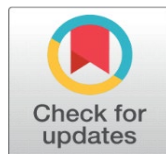


MAGICAL HARMONY OF NATURE IN THE NOVEL WHEN THE RIVER SLEEPS

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ABSTRACT

When the River Sleeps narrates the story of Ville. He start his journey from Angami village to find out the magical river to get the heart stone it has the extreme power which grants whatever it is empowered to grant you. While look up on to the novel readers could understood majority of people are residing in forest. According to them nature is a protector of human being it is also a place of retreat and sanctuary. In 2016 Easterine Kire won Hindu prize for the novel When the River Sleeps. Most of her novels picturizes the forest atmosphere and tells about the tribal communities of Angami village. The article presents the adventurous voyage of villi in the forest to find out his dream vision.

Keywords: Evil Spirits, Magic Realism, Heart Stone, Nettle Forest, Tribal People



1. INTRODUCTION

English literature is a farrago of romance, horror, supernatural powers, tragedy, satire and so forth. During the time of Elizabethan and Jacobean eras educated as well as illiterate people kept faith in magical powers. Most well known plays of Shakespeare such as Hamlet, Macbeth and Tempest, he uses the supernatural characters like apparition and infernal spirits. The play A Midsummer Night's Dream is a satirical play, Shakespeare presents supernatural creatures like Titania and Oberon in a comical way. Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy begins with a long soliloquy by the ghost of Andrea. Writers like Trailokyanath Bandopadhyaya, Tarasankar and Satyjit Ray mainly uses the psychic elements in their writings. The Nagaland writer Easterine Kire uses the gothic elements in her writing in order to give a mesmerizing effect to the readers. The novel When the River Sleeps tells about the solitary man Ville who overcome all the malignant widow spirits and accomplished his dream. The relationship between human and natural world is portrayed throughout the novel. Kire's writings are based on the real image of Nagaland; she gives a clear cut image of their traditions, rituals and their reverence for the land.

Gothic novel is a romantic pseudo medieval fiction which deals with apparition and supernatural powers. The term Gothic derives from Goths it is an ethnic group in northern Europe. Gothic novel arrives after the emergence of novel. Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* is considered as the first Gothic novel, he uses haunted castle, horror images and fantasies. Daniel Cottom in his article *I think: Therefore, I Am Heathcliff* noted the characteristics of Gothic novel as, "Portraits stir and look back at their beholders, statues bleed, suits of armor walk ... picturesque scenes open themselves to nightmares (1067)." The nineteenth century writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker, Sheridan Le Fanu and so forth contributed the gothic novels in English. Ancient prophecy, omen, overwrought emotions, the settings in a castle, horror image, dark atmosphere are the elements of gothic novel. Bertram Millhauser's film *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* contains all the gothic elements. When the River Sleeps exposes the life of tribal communities in Nagaland and their myth in supernatural characters Kire's novel *Son of the Thundercloud* and *When the River Sleeps* commonly tells about the tiger-spirits. They are known for their strength and power. As per the belief of Angamis after the death, men were turned to spirit and their spirits are turned to weretigers which means they have the capability to shift from human to tiger. They are also known as Harimau jadian their behavior and characterization are too strange. Almost 65 percentages of Christians are settled in forest and they have the strong belief in supernatural powers. They practice the custom of sacrificing the chickens. According to the Christian theology god sacrificed his life for the sin of all. To the same degree people who are residing in Nagaland sacrifices the life of chicken because they all are scared of supernatural creatures.

When the River Sleeps narrates the story of Ville, who lives a solitude life in forest. Throughout of his journey he penetrates love and jubilation around everyone. The main aim of his journey is to fulfill his desire. As per the order of forest department, Ville is a guardian of gwi, the mithuns mostly found in the hill region of Kohima. Ville walk across the wood in order to find out the sleeping river his desire is to get the heart stone, it has the untold powers. At the beginning of the novel Villie narrates the power of heart stone to the young boy Rokolhoulie, he listened to it in astonishment. Naga people have the special commitment towards Mother Nature. Mother earth is the personification of nature which nourishes our life and gives an optimistic feel to live. Forest is the simplification of tons of mysteries. It also symbolizes mother where life thrives, though one could find out umpteen of mystical creatures in forest. Ville's dream made him to take a firm decision to find out the mysterious river in his wretched journey.

