

CHAPTER – IV

Ecological and Eco-mystical World in the Poems of Northeast Indian Poets Writing in English

Contemporary poetry in English from India's Northeast has multi-pronged values as emerging voices on myriad ways of search for identity. It is an expression of an individual poetic self, and at the same time, it is the saga of the variegated cultures and people of the region in general. It presents the series of colourful images of the mountains, hills, rivers, myths and legends, tradition and culture, and multi-ethnic people of the region. The thematic of the multi-ethnic poetry of the region ranges from geography to politics, myths and legends to ecology. Multiple ecological concerns are notable characteristics of poetry from this part of the country. Identity crisis, secessionist strategies, sense of alienation, protests for racial autonomy and the like are some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. It has been constant conscious application of ecological perspectives by the poets as a means for an assertion of identity in their works.

Constant experiments with style, technique, thematics, or language are marked in the works of the contemporary poets from this region writing in Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri, English, or in any vernacular language of this region. Their poetry deals with the psychological and social difficulties of modern life and living and seems to be concerned of the subjective realities and predicament of their people in particular, and humankind in general. The eight different states of the region, although there has been marked a common tendency to club them under one tag, the 'Northeast', hugely varies from each other in tradition, culture, language, and religion. But in spite of this diversity, it is possible to locate some common grounds, some shared values and concerns of these writers. Besides a number of issues like identity crisis, search for roots, or contemporary socio-political atmosphere of the region, it is the biodiversity of the region, and ecological concerns of the writers predominantly seem to unite these multi-ethnic thinkers in a common platform.

A reading of contemporary poetry in English from Northeast India makes one realize the eco-awareness of the writers. This awareness plays a pivotal role in their search for identity. The deep sense of ecology plays a vital role to provide a common ground to these poets, to bind themselves together in a common goal towards the quest for identity. Their works also reflect their serious concerns of various ecological issues such as large-scale deforestation, coal and uranium mining, ethnic violence, insurgency and counter-insurgency operations — all that ultimately lead to the degeneration and degradation of ecology. Their poetry strongly advocates preservation of the biodiversity, which will pave the way of preserving their land, their native tradition and culture, and above all, their identity.

The works of translation into English from vernacular literatures have been enriching Indian poetry in English since its formative in the third decade of the 19th century. Important works like Praphulladatta Goswami's *Bihu Songs of Assam*, Hem Barua's *Modern Assamese Poetry*, 1960, Hiren Bhattacharya's *Ancient Gongs* (1985), Pradip Acharya's *Where Seas Meet* (1993), a collection of some of the lyrics of Bhupen Hazarika are some of the great attempts creating superb eco-poetry through translations.

The great practice of translating regional poems into English is also seen in other states of Northeast India. Poets, writers and translators like Robin S. Ngangom, Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, T. Bijoykumar Singh, Daisy Hasan, Paul Lyngdoh, Easterine Iralu, Rita Chakma, Kalyanbrata Chakraborti, Rameswar Bhattacharya, Dibyendu Nag, etc. have been contributed to the corpus of Indian Poetry in English with their original works as well as translations. Many of these people, who are genuinely representative poets of this region, claim critical attention also as translators. There are translations also of the folk songs of some of the tribes of Northeast India like the Hmars, Ao-Nagas, Zos, Darlongs Apatanis, Noktes or the indigenous people of Tripura speaking Kokborak. A proper documentation and publicity would draw a wide readership to these literary works and they would surely add a new dimension to the body of Indian Writing in English enlarging its existing domain.

The land of Arunachal Pradesh is enriched with different species of flora and fauna, mighty rivers, high mountain ranges and also with these varied tribes each one of whom having different languages, a vibrant culture and tradition of their own. Because of the presence of various tribes as well as varied species of flora and fauna, the region is blessed with a unique ecology. The poets from this region show ecological concerns in their poetry. Insurgency, identity crisis, a sense of alienation from the mainland are some of the dominant issues of the contemporary politics of Northeast India, and these have a resonance in contemporary poetical works of the Arunachalee poets like the poets from the other states of the region. There has been an urge of going back to their roots through their native culture and tradition. The ecology of the region has been consciously used by the poets as a means also for asserting an identity of their own.

