,
PG & Research Department of English,
E. M. G Yadava Women's College,
Madurai. Tamil Nadu, India.
&
Dr. D. S. Parveen Banu
Research Supervisor,
PG & Research Department of English,
E. M. G Yadava Women's College,
Madurai. Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract:

When people study war, they usually look at military tactics and the political effects, not the terrible damage it does to civilians and their society. So, this study is mainly about Easterine Kire's *Mari* that focuses on the sufferings of people, especially focusing the Battle of Kohima. The novel portrays, how the chaos and violence caused by the war put Naga social norms and long-held cultural practices to the test and changed them. It also shows how the conflict affects Naga towns, families, and people's lives away from their homes and gives readers a basic way to look at Kohima, an important but little-known World War II conflict.

Mari is a unique piece of war fiction because it focusses on the everyday lives of the Naga people during the war between the Allies and the Japanese. Kire shows through the novel how important individual events are for putting together history. Native American points of view are used in the novel to challenge the main Eurocentric stories about the war. Naga peace was broken when the war started, and people had to deal with new problems and moral issues they had never seen before.

The author shows how memory and telling stories are still important parts of keeping cultural practices alive, in *Mari*. The novel uses detailed descriptions of Naga life and personal stories of hardship and community survival to keep the memory of the people who died in the war in Kohima alive forever. The story gives credit to the innocent people who lived through the terrible war without fighting. Through its complex sympathy for the Nagas, Kire's *Mari* adds to our understanding of World War II and stresses the need for a variety of historical views in public discourse. As an important piece of Naga writing, the novel keeps alive stories about this important time in history.

Keywords: Naga writing, World War II, historical narrative, native experience, war and society.

Introduction

Easterine Kire strikes an important historical incident in *Mari* by showing the pain that the Naga people went through during the Battle of Kohima. Through *Mari* one can read the real people's experiences of people who fought in war zones. At the same time the author also questions the way war stories are usually told to show how destructive war changes the society and culture. It also shows how war affects people's minds and emotions. In fact, *Mari* goes beyond being a war fiction and becomes a deep meditation on how the human spirit can endure unimaginable hardship.

The Indian town of Kohima, which is in a rough area in the northeast, was the site of the Battle of Kohima. Taking place in the spring of 1944, the Battle of Kohima was a major turning point in the Burma campaign of World War II. The Japanese Fifteenth Army tried to invade India with an attack that turned into a long battle at Kohima Ridge. This war, which happened in the East, was called the 'Stalingrad of the East' because of how dangerous and

overwhelming the fighting was. Kohima controlled the important road that connected Dimapur to Kohima, which was the lifeline for Allied troops in the area.

The battle of Kohima is important to history for reasons that go beyond combat strategy. As long as the Naga people lived in the area, they were in a terrible spot when strong forces clashed and changed their lives forever. Naga society had its own separate tribal organisation and a rich traditional cultural history before the war. It also had strong ties to its land. When the Japanese and Allies came into the area, they changed the way people normally lived, forcing them to adapt their way of life to the facts of war.

In fact, the story shows the very important moral problems that come up when people have to choose a side in a war or try to stay neutral. In the same way the history shows how civilians get stuck between warring countries. Edward Said thought that empire rule caused people to have mixed identities and different versions of history. In such a way the people in *Mari* had lot of problems inside, and their personal responsibilities changed all the time, which made their social identities less stable. The story reflects how people have to make hard decisions about who to partner with and what to do to stay alive during a war. In the village, different groups of people have to decide whether to help the Allied troops or work for the Japanese army. This makes it very hard for people to get along with each other. People in the community had a hard time deciding whether to back the Allies or the Japanese military or to stay neutral. Because it shows how difficult all of the characters' choices are, the story shows how unclear the moral issues are that come up with each choice they make.

Through the story, the novel tries shows how the Naga people found ways to stay alive in the harsh environment. Villagers come up with ways to stay alive by knowing a lot about the area and having a lot of social ties in the community. One way they do this is by acting as guides, passing on information, and distributing goods. The novel is great because it

shows how the Naga people feel, which is a mix of fear and ambiguity, through personal stories. The story shows how the Naga people defended their military area while their main goal became survival. It also shows that people who are caught between empires have to put their fight for survival ahead of their loyalty problems because the fight for survival usually comes first. In war zones, choices are made based on the need to stay alive, so family security routines like getting food and making sure everyone is safe take the place of supposed loyalty obligations.

The Naga people lived through hard times when they were forced to move and felt scared and uncertain about their situation all the time. When the battlefield came into their neighbourhood, their homes and businesses were turned into military forts, and their land was used as a storage area for troops who took their supplies. Several Naga tribes fought against the Japanese with the Allies, while another group of tribes had to work for the Japanese. Because of this, war-related tensions between different groups in communities hit a destructive level. Robert Lyman's in his book *Japan's Last Bid for Victory* (2011) says,

> The civilian Nagas fought as 'scouts and spies, guiding the British and gathering intelligence for them; they became stretcher-bearers, trench diggers, etc. Slowly, as the Japanese behaviour became more and more intolerable, even this civilian segment of Nagas would become warlike, leading the Japanese into ambushes, giving them wrong directions, and even killing them. In the process, some lost their lives. (10)

People's ideas about what was going on in this part of the war changed after the Battle of Kohima. The battle showed how strong the Allies were as they fought to stop the Japanese from making progress in their military. This terrible event showed how terrible war is by showing how it hurts innocent people caught in the middle of it. The Naga people have a strong link to the Battle of Kohima as a historical event that shapes how they see themselves

today. Easterine Kire's *Mari* is very important for keeping Naga people's stories alive so that people will remember what they went through. Through her careful storytelling, Kire gives important information about the hard times the Naga people are going through that is usually hidden behind big World War II stories.