If you can wrest a stone from the heart of the sleeping river and take it home, it will grant you whatever it is empowered to grant you. It could be cattle, women, prowess in war or success in the hunt. That is what is meant by catching the river when it is asleep. (When the River Sleeps 3)

The heart stone have umpteen of powers which grant cattle, women, prowess in war and success in hunt, it has some kind of magic power which attracts everyone. Ville spent out twenty five years in forest. According to Ville's vintage point, forest is the safest place than village one could trust animals rather than village people. In the amidst of his voyage he went through plethora of hardships and troubles. The rhythm of life turns up and down the downfall doesn't mean I have lost entire desire. Downfall is the first footstep for success Ville's voyage is full of hurdles made by both men and supernatural creatures. On his journey towards the river he decides to make a halt in the fields belonging to Zeliang, it is one of the most important tribal communities lives in the tri - junction of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. He settles a camp in the shed already made by the owner of the field. During the night, he encounters a tiger. Kire narrates the encounter as,

The tiger came at him fearlessly, throwing itself at the outline of the man. At the last second, Ville sidestepped and the tiger crashed into the door, breaking it, and leaving torn fragments of wood hanging on the hinges. Ville shot off a bullet above the animal's head. The sound was thunderous and the tiger sprung to its feet and leapt away in to the night. (24)

While he encounter with tiger he did not get scared of it. Nature helps Ville to be optimistic and it teaches to be strong so it helps ville to conquer fear. Every now and then he asserts forest as his life nature protects him from evil spirits and consoles him as a mother in his lonely life. Nature provides antitoxin for all the ailments. When he was stung in a nettle forest an old women Idele treat him with the natural equipments. She plucks the leaf of worm wood plant and kneads its pulp in his hand. She also gives him rock bee honey. By looking at the sun in the horizon Ville assumes time as two pm. Women gather nettle from the forest to make bark weaving, it is an art which passed from generations to make yarn - cloths. Men catch fish from the nearby river to make a tasty meal. "People work under the open skies chanting working songs. People fall asleep listening to the sounds of insects, owls, hooting and jackal in the distance" (Easterine

Kire's when the River Sleeps: A Perspective 605). Kire explains the rural life which is untouched in modernism and unmixed by the technology.

Ville continues his journey, he met another character Kani, a fisherman and family they are living in forest for so long. Fisherman's wife Subale cooked tasty food for Ville before they are going to visit his desire place. Before their voyage kani gives instruction about the magical river umpteen of people lost their life while taking the heart stone she said it in an imperceptible voice. With the help of Kani he reaches into the magical river. Ville gets astonished and his ears are resounded with cascade of mighty waterfall. The atmosphere looks so silent even the birds are their but no one could hear any sound from the mystical river. Both of them get surprised to see the sleeping river they experiences deafening silence and uncanny atmosphere. Only their inhalation process made little bit of sounds. They move wary towards the middle of the river. After staying for a long period of time, they see the spirit widow – women they are believed to be the protector of river. Their appearance creates terrific atmosphere as their chanting resembled funeral chants. It gives a strange picture of river after a while widow women disappeared from the river thus the river stopped flowing and went to sleep. "The belief river can sleep is itself a part of superstition leading into supernatural beliefs" (80). If ville needs to catch the heart stone he has to take it while river is in sleep. As per the words of Kani,

They came without knowledge, and that itself is enough to kill a man. They sought the stones they could use as charms to possess wealth. But that is not what the sleeping river is for. Certainly, if you catch it while it is sleeping, you can take out a stone from the river and use it to grant you blessings of wealth and cattle but there is more to it than that. (95).

The heart stone has the power to grant the power of wealth and cattle. Finally Ville grabbed the stone from middle of the river suddenly water flows again and struggles a lot to get out of from the river. Ville chant a slogan of spirit words as "Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, stand aside death! Kepenuopfu fights for me, today is my day! I claim the wealth of the river because mine is the greater spirit." (103) abruptly he steps out of from the river with the heart stone and left the place before the widow women come into the river. According to their tradition, if they got any success they should celebrate it. On his return journey he is asked to observe the genna day, it is a religious day. As per the custom people are restricted to do work on genna day, it is a thanksgiving day for all. Such kinds of superstitions are followed by tribal people due to lack of education.

The next day Subale packed food for him for his return journey. Subale advices him "spirits use guile. They will be appear to be good and beautiful so long as they can deceive you with appearances. Trust no one, not even yourself. Be alert all the time." (112) One who have the heart stone should be careful of the evil spirits, to get this precious stone they will deceive them. He left that place and oddly enough he come across two sisters Ate and Zote. Comparatively Zote is more dangerous and evil minded one. Both of them are called as Kirhupfimia which means one who is believed to have poisonous power. Both of them have the power to see the hidden things in strangers so everyone afraid of these two sisters, they are outcasted from their ancestral village because of their evil powers. According to the belief of tribal people if they curse anyone it would come as real. They have the power to curse anyone just spitting in the direction of the person one who they want to curse. Actually these are the false belief had in the mind of indigenous people. These superstitions blindly believed by everyone without seeking the real fact of it.

The indigenous literature focuses on the things beyond nature. Easterine Kire's novel gives a limpid picture about the false superstition of tribal people. The novel When the River Sleeps takes readers to the magical hegemony of nature where one could experience apparition, evil spirits, astonishment and suspense. In this article I highlight the importance of gothic novel in literature and how the protagonist Vilie get the magical stone after a great struggle. In this modern era literature is flourished with plethora of literary elements that could see in the work of Kire. Perseverance leads a person to wins the race it is proved in the life story of Ville, who come across all the struggles in the forest and he succeed in getting the valuable stone from the magical river.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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