Mamang Dai (1957-) selected to be an Indian Civil Servant who opted to become a full-time journalist as well as an environmental activist, is a reputed writer and a poet of Arunachal Pradesh who has been awarded the first ever Verrier Elwin Literary Award by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and also has been awarded Padmashri by the Government of India and several other awards. As a nature poet, she reveals life in Arunachal Pradesh, its natural beauty, tradition and culture of different local tribes, tribal myths and legends in her works. She is proud of the rich heritage of her land and believes that only it can save the tribal communities from the modern degeneration.

A keen explorer of heritage, Mamang seems to be a sentinel of traditional tribal values. Environmental crisis, profound serenity in nature, and many other indigenous problems have been her major concerns. In her poetry the 'river' becomes a metaphor for life. Mamang Dai explores her identity through the river. This is seen also in the works of other poets of Northeast as 'river' is a central image in Indian poetry in English in general as Indian English poets are mostly river poets.

She speaks of the river:

The river of dreams
 penance and pilgrimage,
 linking life's designs
 will your remember
 the golden chain
 that linked us
 in a dream? (ibidem 65)

Or again we can see in her poems animist faith of the importance of serene surrounding as she feels:

The river has soul.
 It knows, stretching past the town, from the
 first drop of rain to dry earth
 and mist on the mountaintops,
 and river knows
 the immortality of water (ibidem 29)

Eco-mystical elements are in abundance in the works of the poets from Arunachal Pradesh. Nature has a mystical presence in their works and there has been an attempt to explore through the mysteries of nature. This reaffirms the understanding that nature is not merely a passive object, but is a dynamic force that plays a pivotal role in shaping an ecological consciousness. Such a consciousness is the need of the hour when ecology is under threat primarily due to man-made disasters in the environment.

Such an eco-mystical consciousness can develop a new ethics in human beings that teaches to live in a perfectly ecological way by respecting and preserving each and every creature of nature. This concept of Creation Spirituality is present in the poetry of Arunachal Pradesh like in the poetry of the Northeastern states in general. The poetic world of Mamang Dai is full of eco-mystical images:

The yellow mustard is a field of gold. The
 slanting sun promises to return
 tilting the day like a temptation....
 Then ask the fences of love
 About this enigma.(ibidem 56)

An eco-mystical sense enables the human voice even to think about the birds,
 which have a different entity but a similar self with human beings:

I thought you loved me.
 How sad it is,
 this spring sky,
 the caresses of
 mist and vapour
 Why do wild birds cry? (ibidem 54).

Traditional values and recent ecological principles like Spiritual Ecology or
 Creation Spirituality teaches us for harmonious co-existence with the world of nature.
 Traditional tribal societies have been living with nature with a sense of awe and wonder
 mystifying its overall entity. The following lines from a poem by Dai are reflective of
 this spirit and have aneco-mystical perspective:

Without speech
 we practiced a craft,
 eaving imprints on sky walla
 coding the trailing mist,
 in silent messages
 across the vast landscape (ibidem 13)

Tribal folklores, myths and legends have also been explored which heightens the effect of ecomysticism in the poetic world of Mamang Dai. Many of the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh believe that human beings and tigers are born brothers, so the killing of a tiger is regarded as equivalent to that of killing a human being. This exhibits the age – old eco consciousness among the tribal communities and this has been explored in one of Dai’s poems, where there is an appeal to tiger to have mercy on its brother, i.e. human beings:

Yumlam Tana (1976-), is another important poet from Arunachal Pradesh. In Tana’s poem entitled “The men and the Tiger” this tribal myth is again comes to life. (Tana 2003: 14-15).

Yumlam Tana’s poetry is rooted in Arunachalee culture and tradition, particularly the traditional world of the Nyishi community— the tribal community he belongs to. His poetry explores Nyishi legends, folklores, rites and rituals and also the ecology of his native land in quest for identity and root. Search for identity, which is a significant feature of postcolonial literature, is a recurring theme in the works of the poets from Northeast India. In one of Tana’s poem entitled “The Kurta and the Pyjama” we mark a search as well as an assertion of identity:

I write in English
 Which is not my language
 You see, I am a Nyishi
 A tribal claiming to be a man.
 I am all humanity
 With no geographical boundary
 No social restrictions, no biological limitations
Nothing to divide me from my fellow men. (Tana 2003: 13)

Tana is also concerned of the veils of mysteries in nature as is seen in his poem entitled “Superstitions”:

The blind waters all over
 The darkness hides such mysteries
 That even the colours of day
 Fail to lighten the tone of its hue...(ibidem 15)

There has been a myth among different tribal communities, including the Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh that tigers and human beings are brothers. Although these two brothers have developed physical features different from each other, they are potentially same and united with one another. This myth is the manifestation of the philosophy, which in recent terminology, is known as Spiritual Ecology or Creation Spirituality. It inspires us to feel oneness with each and every object of creation. This sense of oneness would inspire the human world to honour the sacred in creation.

