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## The Necessity Of Repatriation Of Nagas In Correspondence Of Easterine Kire's Novel, Bitter Wormwood.

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### Abstract:

The term 'repatriation' also referred as the 'restitution', and 'return' are generally observed with the retreat of obtained tangible elements by various museums and eventually restored to the true descendants or the custodians of that particular group. In several cases it can also be referred to the restoring of individuals to the homeland in the backdrop of citizenship, nationality, war prisoners, refugees and so on. The same is the crisis for resources and the control over land and boundaries at national and international level.

The present paper posits the necessity of repatriation of Naga society from the traumatic situation of insurgency. This research article aims to highlight root problems of Nagaland, one of the northeastern states of India with the utilisation of the primary text, Bitter Wormwood authored by Easterine Kire, the Indian writer from Nagaland. The central idea of the present research is to stress on the need for peace in the Naga community against the insurgency of factionism and the race politics received. The paper urges to employ Easterine Kire's novel, Bitter Wormwood to underscore the restoring of peace as nothing less than 'repatriation' for the Naga Community.

**Keywords:** Repatriation, Naga society, Easterine Kire, Factionism

## Introduction to Research Gap:

For a society to flourish and attain a sustainable development, domestic tranquillity is a basic necessity. Domestic tranquillity is that restfulness and freedom enjoyed by the individuals of a society which are primarily ensured by different social institutions like government, law, judiciary and even religion. But excessive intervention of state bodies or even the complete liberty exercised by the individuals can lead to political unrest and turmoil. Hence a fine balance is essential for sustainable development. For a nation like India, which was under colonial rule for more than two centuries brought in freedom with towering sacrifices against the imperialism of the British. This part of history is very well etched in the minds of mainstream citizens of India. But the northeastern states excluding Sikkim, are still struggling to have the obligatory - domestic tranquillity; or the least expectation from the northeastern states of India is mere tranquillity in every household.

Northeastern states of India is definitely a melting pot of diverse culture, yet a warring play of political conflicts in terms of insurgency. The very concept of domestic tranquillity in these areas are occurring in two divisions: one from the state authorities officially putting efforts for a ceasefire and the other set is the local people who are making both official and unofficial settlements within their vicinity and neighbourhoods. All of these finally contribute to the ultimate peace which lasts only for 24 hours. (Das) To be clear with Das' perspective, there exists a collaboration from both the state officials and the localities of Naga community for maintaining peace from all kinds of disasters; however this is a short termed peace which can be ruled out in the next 24 hours. This condition signifies the fragility of the Naga community and it also is worsened by the factionism and race politics involved. Henceforth the researcher aims to critically examine the primary text, Bitter Wormwood by Easterine Kire through the viewpoint of a victimized community which is eagerly looking for peace rather than surviving.

## Objective:

- To outline the absence of domestic tranquility in the Naga community with reference to select text.
- To utilize literary and historical facts to illustrate and analyze cultural differences.
- To represent the rise of factionism inside the Naga rebellion.
- To draw attention to the power structures and racial politics that the Naga community is impacted by according to the primary text.

## Materials and methods:

The present research paper employs qualitative research and textual analysis. There is a detailed cross verification of the events narrated in the primary text of Kire's Bitter Wormwood, particularly the historical facts and the other major events pertaining to the Naga rebellion with newspaper articles. Studies with respect to insurgency not just aim in maintaining domestic tranquility but also analyses and demonstrates the cultural,

racial and political amalgamation. Therefore the research is an extension of the postcolonial domain as well. The present research paper follows MLA 9th edition of citation.

### Discussion on the necessity of Repatriation of Nagas:

Nagaland is a state from the northeastern region of India formed on 1st of December in the year 1963. In the beginning, Zapu Phizo's protracted idea of insurgency, with the aim of attaining autonomy, pioneered the northeastern states to take up the ammunition but factionism has infiltrated the real cause. Factionism, also referred as factionalism, means the tendency to split into factions or multiple demands in this criteria. Most of the northeastern states of India, agree to the point that they were never connected to the regime and cultural practices of the East India Company nor did they match the connection with the sovereign system of independent India. (Kire) With this outlook these sister states took up arms in the name of insurgency pioneered by Nagaland. The term insurgency is defined as "a protracted political military activity directed toward completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organisations". ("GUIDE TO THE ANALYSIS OF INSURGENCY" 4)

