

ENG DSC-302

Writings in English from the Northeast

Course Objective: The primary objective of the course is to familiarize the undergraduate students with the ever-developing corpus of writings in English from Northeast India, which has articulated not only what is often perceived as the region's historical marginalization but also its cultural mosaic and its politics of identity. The course intends to engage the students in exploring the term 'Northeast' both as a political category and as a literary one.

Course Outcome: By the end of the course, it is expected that the students will be able to have a better understanding of the diversity of literary production in English from the Northeast.

Unit 1: **Introductory Readings**

- i. Introduction to *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India: Poetry and Essays* – Tilottoma Misra
- ii. Introduction to *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from the India's Northeast* (Title of the Essay: "Engaging with the Northeast: The 'Outsider' Looks in") – Preeti Gill
- iii. "Articulating Marginality: Emerging Literatures from Northeast India" –Kailash C. Baral (published in *Emerging Literatures from Northeast India: The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity*, edited by Margaret Ch. Zama)
- iv. Introduction to *Into the Vortex of Migration and Identity: Emerging Discourses on Northeast India* – Dipendu Das and Anindya Syam Choudhury

Unit 2: **Short Stories**

- i. "The Curfew Man" from *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone*(2006) – Temsula Ao
- ii. "Travel the Road" from *The Legends of Pensam* (2006) – Mamang Dai
(Both the stories were also published in *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India: Fiction*, edited by Tilottoma Misra)

Unit 3: **Fiction I**

- i. *A Terrible Matriarchy* – Easterine Kire

Unit 4: **Fiction II**

- i. *The Point of Return* – Siddhartha Deb

Unit 5: **Poetry** (from *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India: Poetry and Essays*, edited by Tilottoma Misra)

- i. "The Sorrow of Women" – Mamang Dai
- ii. "The First Rain" –Robin S. Ngangom
- iii. "Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus" – Mona Zote
- iv. "Shoot" – Monalisa Changkija
- v. "Mymensingh" – Ananya Guha (from *Dancing Earth : An Anthology of Poetry from North East India*)



CAREER STUDY
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UNIT – 1

Q: What is Tilottama Misra known for?

A: She is a prominent figure in Assamese literature, known for her essays and poetry that often explore themes of trauma, violence, and women's experiences.

Q: What does her essay "Women Writing in Times of Violence" discuss?

A: It explores how women's writing in Assam serves as a form of protest, depicting the trauma and suffering of women during times of conflict and violence.

Q: What is the significance of her anthology "The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India"?

A: It's a comprehensive collection of poetry, essays, and fiction from leading writers of North-East India, covering 60 years of literary activity.

Q: What themes does her work often address?

A: Her work often explores the impact of violence, trauma, and social change on individuals and communities, particularly women.

Q: What is her notable novel "Swarnalata" about?

A: It's a historical novel set in mid-19th century Assam, exploring themes of women's education, widow remarriage, and social change through the lives of three women.

Q: What awards has "Swarnalata" received?

A: It was awarded the Ishan Puraskar by the Bhartiya Bhasha Parishad in 1995.

Q: What is distinctive about her writing style?

A: Her writing often blends literary critique with personal narrative, exploring the intersection of gender, violence, and identity.

Q: How does she approach themes of trauma in her work?

A: She approaches trauma with sensitivity, using literature as a lens to examine the human experience.

Q: How has Tilottama Misra contributed to Assamese literature?

A: She has enriched Assamese literature with her thought-provoking essays and poetry, shedding light on important social issues.

Q: What impact has her anthology had on readers?

A: Her anthology has provided a platform for diverse voices from North-East India, promoting understanding and appreciation of the region's literature.

Q: Does her work focus on women's issues?

A: Yes, her writing often explores women's experiences, trauma, and resilience.

Q: How does she address social change in her work?

A: Through her essays and poetry, she sheds light on social issues and advocates for change.

Q: What is the significance of her anthology?

A: It showcases diverse voices from North-East India, promoting literary diversity.

Q: Has she influenced other writers?

A: Yes, her work has inspired many writers and scholars to explore similar themes.

Q: How has her work impacted Assamese literature?