Tana, as a poet who is deeply rooted to his native tradition and culture, explores this myth in one of his poems and seems to re-invent a contemporary meaning in it. It shows his ecological concern as a writer. This re-creation of a world of his own exploring traditional myths and legends is also suggestive of his conscious use of ecology as a tool for obtaining a space for himself — a distinctive feature of contemporary writing from Northeast India. In that poem Tana, while exploring the myth also presents a picture of the ecology of his native land:

My brother, my mother nestled so fondly on her bosom
 Singing lullabies in the night
 And when away to the *jhum* fields in the mountains
 We played various games around the house.
 He was my playmate. He was my nurse.
 And I was his soulmate in a world

Where my young mind could stretch
 The length and breadth of imagination....
 The Tsangpo flowing through the Dibang valley
 And the plains of India
 And Bangladesh
 At last in the ocean finds the solace of brotherhood. (ibidem 14-15)

Nature is a major thematic of the poets of Assam. Yet a concern for ecology is rare in their works in comparison to the poets of the other states of the Northeast. (Das, N. 2004:8). But a mystical tone is heard in the works of some of these poets. Bhupati Das is found to be one of such poets. In his first collection of poems *May I*, he deals with nature, its mysteries and the problems of human existence:

the lonely road
 I walk it
 alone
 counting the dead leaves
 falling
 vibrations
 of my thoughts
 ripple thro' them
 and
 make the dead leaves
 alive(Das 1998 : np)

There are existential phenomena mysteriously presented in his poems. In one of his poems entitled “my prison” this issue of existence is beautifully presented that is open to numerous interpretations:

she died
 with it
 my world
 died
 and
 i stopped living. (ibidem)

The strain of mysticism is further exemplified in the quoted lines from his second collection of poems entitled *life and beyond life*:

at the lost horizon
 the moon was dying
 in the arms of the elusive god
 the blood-red sun
 came out afresh
 ambushing the night
 and the pregnant dream
 undelivered
 she cried out god
 why are you silent. (Das 2004: np)

Poetry in English from Manipur have been enriched by the works of the poets like Robin S. Ngangom, R.K. Madhubir, Memchoubi, Saratchand Thiyam, Ilabanta Yumnam etc. Of all of them Robin S. Ngangom, the Shillong-based Manipuri poet can be called the most celebrated and the most representative one. Robin's poetry, like many of his fellow poets from the state is a kind of a nostalgic search for roots. There is a quest for identity through native tradition and culture. Tribal folklores and traditions have been explored through his poetry for asserting an identity that can be claimed as his own. Robin is also concerned of the problem of insurgency in the northeast in general, which, to a large extent, is responsible for the erosion of human values as well as degradation of the environment:

I hear a wicked war is
 now waged
 on our soil, and gory bodies dragged
 unceremoniously through our rice
 fields....
 I hear that freedom comes there, only
 if escorted by army men (Ngangom 1988: 10-11)

An ecofeminist tone is often heard in Robin's poetry. His poem entitled "To a Woman from Southeastern Hills" echoes this tone:

You, woman from southeastern hills, cloud-covered
 mystery, gliding on rain, deep drink of rice wine
 with eyes closed,
 child of the dancing bamboo, unction
 of ginger on the wagging tongue.
 Your voice is soft because mountain
 streams taught your heart.
 (Ngangom 2006:18)

This ecofeminist strategy can be felt in the works of other Manipuri poets also. Memchoubi's poem "My Beloved Mother" can be studied from such an angle where a mother who is 'serene as a deep mountain wood' and 'tenacious as the earth' is carrying her husband and son in a basket on the back. When she is asked why she is carrying them, she calmly replies:

