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Kire, Easterine. When The River Sleeps. Paperback
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When the River Sleeps is a highly captivating tale that adeptly portrays an intimate perspective of the Naga world. Through Kire's skillful portrayal, readers are introduced to various facets of Naga life and culture. The narrative revolves around the protagonist, Vilie, and chronicles his quest toward the sleeping river in order to extract an enigmatic heart stone from its core. The book furthermore covers the protagonist's expedition and endeavour to safeguard the heart stone. Kire's adept utilization of language and inventive narrative techniques effectively captivate readers, as her words shed light on significant realities such as societal challenges, cultural stigmas, traditional belief systems, and the indigenous medicinal practices of the lesser-known Tenimiya Naga tribe. In this regard, the book explored the Naga region a bit. The novel effectively reflects an “intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery” (Misra xi).

This novel wonderfully whisks readers to the Naga mountains. The location is adorned with a backdrop of abundant natural splendor and enigmatic supernatural allure. The central character, Vilie, embarks on a journey through a densely populated woodland with the aim of accomplishing his legendary

aspiration. The novel not only chronicles Vilie's quest to collect the heart stone from the heart of the slumbering river, but also provides insight into the Naga oral traditions, beliefs, and spiritual practices. The incorporation of the socio-cultural tradition of Temimiya Naga, emphasizes the significance of oral literature lineage and folklore as integral components of their way of life. The readers are captivated by the engaging narrative set in a realm where spirits possess an equal ontological status as human beings. Preeti Gill comments "Life in the Northeast (as elsewhere) is not all bleak, tragic or violent. There is love and hope in the indomitable human spirit" which the readers can experience exclusively through the pages of the novel (Gill).

During the course of the narrative, the central character acquires profound spiritual insight, enabling him to overcome malevolent entities through his recognition of the transcendent potency inherent within his own soul, ultimately leading to his successful acquisition of the heart stone. The significance of Vilie's voyage extends beyond the heart stone, encompassing the acquisition of spiritual understanding and strength. Easterine Kire herself writes "The wisdom of the stone is more spiritual than physical. It helps us discover the spiritual identity that is within us, so we can use it to combat the dark forces that are always trying to control and suppress us" (238). Hence, the work not only portrays Vilie's pursuit of accomplishing his dream but also imparts readers with insights into the lesser-known spiritual realm of tribal communities.

In addition to a diverse array of deities, spirits, and rituals that collectively influence the beliefs and behaviours of the Naga community, Easterine Kire's portrayal of Vilie's transition from ignorance to knowledge through the 'mythopoetic imaginary' writing provides insights into the eco-critical awareness of the Tenimiya Naga tribe. The protagonist's unwavering commitment spanning a period of 25 years towards the preservation of the natural environment and its unsayable residents serves as a testament to the deep-rooted eco-consciousness prevalent among the Tenimiya tribes. Vilie's dedication and devotion to nurture nature are beyond words as for him forest is his wife and he denies marrying a girl of flesh and blood. One noteworthy aspect is that the tribes consistently regard nature not as an object, but rather as a sentient entity. Kire's integration of tribal indigenous healing practices in the narrative serves to enhance the tribes' eco-consciousness thinking. In her work, Vilie acquaints her readers with many medicinal herbs like *Tierbutiepfuas*, an herb with curative properties, *Japan nba* an antiseptic leaf to relieve ache and wounds, rock bee honey to heal damaged tissues or native tobacco as sedative and insecticide.

The novel is adorned with the concept of 'eco-spiritualism', the practice of attributing divine power to the world of nature and its spirits. According to Abrams and Harpham "The common view in traditions ...envision the natural world as living, sacred thing, in which each individual feels intimately bonded to a particular physical 'place', and where human beings live in interdependence and reciprocity with other living things" echoes in the novel (99). The

intercommunion of the divine, human beings, and non-human creations on earth is an elemental belief that inspires and motivates Tenimiya Nagas to remain a true devotee to nature. They pay honour and acknowledge the creator deity *Ukepenuopti* whenever they fetch firewood or gather medicinal herbs from the forest or find animals in their traps “*Terbuomiapexiemu*. Thanks be to the spirits” (Kire 80). When Villie endeavors to extract a stone from the core of the dormant river, he is taken aback by the deceitful subcurrent. Without delay, he directs his focus towards the spiritual utterances that have been imparted to him, with the intention of establishing equilibrium with the natural realm. “Sky is my father; Earth is my mother, stand aside death! I claim the wealth of the river because mine is the greater spirit. To him who has the greater spirit belongs the stone (Kire 103). Kire's novel truly exemplifies Valerie Lincoln's (2000) idea of 'eco-spirituality' which evokes the "manifestation of the spiritual interconnection between human beings and the environment...Eco-spirituality engages a relational view of the person to the planet, soul to the soil, and the inner to the outer landscape"(228).

In accordance with the titled work *When the River Sleeps*, it may be observed that Villie's spiritual knowledge and wisdom remain inactive during the period of the river's sleep. The extraction of the heart stone has disrupted the tranquility of the river, coinciding with Villie's freshly acquired desire for spiritual enlightenment and wisdom. The individual's materialistic ambitions have dissipated, leading to a transformation into a spiritual sage who renounces worldly possessions and seeks solace within the embrace of nature. The enigmatic influence of the heart stone bestows upon him a heightened spiritual power, enabling him to attain a greater level of understanding regarding the societal dynamics and innate characteristics of its inhabitants. Kire's novel effectively amplifies the voices of marginalized individuals, providing a platform for the documentation of their cultural heritage, folkloric traditions, and indigenous customs.

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