A: Her writing has enriched Assamese literature, providing new perspectives on social issues.

Q: Is her work widely read?

A: Yes, her essays and poetry are widely read and studied in academic circles.

Q: Does she use a unique narrative style?

A: Yes, her writing often blends personal narrative with literary critique.

Q: How does she approach complex themes?

A: She approaches complex themes with sensitivity and depth.

Q: What inspires her writing?

A: Her experiences, observations, and concerns about social issues inspire her work.

Q: Does she write in multiple genres?

A: Yes, she has written essays, poetry, and fiction.

Q: What message does she convey through her work?

A: She conveys messages of resilience, hope, and social change.

Q: How does she address violence in her writing?

A: She addresses violence with sensitivity, exploring its impact on individuals and communities.

Q: Has her work been recognized?

A: Yes, her work has been recognized and celebrated in literary circles.

Q: What is her contribution to literature?

A: She has contributed to Assamese literature, providing new perspectives and insights.

Q: What is notable about her literary career?

A: She has made significant contributions to Assamese literature, exploring themes of social justice and women's experiences.

Q: Has she been involved in academia?

A: Yes, she has been involved in teaching and research, enriching literary studies.

Q: How does her work reflect North-East Indian experiences?

A: Her writing sheds light on the region's unique cultural, social, and political contexts.

Q: What impact has her anthology had on readers?

A: It has promoted understanding and appreciation of North-East Indian literature.

Q: What is the focus of her research?

A: Her research focuses on literature, gender, and social issues.

Q: Has she edited any notable books?

A: Yes, she has edited important anthologies and collections.

Q: What is distinctive about her writing style?

A: Her writing is known for its clarity, depth, and sensitivity.

Q: Does she use literary devices effectively?

A: Yes, she uses literary devices to convey complex themes and emotions.

Q: How has she contributed to literary studies?

A: She has enriched literary studies with her research and writings.

Q: Is her work widely studied?

A: Yes, her work is widely studied and appreciated in academic circles.

Q: What is The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India?

A: It's a two-volume anthology celebrating the richness and diversity of culture through writings from the seven states of North-East India.

Q: What kind of writings are included?

A: The anthology includes poetry and essays from notable writers of North-East India, covering 60 years of literary activity.

Q: Is Tilottama Misra associated with the anthology?

A: Yes, she is one of the editors or contributors, given her prominence in Assamese literature and her work on similar themes.

Q: What themes does her work often address?

A: Her work often explores the impact of violence, trauma, and social change on individuals and communities, particularly women.

Q: Why is the anthology important?

A: It provides a platform for diverse voices from North-East India, promoting understanding and appreciation of the region's literature.

Q: How does it contribute to Indian literature?

A: It enriches Indian literature by showcasing the unique cultural, social, and political contexts of North-East India .

Q: Who are some notable writers included?

A: The anthology features a diverse range of writers from North-East India, showcasing the region's literary talent.

Q: What is the time span of the writings?

A: The anthology covers 60 years of literary activity, providing a comprehensive overview of the region's literary evolution.

Q: What themes are explored in the anthology?

A: The anthology explores themes of identity, culture, politics, and social change, reflecting the region's complex history and experiences.

Q: Why is the anthology important for readers?

A: It provides readers with a unique opportunity to engage with the diverse voices and perspectives of North-East India, promoting understanding and appreciation of the region's literature.

Q: How has the anthology been received?

A: The anthology has been well-received for its comprehensive representation of North-East Indian literature and its contribution to Indian literary studies.

Q: What impact has it had on literary studies?

A: It has enriched literary studies by highlighting the region's unique cultural, social, and political contexts, and promoting further research and exploration.

Q: What is the significance of this anthology in Indian literature?

A: It highlights the diverse voices and perspectives of North-East India, enriching Indian literature.

Q: Who are the target readers for this anthology?

A: Scholars, researchers, and readers interested in North-East Indian literature, culture, and history.

Q: How does the anthology contribute to our understanding of North-East India?

A: It provides insights into the region's complex history, culture, and experiences through literature.

Q: What kind of impact can this anthology have on readers?

A: It can promote empathy, understanding, and appreciation of the region's diverse perspectives.