How would they survive
 If not carried by me? (Memchoubi 2003:102)

Here the mother can also be the ‘Mother Earth’ as both of them sustain life. In another Manipuri poet Saratchand Thiyam’s poem entitled “Sister” the vulnerable condition of a female in a male-dominated society is intelligently presented:

Sister, I won’t allow you to go
 Every road is reverberating
 With the deafening utterance of boots.
 Hide inside the house, sister
 Don’t you go at all. (Thiyam 2003:104)

Love of nature and motherland is amply exemplified in the other poets of Manipur as in the poet Thangjam Ibopishak who explores the environment in his poem “Manipur, Why Shouldn’t I Love Your Hills, Marshes, Rivers, Fields, Open Spaces”:

Manipur, I love your hills, marshes, rivers,
 Greenfields, meadows, blues sky.
 Why shouldn’t I love them?
 I never had a quarrel with them,
 There’s no resentment. (Ibopishak 2003:88)

The poets are equally aware of the ecological pollution and degradation of their land like R.K. Bhubonsana who voices his concern for the ecological degradation caused by a dam constructed under the Loktak Project:

Loktak Project wastes paddy fields, fishes
 Submerges by water
 Ruins people
 Deprives people of homes

Denies people of working space
 Gets on one's nerves. (Bhubonsana 2003:75)

A mystical sense regarding nature as well as a sense of belonging to it is also pervading in their poetry:

Hill, you and I have seen
 only upheaval since our birth.
 When I was torn from the universal womb
 I echoed your silent cry. (Ngangom 1994:39)

Poetry in English from Nagaland started with the publication of Easterine Kire's *Kelhoukevira* (1982). Temsula Ao's *Songs That Tell* in 1988, *Songs That Try to Say* (1992), *Songs of Many Moods* (1995), *Songs from Here and There* (2003), and *Songs from the Other Life* (2007) are consistent attempts to explore traditional and modern ecological views. Besides Easterine and Temsula, some other representative poets in English from Nagaland are Nini Vinguriau Lungalang and Monalisa Changkija. These poets speak of universal human values in their poetry and also address some of the core issues of the region. There has been a search for roots in their works exploring through their native tradition and culture. In them the ecology of their land comes to life and it is used as a means of asserting an identity.

Ecology of their native land forms a central theme of their poetry. They celebrate the hills, mountains, rivers and forests of their land and are greatly concerned of the destruction of these, which has degraded the ecology. This ecological concern is seen in all of these poets:

The rivers are running red,
 The hillsides are bare
 And the seasons
 Have lost their magic. (Ao 1995:49)

Monalisa Changkija also shows this ecological concern:

Yes, I've seen own rice fields turn
 into factories and hills
 reduced to barren brown
 our rivers have dried
 and our once sparkling fish
 lie dead on sandy banks. (Changkija 2003:216)

Nature and women become synonymous in many occasions in their poetry. Nature is tortured and exploited like a woman tortured and exploited by the patriarchal society. Such ecofeministic treatments add a powerful dimension to the works of these poets. In one of her poems entitled "Lament for Earth" in her collection *Songs That Tell*. Temsula Ao presents the Earth as a woman who is raped and has a bleak future ahead:

No life stirs in her belly now
 The bomb
 And the bleaching powder
 Have left her with no tomorrow. (ibidem 46-47)

These poets in their works reflect the philosophy of cultural ecofeminism which is a response to the exploitation, domination and degradation of women as well as nature by the patriarchal society. Such concerns for environment using the principles of

recent ecocritical theories are predominantly seen in the works of the contemporary writers from Northeast India. This is what seems to make their writing canonical.