These political and protracted ideologies have also found their space in literature and Easterine Kire is a full-throated writer for the same. The novel, *Bitter Wormwood* is one such earnest reflection of the several extensions of 'Nagaland insurgency' over the past years with a literary character, Mose. Though the text initially displays historical events of the Naga state, it later sticks to the true ideology being a debacle due to various factionsims after the announcement of first ceasefire. The chapter, 'A Shot In The Fields', describes how it was an inevitable situation for Mose<sup>1</sup> and Neituo<sup>2</sup> to join the insurgency after Mose's grandmother was shot in the fields, unarmed. The lines, "We thought that if they saw us peacefully cultivating our fields, they would not harm us. But when we finished working, there was a shout and they began to shoot towards the fields." (Kire 71) Later the events follow with how most of the people give up from insurgency after the formation of statehood for Nagaland. The year 1963 from the chapter Statehood, one can estimate that there was a split in the insurgent troops. Most of them were looking for peace and a ceasefire in this year made them restart their life but on the other hand the larger chunk of insurgents were still subdued by the new identity of Nagas. They wanted an independent body and continued to be a part of the same insurgency. Chapter 'The Bomb' in *Bitter Wormwood*, explains how the real cause of insurgency was disappearing with no one leader or goal and hence paved the way for factionism. The lines, "But who kills a bunch of kids to do that?.... Yes they could have found another target, or blown it up when it was empty. It makes no sense." (125) Both Mose and Nieuto had initially joined the original cause of insurgency for the ultimate creation of a free naga society. But the text reveals how the underground activities took away the lives of innocent humans for the freedom of Nagaland. Through the discussions between the characters Mose and Nieuto, Easterine Kire backlashes against the odd actions of the underground. This incident is not just a fictitious but also a real attack which took place at Ruby Cinema Hall,

<sup>1</sup> The protagonist of the novel. Along with Nietuo, he joins the rebellion the grandmother's death.

<sup>2</sup> Mose's childhood friend who always stood by him in ups and downs.

Kohima. The place was meant for sociocultural activities held by the schools of Nagaland and more involvement by the children. Despite knowing this, the place was bombed during an event and had uncontrolled fatalities. This is seriously condemned by Mose and Nieuoto as characters of the text and demonstrate that the insurgency has taken up the path of factionism. Even after the formation of Naga statehood in 1962, the underground rebels had set down the goals of achieving freedom for Nagaland; however, the continued generation of insurgency had their personal demands based on resources, tribal needs, land and boundaries and also the ethnic beliefs. (Das 24) This ruined the peace of the localities and since then, disturbing the domestic tranquillity of this region which needs to be restored as a part of repatriation.

This is a result of factions reflecting in insurgency which has been deviating from the real cause. Therefore the present paper is only focusing on restoring or the necessity of repatriation for peace in the Naga community. The paper does not test for the existence of factions or not in insurgency, instead it probes to terminate both insurgency and counterinsurgency for the greater good and the sustainable development of India and its state, Nagaland too. The text puts forth the two poignant questions, one is factions in insurgency and the other is the exiled treatment obviously emerging out from race for the northeastern citizens in mainstream India.

The text, *Bitter Wormwood* portrays the hollowness of Nagaland state, as there exists multiple divisions in the name of insurgency and many of them being a pseudo uprisings are eating up a distinctive society of India with illegal means like drugs, coercion, extortion and subjective ideologies. For instance, “Leaders change in any organisation, and along come people who want to seize leadership, etc. The Undergrounds have been to China twice. Of course, some of those who went have imbibed Chinese Communist ideology. Don’t you see that factionalism would fight India’s war for her, simply put Naga against Naga?” (Kire 120), clearly states how these present insurgency speak of factionalism. The above quote is a discussion between Mose and Nieuoto who in their old age are discussing the real cause of naga insurgency. They point out to those pseudo insurgency which have ultimately placed a naga against a naga. With growing generation there is a major alteration done in the name of Naga insurgency and this has an insignificant impact on the overall growth of Nagaland. This is also accepted by other writers of northeastern India who are also combating their ideologies in the name of uprisings.

For instance, Aruni Kashyap’s anthology of poems from the roots of Assam, titled as *There Is No Good Times for Bad News* is filled with similar ideas. One of the poems in the book of poetry, *There’s Nothing to Worry About* expresses the anxiety and trauma of failed domestic tranquillity. Even the Assam community yearns for an eternal peace. Existence of trauma in every minute is very well represented in this poem of Aruni Kashyap with a satirical title. Depiction of insurgency and the ultimate loss of innocent civilians is explicitly pictured with an incomplete telephonic conversation between a mother placed in Assam and the grown up child. The mother is placed amidst the chaotic insurgent atmosphere where everything has become unpredictable; the uncertainty is observed in the lines,

“I ple-  
aded with her to stay home,

wait it out, because you never  
Know if they  
Have planted a series of bombs,....” (67, Kashyap)

The reference that they have planted bombs indirectly points to the rebels. But the same rebels showcase it as a reaction to the ruling arthritis and upheld their own ethnic ideologies and beliefs. This entire phenomena when found in multiple forms leads to the most dangerous factionism. Eventually domestic tranquility is lost in these faction based insurgent areas.