Q: What makes this anthology unique?

A: It's a comprehensive collection of writings from North-East India, showcasing the region's literary diversity.

Q: How is the anthology organized?

A: It's organized into themes or genres, providing a structured exploration of the region's literature.

Q: What themes are prominent in the anthology?

A: Themes of identity, culture, politics, and social change are prominent, reflecting the region's complex experiences.

Q: Why is the anthology important for scholars?

A: It provides valuable insights into the region's literature, culture, and history, supporting research and study.

Q: How has the anthology contributed to literary studies?

A: It has enriched literary studies by highlighting the region's unique perspectives and experiences.

Q: What is the anthology's legacy?

A: It has become a significant resource for understanding North-East Indian literature and culture.

Q: What is the book about?

A: It's a collection of voices from India's Northeast, exploring themes of identity, nationhood, and alienation.

Q: Who is the editor?

A: Preeti Gill

Q: What triggered the creation of this collection?

A: The killing of Thangjam Manorama by the Assam Rifles in 2004 and the subsequent protests.

Q: What kind of perspectives does it offer?

A: Intensely personal reflections and informed political assessments on the state of the Northeast.

Q: Who are the contributors?

A: Writers, academics, and activists from the Northeast and outsiders who share a passion for the region and desire for peace.

Q: Why is the book important?

A: It provides a platform for diverse voices, promoting understanding and appreciation of the region's literature and experiences.

Q: When was it published?

A: 2010 (paperback edition in 2013 as part of the Zubaan Classics series)

Q: How many pages does it have?

A: 492 pages (paperback edition) or 602 pages (ebook edition)

Q: What is the book's focus?

A: It explores the complexities of India's Northeast region through diverse voices and perspectives.

Q: Is the book a collection of essays?

A: Yes, it's a collection of essays, articles, and writings from various contributors.

Q: What themes are prominent in the book?

A: Themes of identity, nationhood, alienation, and the region's complex history and experiences.

Q: Why is the book important for readers?

A: It provides readers with a deeper understanding of the region's complexities and diverse perspectives.

Q: How has the book been received?

A: It has been well-received for its comprehensive representation of the region's voices and experiences.

Q: What impact has it had on literary studies?

A: It has enriched literary studies by highlighting the region's unique cultural, social, and political contexts.

Q: What makes this book unique?

A: It's a comprehensive collection of voices from India's Northeast, offering diverse perspectives on the region.

Q: Who benefits from reading this book?

A: Anyone interested in understanding the complexities of India's Northeast region, including scholars, researchers, and general readers.

Q: How does the book contribute to our understanding of the Northeast?

A: It provides nuanced insights into the region's history, culture, and experiences, promoting empathy and understanding.

Q: What kind of discussions can this book spark?

A: Discussions on identity, nationhood, alienation, and the region's complex history and experiences.

Q: Is the book a valuable resource for researchers?

A: Yes, it's a valuable resource for researchers studying India's Northeast region.

Q: Does the book offer new perspectives?

A: Yes, it offers new perspectives on the region's complexities and experiences.

Q: How does the book address identity issues?

A: It explores the complexities of identity in the Northeast region through diverse voices.

Q: What kind of impact can this book have on readers?

A: It can promote empathy, understanding, and appreciation of the region's diverse perspectives.

Q: What is "The Peripheral Centre"?

A: A book of voices from India's Northeast.

Q: Who edited the book?

A: Preeti Gill.

Q: What themes does it explore?

A: Identity, nationhood, and alienation.

Q: Why is the book important?

A: It provides diverse perspectives on the Northeast region.

Q: Who is Preeti Gill?

A: Preeti Gill is an independent literary agent with over 20 years of experience in the publishing industry. She's also the founder of Majha House, a literary and cultural space in Amritsar, and Café Kikli, a pop-up book café and library.

Q: What are her notable works?

A: She has edited notable books like "The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast" and co-edited "Insider Outsider: Belonging and Unbelonging in North-East India" with Samrat Choudhary .

Q: What is "The Peripheral Centre" about?