These poets are ecomystics in many occasions. They believe in a peaceful co-existence with nature. It has been traditionally believed that the mountains are the ancestors of the Naga people. In a poem entitled “On Puliebadze” Nini Vinguriau Lungalang expresses this traditional belief and emphasizes on living ecologically. Such sentiments reflect the ecomystical world of these poets:

Stern sentinel trees silently guard
 The secret pulse that throb beneath the skirts
 Of ancient ancestress Puliebadze.
 Walk with care: for here is holy ground,
 Let not your footfall sound further
 Thaw the crisping crush of twig or leaf!
 Let then the wisps of mist that stroke
 The flanks of old Puliebadze. (Lungalang 1994:46)

An urge for going back to the roots is noticed in contemporary poetry in English from Meghalaya. A host of poets from this region have been writing in English and have already attained a powerful, legitimate and a distinct voice of their own. Robin S. Ngangom, the Manipuri poet presently based in Shillong, Desmond Lee Kharmawphlang and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih are the best known English poets from Meghalaya besides Ananya S. Guha, Esther Syiem, Donboklang Rynthathiang, Paul Lyngdoh, and Bevan L Swer. Almost all of them deal with the myths, legends, folklores and rich tradition of the land. In their poetry the natural beauty of Meghalaya is explored to the deepest extent. The conscious exploration of the ecology of their land is a means of asserting an identity. They seem to believe that the ecological degradation in their land is a threat not only to the environment alone, but also to their very identity. Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih’s poem written on the occasion of the then Prime Minister of India I.K. Gujral’s visit to Shillong depicts man’s insensibility against the nature:

When Prime Minister Gujral planned a
 visit to the city
 bamboos sprang up from pavements like a
 welcoming committee....
 Only the bamboos watched in silence
 too used to the antics of men. (Nongkynrih 2003:159)

All these ecological features are celebrated in the works of the poets from this region. They portray nature as a mysterious entity that has a profound note of mysticism behind its veil. Such portrayal of ecology in a broader canvass reaffirms their treatment of nature not merely as a passive object, but a hugely dynamic entity, full of vitality and energy, an important source of life and living. Almost all the poets from this region exhibit a strong ecological concern in their poetry. As if ecology becomes synonymous to their very existence and identity. Ananya S Guha, in his poem entitled “In Mawsynram” speaks of the ecology of Mawsyanam, the place in Meghalaya having the highest rainfall in the world:

In Mawsyanram the cloud capped hills
 Spiralled into a questioning loneliness
 Mawsyanam truly was a
 wonderous sight; (Guha 2003 :125)

Desmond Kharmawphlang in his poem “Ranikor” speaks of the ecology of his land as a medium through which he can have a peep into his ‘roots’. He is also referring to the Surma River, the river in Bangladesh bordering Meghalaya as this is also an important part of the ecology of the region:

How could the sweat and tears
 of my forefathers escape these hills
 to form silent rivers on the

plains of the Surma? (Kharmawphlang 2003:136)

The poets have been exploring through the folk-tales, myths and legends of the Khasis, the indigenous people of Meghalaya. These myths and legends show that nature has traditionally been an integral part of culture of this tribal community. It also reflects their age-old ecological consciousness conceptualizing what presently known as Deep Ecology. In Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's poetry there seems to have a conscious use of these tribal myths and legends that reflects his ecological concern as well as becomes a means of asserting an identity. Nongkynrih's poem "Ren" is based on a Khasi folk story about a fisherman called Ren who is said to have fallen in love with a river nymph, and eventually, to have followed her into the river. And thus they are united both physically and spiritually. This folk tale celebrates the nature- human relationship that bears an ecomystical sense in it. That nature is a living entity with a deeply mystical aspect can be marked in the following lines of "Lucia", a poem by Almond D Syiem:

Girl, who arrived from yawning valleys
and hills where clouds perform rituals,
show me the highway of your palms,
let me take you to silent woods of mushroom
and herbs, wet leaves, of wild berries, moist earth. (Syiem 2003:173)

But this beautiful, mystical world of nature is under threat at present. The ecological chain of being has been disturbed due to reckless attitude of human beings. In the name of modernization and technological development nature has been exploited and used to the optimum limit. In order to meet their own selfish ends human beings started viewing nature just as an object forgetting the age-old bond they share with nature. This is a major environmental issue of present times and the poets from Meghalaya are seriously concerned of this. Uranium mining is a matter of grave concern in Meghalaya at present, which is very much responsible for environmental degradation. In a poem entitled "Domiasiat" by Paul Lyngdoh the issue of environmental degradation due to uranium mining is addressed?

