

Ethnicity and Otherness in Culture-Meghalaya

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Abstract

The marginalized identities, their language and form, their cultural background, reflect their call as they narrate their everyday lives.

The Northeast writers write in 'Khasi' language to signify the Khasi hills, their dwellings and culture, as an originated exposition to be formulated and projected.

De Bonald states 'Literature is an expression of society', as quoted by Liza Charavarty in her work, 'Marginalization And The Indian English Literature'.

The poet Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's works make it comprehensible, his "Khasi" identity to have long been marginalized in councils and forums at the national levels and he often claims his people, his language and his place to have been kept so, as to become non-dominant social identities.

The political discrimination of their community makes them feel abandoned. They face alienation in their own dwellings. Their region has a complex identity crisis.

Where the North-eastern part is home to numerous ethnic communities, Nongkynrih keeps his contribution through a rich narrative account of his Khasi ethnicity, in the inclusion of literary texts and represents Indian literature.

Nevertheless, his works have been translated into Welsh, Swedish and many Indian languages too.

Keywords: 'Khasi' Language, Bible in Khasi Language in 1800, Matrilineal Society, Hynniewtrip, Otherness

Introduction

In India, writing in English with the regional background reflects the marginalized identities and their experiences, as the periodical flavours marking the Indianizing of a model Curricula by the UGC with an impact in the interpretations in teaching and research. Such an impact is a way to read and analyze the new themes of socio-economic conditions. Hence diverse literary, linguistic traditions of India premise the idea of Indianization of English studies.

A university in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Tripura will have texts in English and translated texts of their indigenous languages.

India today is enthralled by English in every socio-political changes going on in the nation as the use of the English Language strops interpretation of literary representation, the reflection of a colonial phenomenon. The literature of the Northeast, eight states

collectively, is of a unique ethnicity and culture, the effective utterance of the marginalized history an effective utterance of the marginalized history. The identity of this state is politicized with the happenings of the times and its pictures, the power or the powerlessness, and the otherness existent in the region. This routes to the history and literature as syllabuses in studies translated and available in English.

In any modern classroom, the Indian English literature of the Northeast reveals the mental sufferings, the strong protests of identity history.

The book by Dr. Hoinathing Sitthous adds to the concentrated Indianizing in the English studies. J.M. Waghmare (2012) in his article, 'Literature of Marginality' respects marginality as a term pertinent on the whole to the people groups of the world living in a state of contemptible neediness and therefore disconnected from standard life. The marginalized segments are deliberately or accidentally removed from the authority community. Writers with social responsibility offered space to the socio-economic and political divergence in their works to portray the issue of imbalance and bias in Indian culture.

Indian writers in English (poetry, prose, fiction) have sculptured and creatively interpreted the marginalized groups of the political divisions of India, the farther, North-East. The facilities and standards of living are boxed; they are restricted from the standard of a beneficial system of life.

R.K. Narayan, furnished Malgudi in his fictional work, as Thomas Hardy's Wessex in his stories, so is the writer of the Northeast, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, a true colloquist, in all his forums' conversations portrays his 'Khasi' tribe and language to be alienated due to political discrimination in the process of Indianizing of the voices of the marginalized, English literature in the classroom, facilitate students to gain understanding of the different perspectives in cultural issues. The 'Khasi' people are an indigenous tribe of the Indian state of Meghalaya. They have a rich history of their origin. Nongkynrih ruminates, as he represents his Northeast, a region to be lensed for 'otherness' in Indian literature. The poverty of his Khasi people and the political discrimination of their community make them feel abandoned. They face alienation from their own dwellings. Their region has a complex identity crisis where the northeastern part is home to numerous ethnic communities. His critical insights instantiate the theme of marginalized identities as the minority rights and cultural erasure. Khasi language spoken in Meghalaya has risen from an unwritten to a written language. It has gained historical importance as an Astro Asiatic language, with a million speakers in the Indian state of Meghalaya, which comprises of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Nevertheless, the marginalized living and experiences gain significance as about their passivity.

The people of Meghalaya speak the 'Khasi' language. It is also spoken by a sizeable people of Assam and Bangladesh.

In 'Khasi',

Kumno? is 'how?'

Hue is 'Hi'.

How are you? also ask how?'

Kumne – I am fine. Nga biang

Sngewbha – Thank you – Khub

Khublei – thank you

Ym Lei – lei

Sha – Ja – Tea & Rice Shop

Kong – woman

Bah – Man

Leit Suk – bye

with at least a million speakers in Northeast India in seven Khasi tribes, referred to as the seven

Huts on Earth, another Nine in Heaven, a 'Khasi' family is called a 'ling', a matrilineal family structure. The Khasi people are collectively called 'Hynniewtrip'.

Methodology- This paper offers a rich narrative account of the specific culture, through the experiences, of the Khasi writers, their written narratives, "lived experience" in their works of poetry, content about their place of dwellings, and their rich heritage of creativity and oneness in nature. This methodology brings in the picture of the indigenous group of the hills people of Meghalaya interconnected with the narratives of their living experiences to interpret a symbol of minority in the history of the Indian literature.