Mari as a Cultural Chronicle: How Traditional Life Was Bustled

Mari carefully looks at how the violent effects of World War II changed the existing Naga way of life. Through her story, Easterine Kire constructs an important historical account that reveals the major societal shift that is took place in a society at war. Using old customs and a close link to nature, the first scene shows how a Naga community lives in peace. When warring groups get to the village, they break the peace and confront the locals with a situation that is very different from how they normally live. Forcing Mari's family to move with other characters shows how their traditional way of life has fallen apart completely. In this situation, the people are forced to leave their homes and farms and are forced to become refugees who are moved on land that belongs to them. When war destroys old systems and ways of doing things, it leads to deeper social changes in Naga society.

In the midst of chaos, the novel shows how the characters fight to protect their traditional heritage. At different points in the novel, characters have to protect their traditional heritage while also having to adapt to life during war. According to Homi K. Bhabha, cultural translation is one of the most important things that people do to stay alive. In *Mari* soldiers were forced to deal with problems caused by war and protect important Naga cultural values. The characters showed they are determined to protect their cultural roots even though things are hard by doing things like sharing stories, holding ceremonies, and getting together with people from other communities. Strong images in the novel shows how war changes everyday life. For example, farming, community events, and religious practices stopped

happening because soldiers and daily security demands became constant realities. Kire shows how war seriously hurts Naga social structures by talking at length about these wars. By telling stories out loud, the author protects the historical heritage of her people and keeps cultural memory alive. Sharing and remembering stories is a way for Nagas to protect their history in the world of stories. Mari shows through this story how cultural elements can stay strong even when bad things happen.

2. Trauma and Adaptability in the Mental Scars of War

The novel not only showed how the war has disturbed and destroyed their land, but also shows how it deeply affected their minds. It shows about how people's daily lives were changed by constant fear, worry, and mental trauma. There are ongoing psychic wounds from war in the characters, which shows how people react to war in a way that is often ignored. When people were forced to move, being abused, and losing loved ones, the characters in novel shows that they have lost all power. A constant state of worry was created by the constant air raids, the bodies of victims, and the loss of normal daily life. These characters had terrible nightmares because they have been through violent events and lost family members. Their thoughts keep playing over painful memories. Apt words of Judith Herman fits here, and he says,

> The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event. Thus, even normally safe environments may come to feel dangerous, for the survivor can never be assured that she will not encounter some reminder of the trauma. (27)

The novel shows that remembering and telling stories can help people heal and keep their cultural identity. Sharing stories about their lives and remembering loved ones who have died brings comfort to team members. Naga men and women get the strength to deal with and understand traumatic events through their own customs. Through their cultural practices, the novel shows how people who have been affected by war deal with shock and trauma. By having people tell stories and mourn together, the novel shows how important community tools are for helping each other and how people deal with grief. Talking about one's problems and remembering important events can help an individual to heal, as shown in the novel.

Kire mixes personal stories with historical events in a way that lets human points of view to show the whole war background. Through her characters, she takes the focus off of the normal military hero stories that make up war stories. The novel also looks at how people are hurt by conflict and how everyday people keep going even when things get hard. To get to a postcolonial point of view, the author uses culture elements and certain language features all through the story. Kire adds Naga words, sentences, and cultural practices to her story, which makes Naga culture more important. Rich multicultural aspects that go against traditional western views make the story more self-sufficient. The novel also adds to ongoing efforts to decolonise history by giving power to the Naga people, which helps recover lost, marginalised historical accounts.

Conclusion

Easterine Kire's historical novel *Mari* is a great way to learn about both Naga writing and World War II. As a result of focussing on Naga civilian experiences instead of military tactics, the story is an important revision of typical war reports. *Mari* shows how World War II destroyed Naga culture by showing the moral choices people had to make during the war and the pain that people still feel after the war. Kire shows through her writing that the human

spirit can live on, with the help of strong memories and powerful stories. The novel also shows how events that have been ignored become important when its characters rise to power and win, that shows how important it is to give the subaltern a voice.

The novel keeps the Naga people's experiences from the Battle of Kohima living as both a war story and a cultural history. Through the study of literature, it shows readers why cultural material needs to be protected and helps them learn a lot about history. Kire gives Naga people a way to share their stories in his novel, which makes sure that their words are heard and that people remember their stories. This makes Kire's work one of the most important in postcolonial literature.

Works Cited:

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford UP, 2005.

Chasie, Charles, and Harry Fecitt. *The Road to Kohima: The Naga Experience in the Second World War*. Infinite Ideas Limited, 2020.

Herman, Judith L. *Trauma and Recovery*. Basic Books, 1992.

Kire, Easterine. *Mari*. Zubaan, 2003.

Lyman, Robert. *Kohima 1944: The Battle That Saved India*. Osprey Publishing, 2004.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, U of Illinois P, 1988, pp. 271-313.