Draped in the hill's Sunday attire,
 you have seen summers come and go
 and still cling to mother earth's womb,
 obscure, like the famed *tiewdohmaw* of the hills. Today, a
 cacophony of
 voices
 rouse you every morning---
 from the love –calls of the
 ancient thrush to be happy
 laughter of children,
 newly arrived,
 playing cricket on a makeshift ground.(Lyngdoh 2003:146)

A lamenting voice for the degeneration of the environment is heard also in
 Kynpham S.Nongkynrih:

The barren hills
 that bear the pockmarks
 of miners and a foolish people
 that burn and cut at will,
 looks as unremarkable
 as half-naked little brats. (Nongkynrih 1992:24).

These poets have shown their serious concerns for the damage of ecology. They are quite aware of the dire consequences of ecological degradation in the name of so-called progress and development. In them we mark the similar note of protest and resentment to that of many prolific writer-cum-environmental activists, who are also very much critical of the 'developmental agendas' of the government at the cost of a degenerated ecology. Because of its rich natural 'resources' India's Northeast has been the target of the colonizers who have adversely affected the ecology of the region. Recent technological developments have accelerated the pace degeneration in the

ecosystem of the region. Contemporary writing from the region has a strong voice of protest against such ecocidal activities and propounds an ecosophy that advocates ecological preservation sticking to the native traditional values.

The degeneration and exploitation of nature is like the exploitation of women since women as mother stand for nature. Myriad ecofeminist ideals find expression in their poetry where nature and women become almost similar. Desmond L Kharmawplang's poem "Pictures" reflects this spirit:

Lightning is happily licking the clouds,
and a light drizzle falls.
Your hair is wet, damp clothes
delicately sculpt your body.(Kharmawphlang 2003:135)

Almond D Syiem's "On top of a Hill" reverberates this ecofeminist ideal in the lines that follow:

I'm standing on top of a hill which is
bare like a naked women, whose breast
have been uncovered
by a ravishing madman.(Syiem 2003:174)

Esther Syiem, explores the ecofeminist and ecomystic ideals through a Khasi legend in order to present the nature- women relationship. In the said legend, the father of a beautiful girl organized a race for all her suitors who were to run up the hills, and the winner would marry her. The legend has a tragic end where the boy favoured by the girl, even after winning the race, could not marry her as he died owing to sudden burst of his heart due to heavy breathing though he won the victory. It is believed that the girl

decided to remain on the hill to mourn his death and her fate forever as has been told in the legend. The girl narrates to her father:

Father I know you decreed this for me. My
 destiny you wrote
 on these grassy steeps?....
 You've stalled me forever
 and the future is yours for the taking. (Syiem 2003:178)

The helpless girl here may easily be the representative of women in general, and her voice is the unattended voice of the women to the patriarchal society represented here by the father. Her voice may also be the voice of nature which is always kept suppressed by the essentially male-dominated human society. The suppression of women in an essentially patriarchal society can also be seen in the following lines by Indari Syiem Warjri:

The sons became men, royal in stature
 Having wisdom gifted by the gods
 They came to rule the misty hills;
 To dwell in pinewood mansions
 Where carpets of clouds
 And cloaks of rain
 Conserve the forests of the Khasi hills. (Warjri 2003: 190).

These poetic expressions are also reflective of the varied aspects of the ecology of the land. Human civilization has arrived such a stage that it seems to lose the power to listen to the voice of nature. It even does not hesitate to commodify nature for the sake of achieving so-called prosperity and development:

For sale this battered, artistic land with its lucre-laden earth,
 our precious minerals, medicinal herbs, rare orchids,
 and trees and fields and waters,....
 our young, nubile girls, beautiful like the land itself,.... our
 cumbersome anachronistic tribal roots.....
 our pride, values, work culture,
 our sense of shame, our collective conscience. (Lyngdoh 2003:145)

It is seen in the works of the writers from Northeast India that there is a continuous urge of going back to the native tradition in search of roots. These writers strongly advocate preservation of their own culture and tradition, which they seem to believe as a powerful way of asserting their own identity amidst cultural and political hegemony. In doing so, they also emphasize on preservation of ecology, as ecology of their region and their self-identity seem to be synonymous in their perception. The above lines from Lyngdoh's poem strongly exemplify this particular consciousness of the writers from Northeast India. This certainly opens up new avenues of studying this body of postcolonial ecological writing from Northeast India.