Recognized by the Government of India the 'Khasi' people are a secluded indigenous Indian group, living in and around the Khasi and Jaintia hills of the Northeastern state of Meghalaya in India. Also found in Bangladesh (Sylhet) and Assam. They are the earliest ethnic groups in India, with the modern population as 15,00,000. They are of creative nature. They are known for their creative personal names and living bridges, the natural bridges across rivers constructed out of the roots of living trees. The Khasi people didn't have a written language until Thomas Jones of the Welsh missionary helped them develop a script using the Latin alphabet.

'Khasi' is used in Primary, Secondary education, radio, television and religion. The present-day conditions are significant in the Northeast Indian English literature as they are compared and evaluated; yet have been rooted into their roots into serious research. Available in a few numbers, this Northeast literature has risen to steadfastness with upcoming writers like Mamang Dai, Mitra Phukan, Esterine Kire, and poets Robin Ngangom, Kynpham Singh Nongkynrih, Mona Zote, Esther Syiem, and Desmond Kharmawphlang and also Temsula Ao, and Dhruwa Hazarika.

A number of works of English fiction by writers from the Northeast have appeared since 2000. Siddhartha Deb's debut novel, *The Point of Return*, was published in 2002. His second novel, *Surface*, was published in 2005 as Mitra Phukan's novel *The Collector's Wife*.

Dhruba Hazarika's novel *A Bowstring Winter*, Temsula Ao's short story collection *These Hills called Home*, and Mamang Dai's short fiction *The Legends of Pensam* all came out in 2006. Anjum Hasan published her first novel in 2007. Another writer of merit is Prajwal Parajuly who has written *Land Where I flee* and *The Gurgha's Daughter*. According to Prasanta das, Reader, Dept of English and Foreign Languages, Tezpur University.

The distinct tradition of this group is that they are a matrilineal society. The youngest daughter inherits property from the mother and also the power to head, to rule, comes from the mother's line. They are also skillfully talented as they can weave, and make their environment befit their living, as they make the living trees and their roots form bridges for their moving above the water surfaces. They worshipped the creator God and had faith in nature spirits.

Through English, even exclusionary nationalisms in literary works can be overcome. The many various highly developed literatures in our regional languages have paved way for new writers and researchers to excel and register their identities in many central universities in the country.

"Literature on peace and conflict resolution consists predominantly of (a) memoirs, biographies and autobiographies of the ex-army generals, police officers, activists, ex-insurgents etc.; (b) journalistic writings with detailed chronicling of the events, incidents and organizations involved in insurgencies and movements; (c) scholarly and policy-oriented writings by researchers, advisors and consultants. (d) reports, vision documents etc. of the government, the voluntary organizations and other multilateral agencies and last but not the least (e) the literary works mostly in the regional languages" (Review of the Literature of the Northeast 2).

Today Indian literature is refined as it acknowledges the geographical and unique cultured societies, which are even mere marginalized identities of their language in their region.

As quoted in – *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities* ISSN (online) 258-1712, Volume 2 Issu July 2022 PP 14-21. By Dr Ravindra Kumar Siongh & Dr Usha Sahney.

Peter Leonard characterizes – “Marginality as being outside the standard of gainful movement”. Marginality manages socio-cultural issues, having a place with different areas of society. Such experiences of marginalized groups in India, by and large, is a pacifying sensation in the Indianized English studies. The identities of the marginalized are reflected in the process and nationalism furthered with approachability too.

As stated by Brodin, “Marginalized individuals may be socially, economically, politically and lawfully unnoticed, avoided or socially dismissed, and are in this way vulnerable to livelihood change”. With many writers and authors in English made to stray from a subject with lines of printed content, their works express their social responsibility to Indianize such cultural, socio-economic and political backgrounds.

‘Khasi’ spoken in Meghalaya, has a million speakers, in the state. As one of the three major languages spoken in the hills state, it is identified as an Austra Asiatic language, and is to get the Eighth Schedule status, for ‘Khasi’. The first Khasi Newspaper, a monthly, called ‘U Nong Kit Khubor’ was published in 1981 by a British Officer called William Williams, hence, it is an associate official language in some districts.

The local situations prevalent in the Northeast regions of Meghalaya are interpreted in the writings of many writers and poets like Robin Ngangom, Kynpham Singh Nongkynrih, Mona Zote Esther Syiem, and Desmond Kharmawphlang. This literature has its roots in serious research and has been incorporated in school curriculum and in the University Syllabi at the national levels. This is significant of the Indianizing a sub genre, a Holocene, for the empowered Indians in their regional fads. This reveals the steadfastness of Northeast literature.

Conclusion

Khasi is the medium of instruction up till class IV. It is permitted as a language to be used in the lower courts and in the Khasi district council. A department of Khasi was established in Northeastern Hill University. The researchers and the MPhil scholars could write in Khasi.

The daily newspaper “U Mawphor”, the Landmark and “Dongmusa”, the Torch were published in Khasi language. It is the language of the home, yet it is neglected in education.

Nevertheless, the writers delineate their otherness in their works, as ordeals of their marginalized dwellings. The rich culture of the people, their community, group, tribe or caste in the Northeastern regions, the plants, hills and valleys find the roots of their farm, culture and language in their narratives.

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