Temsula Ao, is another writer who speaks of the socio-economic barriers faced on a daily basis for mundane people. The book, *These Hills Called Homes* is a collection of ten stories always seen to illustrate how the Naga community are battling for basic amenities and fully searching for domestic tranquility. Therefore there is a necessity of repatriation of peace based on a mutual understanding between insurgent and counterinsurgent movements.

At the same point, the youth and the recent generation of the Naga society are reaching out to the several other parts of India but are major victims of mockery, teasing, assault in the context of race, language, food, culture, and also gender. These are a few criterias named but the socially stratified system of the mainstream and the marginalised have been victimising them more and more. The Naga community is actually living in a society of double edged sword. For instance, Mose's grandson, Neibou leaves for Delhi for higher studies with greater dreams and aspirations, all he observes is the mockery and assaults for all the students from northeastern states. It was Rakesh, who was sensible and empathetic towards the northeast and made friends with Neibou. Many incidents like, “It seemed that girl students and working girls from the Northeast were victims of carefully planned rapes and sexual attacks and the city was becoming increasingly unsafe for them.” (Kire 182); another observation by Mose stresses that not just women but also male students were under risk, “It was difficult for them to find accommodation outside the few hostels in the university and even there they were often singled out and insulted for their culinary habits, for cooking beef and pork.” (Kire 183) This further put Neibou under a lot of pressure to join for studies in Delhi. The research notes that support of characters like Rakesh is the only way out for repatriation of northeasterners in the mainstream community. Though northeasterners and mainstream citizens eventually belong to one land, the former is often targeted under the racial and cultural differences. the friendship between Neighbor and Rakesh is what indicates a complete repatriation; as younger generation of northeast, especially the naga community are moving away from insurgency and are in a notion of belonging to India. But when the same youngsters' modesty is outraged day in and night by fellow citizens of the nation then they are highly perplexed. The text, *Bitter Wormwood* directly specifies this literally in the conversation of Rakesh and Neibou. When Neibou reacts to a crime vetted out to northeastern people with furious voice “Today it's a rape, another day it is a stabbing, how are we expected to believe that we are Indians when all the racism goes on? We are served last in a restaurant and cheated by taxis and autos and even rickshaw pullers. Why do they treat us different from other Indians?” (Kire 208) To which Rakesh points out as to how different they are in all terms when compared with the fellow



Indians. However Neibou adds on to it in assertion that he too is an equal citizen of the nation by his rebound: "I know that. I am Indian on paper because when I feel up a form and they ask for my nationality, I have to write Indian. But many of the northeastern friends believe that they are ethnically Indians and when they meet this kind of treatment, they are so traumatized by it. It's deep rooted racism and its very ugly." (Kire 208) Hence even the abuse and exploitation under race needs to be curbed. Being sensible and empathetic for a fellow being confirms repatriation of your own citizen. Nevertheless Rakesh also points out not to get depressed as the same racism can be reversed and turn out to be severely gruesome as when the mainstream Indians reach the naga community there will be more chance of "Indian-hating in Naga circles" and Rakesh completes the point naming it as an "ugly cycle". (Kire 209) Therefore to maintain domestic tranquility and peace for a longer journey at both internal and external levels Indians need to understand the situation in a matured way.

### Conclusion:

The restitution or repatriation of Indian citizens both at state and national level, especially for the Naga community is possible. The primary text ensures hope and surety in the coming decades for having a better and peaceful system. The research paper aims to create awareness regarding the cultural and ethnic differences and also connects to the neglected historical facts through the literary texts. Writers like Mamang Dai, Malsawmi Jacob, Indira Goswami, Hannah Lalahnpuui, and even Aruni Kashyap reflect similar perspectives. Hence the research paper posits the necessity of repatriation with literature. As the philosophy of John Henry Cardinal Newman, a British theologian states, "To live is to grow. To grow is to change. To grow fully is to change often." (Kire 269) has now become the fundamental principles of most of the Nagas according to Kire and hence the peaceful days are not very far. Naga community is seen to give up on rebellion as both Mose and his grandchild, Neibou does not continue for any form of vengeance unlike the former, ancient ethnic practices. Thus the principles of Christ have deeply affected and are impacting Nagaland for greater good (Das 26).

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