These writers are advocates of a drastic ethical change because, according to them, only this can check the large – scale destruction of nature. In order to develop an ethic for the conservation of environment, it is necessary to go back to the traditional values. The age-old values regarding environment preservation can restore the ecological equilibrium and only this restoration of ecology can revive the root and identity of the tribal people. This has been re-iterated in contemporary poetry in English from Northeast India.

Mona Zote (1972 —) and H. Ramdinthari (1976 —), the poets of Mizoram explore Mizoram's beautiful landscape with dense forests surrounded by green hills from all sides. The landscape of the land finds a nostalgic expression in the poetry of

both Zote and Ramdinthari. A strong mystical strain and religious spirit echoes in the following lines from Mona Zote's poem entitled "Lilyum":

Thin-skinned October
 With its cold religious air
 Eyes of coal
 Veins of ice
 And the dark – enfolded insects....
 O Allah she thinks of Jesu
 When out of the honeycomb of right
 Church drums busily advertise
 The high percentage of faith (Zote 2003-204)

An ecomystical tone also resounds in the poems of Ramdinthari profoundly:

For us the fogged lights of green leaves
 and the thick lamp-post of crushed boulders
 are antipodes where we build our huts; (Ramdinthari 2003:197)

Both the poets choose their images and metaphors from the ecology, tradition and culture of their native land. The world of nature has been explored in search of metaphors in order to express their inner selves.

Rajendra Bhandari (1954-) from Sikkim, who also writes in Nepali, his first language, speaks about the ecology of the land. Preoccupied with the landscape of Sikkim with its hills, rivers, forests and people, the ecology of the land is a source of inspiration for the poet:

I haven't materialized these lines
 I've lifted them from
 the forests, the lowlands,
 the grain fields, the cliffs. (Bhandari 2003:72)

A quest for roots is a significant feature in Bhandari's poetry like his fellow poets from other provinces:

....the bomber's lonely briefcase abandoned at some junction?
 Memory's tree, lush branches
 Aden with fruits
 Where are the roots? (ibidem 7)

Many contemporary poets in English from Tripura have been greatly contributed to the large body of writing in English from India's Northeast. Bhaskar Roy Barman (1950-), Niranjan Chakma (1951-), Kalyanbrata Chakraborti (1940-), Krittibas Chakraborty, Sefali Debbarma (1957-), Chandra Kanta Murasingh (1957-), Pijush Routh, Gombhini Sorokkhaibam (1971-) are the poets presently writing from Tripura. They vehemently talk about ecology, myth and legends of their land. The ecology of the land comes to life in the following lines from Krittibas Chakraborty's poem entitled "Tripura":

One day they left beyond the dawn towards the woods
 The green corn of *jhum* and
 Terrain flowers greeted them
 They started living in the silent hills
 Across the cucumber and *futi* fields. (Chakraborty 2003:24)

That nature is a living entity and every object of nature has a soul is an ecomystical concept. This is seen in this poetic expression:

A tree's also just the same-
 Will take birth, grow, spring leaves, spread branches will
 bear flowers, will hang fruits....
 But, it doesn't have the power to say anything.
 So I, where no love is bred in hearts,
 am a frustrated woman of a society's brutal stage. (Sorokkhaibam 2003: 262)

The famous Chakma poet Niranjana Chakma has a strong concern for the Chakma people, the indigenous community of the land, and the sons of the soil who have been the refugees now. They have been driven out by the illegal migrants from Bangladesh, a dominant issue of contemporary politics of the Northeast as a whole. These displaced people have an adverse effect on the environment as a whole as the problem of displacement also has an ecological aspect in it. Niranjana Chakma tries to portray the plight of these people who have either been driven out of their land or have become refugees in their homeland:

They are displaced
 From their homeland
 By the intruders,
 Their dew-wet
 Courtyard inundated
 With tears,
 Their survival's tide
 Has been seized by
 The midnight lamentation. (Chakma 2003:240)

Ecological concerns are strongly felt in the poets writing in English from India's Northeast. Native culture and tradition, myths and legends are consciously explored in order to assert self identity. The traditional values are seen as answer to the present ecological decadence and degeneration. The bulk of their poetry can also be analyzed from eco-spiritual, ecofeminist and ecomystic points of views. The body of this postcolonial poetry in the light of the tenets of ecomysticism, ecofeminism and ecocriticism presents quite an interesting, meaningful as well as an attractively enriching analysis.

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