

IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE



The Department of English



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Eco-ethnic Study of North Eastern Indian Writers with special reference to Mamang Dai

Ms. S. Aarthi

Centuries of migration from Burma, Tibet and China to the North eastern parts of India have been a major contributing factor in creating one of the most fascinating cultural regions in the world. The "seven sisters" of the North east are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura along with Sikkim. The pollination of cross-cultural diversity among the people of these regions is deeply reflected in the multi-hued spectrum of their music, dance, folklore, and literature. There are very many prominent and promising writers from the states of North east India who are lesser known to the world. Some of the representative writers of the North eastern region are Mamang Dai, Yeshe Dorji Thongchi from Arunachal Pradesh; Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Hem Barua, Indira Goswami, Mitra Phukan, Dhruva Hazarika, Arupa Patangia Kalita, Sanjoy Hazarika, Sanjib Baruah from Assam; Arambam Ongbi Memchoubi, Thingnam Kishan Singh, Tayenjam Bijoykumar Singh, Pradip Phanjoubam, Yumlembam Ibomcha from Manipur; Patricia Mukhim, Siddartha Deb, Anjum Hasan from Meghalaya; Margaret Chalthantluangi Zama, Margaret Lalmuanpuii Pachuau, Mona Zote from Mizoram; Temsula Ao, Easterine Iralu, Charles Chasie, Anungla Aier from Nagaland and many more to name. Eco-consciousness combined with indigenous ethnicity is a significant feature in the writings of these writers.

Dance, music and oral literature are important components in the ordinary day to day lives of the tribal populace both as a community experience and individual performance. The rich culture, tradition and ethnic values of these people were sidelined by the dominant forces of the ruling class, mainstream society and the Indian government. These people who are basically tribals inhabiting the mountainous region of the North are topographically and sentimentally quiet removed from the mainland of India. Their culture, traditions, beliefs, languages and practices are indeed different. They are neglected, suppressed and marginalized and therefore do not share a common Indian identity. So their writings are powerful expressions dealing with themes of tribal identity, insurgency, ethnicity, myths, legends, traditions, mysticism, home, migration, exile, memory, etc. A bioregional ecological concern is inherent in most of their writings. They present a vista of images of the mountains, hills, rivers, myths and legends, tradition and culture, and multi-ethnicity of their regions. Contemporary literature in English from India's Northeast has multifaceted voices. Some of the recognized contemporary novelists from the North east are Dhruva Hazarika, Mitra

Belongingness: The Manifestation of the Alter-Egos in Rohinton Mistry's "Lend Me Your Light"

Dr. R. Saktheshwari

Literature sensitises the readers worldwide about various issues pertaining to abstract and concrete dimensions. It throws light on the so far murky arenas enabling humanity to understand the features peculiar to such realms. Diasporic literature attempts to analyse and project the sensibilities of the immigrant/emigrant community. The contemplations of the diasporic writers are charged with the complex web of emotions and sentiments that varies from person to person. Indian literature also has contributed and contributes to the diasporic history. The Indian writers' projection of the diasporic reality is an unbiased evaluation and account of the community's mental and physical conflicts. While some writers thrive to instil belongingness into them by writing optimistic essays like Uma Parameswaran's "Home is Where Your Feet are and May your Heart be There Too!", others' longing for belongingness could very well be sensed with the literary outputs like Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*. Whatever may be the mode, they are the reverberations of the sincere emotions felt within. Rohinton Mistry belongs to this diasporic community and his writings echo faithfully the core of any immigrant/emigrant. Born into a Parsi family, the urge to reassure his belongingness both to the community and the country is reflected through his writings. The current paper analyses his "Lend me your Light", taken from his book *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, with reference to the emotional imbalance resulting from severing one's ties from his country and its environment.

Environment plays a vital role in assuring a being's identity and individuality. The absence of rootedness leads to emotional shock that might affect the course of life and destiny. It is true that Homi K. Bhaba's notion of acculturation as a "condition of extra-terrestrial and cross-cultural initiations" (9) holds good in the reaffirmation of the scattered selves. But the journey towards acquiring such serene outlook demands time. That timeline of agony and instability is captured vividly by Rohinton Mistry by the portrayal of the two characters; Kersi Boyce, and Jamshed, whose alter-egos struggle to overcome their sense of loss and rootlessness. Kadri Tuur comments thus: "A text is always a part of an environment in the same way as a human being," and elaborates further that "A number of environmental conditions under which the text has been created, are reflected or manifested in text. We could even say that each text belongs to some extent to its environment, although the ideas presented in it may be as universal as possible" (178).

The story details the experiences of the three boys whose life styles are unique, driven with a purpose. Kersi, the narrator, is the younger brother of Percy, and Jamshed is