A: It's a collection of voices from India's Northeast, exploring themes of identity, nationhood, and alienation. The book takes inspiration from the mass demonstrations that arose after the death of Thangjam Manorama in 2004.

Q: What can readers expect from the book?

A: Readers can expect diverse perspectives on the Northeast region, including intensely personal reflections and informed political assessments .

Q: What is "Insider Outsider" about?

A: It's an anthology that explores the experiences of being simultaneously insiders and outsiders in Northeast India. The book features scholarly essays, personal accounts, and poems.

Q: Who are the contributors?

A: The contributors include writers, academics, and activists from the Northeast region and beyond, sharing their experiences and perspectives .

Q: What is the book's significance?

A: It's a comprehensive collection of voices from India's Northeast, providing diverse perspectives on the region's complexities.

Q: Who is the editor?

A: Preeti Gill, a renowned expert on women's issues and conflict in Northeast India.

Q: What themes does the book explore?

A: Nationhood, identity, alienation, and the complex factors affecting the region's relationships with the rest of India.

Q: What kind of contributors are included?

A: Writers, academics, and activists from the Northeast and outsiders who share a passion for the region and desire for peace .

Q: Who published the book?

A: Zubaan, an independent feminist publishing house based in New Delhi.

Q: Is the book available in different formats?

A: Yes, it's available in paperback and e-book formats, with 492 pages in the paperback edition.

Q: How has the book been received?

A: It's been praised for its comprehensive representation of the region's voices and experiences, offering valuable insights into the complexities of Northeast India.

Q: Is the book a valuable resource?

A: Yes, it's a valuable resource for researchers, scholars, and anyone interested in understanding the Northeast region's culture, history, and experiences.

Q: What is the book about?

A: It's about emerging literatures from Northeast India, exploring themes of marginality, identity, and culture.

Q: Who is the author?

A: Kailash C. Baral, a professor of India Studies at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.

Q: What does the book discuss regarding marginality?

A: It explores how writers from Northeast India articulate marginality, negotiating between traditional and modern ways of life.

Q: How do writers from the region address identity?

A: They often delve into the past, retrieving ancestral customs and beliefs to recreate alternative histories and reclaim their identity.

Q: Why is the book important?

A: It provides insights into the complexities of Northeast India's cultural, social, and literary landscape, highlighting the region's unique experiences.

Q: What kind of impact can this book have on readers?

A: It can promote understanding and appreciation of the region's diverse perspectives, encouraging readers to engage with the complexities of marginality and identity ¹.

Q: What is the book's main theme?

A: Nationhood, identity, and alienation in India's Northeast region.

Q: Who edited the book?

A: Preeti Gill.

Q: What kind of perspectives does the book offer?

A: Diverse perspectives from writers, academics, and activists on the region's complexities.

Q: Why is the book important?

A: It provides valuable insights into the region's culture, history, and experiences.

Q: Who published the book?

A: Zubaan, an independent feminist publishing house.

Q: What impact can the book have?

A: It can promote understanding, empathy, and appreciation of the region's diverse perspectives.

Q: Is the book a collection of essays?

A: Yes, it's a collection of essays, articles, and writings from various contributors.

Q: What inspired the book?

A: The death of Thangjam Manorama in 2004 and the subsequent protests.

Q: What themes are explored in the book?

A: Nationhood, identity, alienation, and the complex relationships between the Northeast region and the rest of India.

Q: Who are the contributors?

A: Writers, academics, and activists from the Northeast region and beyond.

Q: Why is the book significant?

A: It provides a platform for diverse voices and perspectives, promoting understanding and empathy.

Q: Who can benefit from reading the book?

A: Researchers, scholars, and anyone interested in the Northeast region's culture, history, and experiences.

Q: Who is the author of "The Portrait of a Lady"?

A: Khushwant Singh

Q: What is Khushwant Singh's writing style known for?

A: His writing often explores themes of identity, culture, and relationships with a touch of humor and satire

Q: What was Khushwant Singh's profession besides being an author?

A: He was a lawyer, journalist, and politician

Q: What are some notable works by Khushwant Singh?

A: Some notable works include "Train to Pakistan", "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale", and "The Company of Women"

Q: What is Khushwant Singh's contribution to Indian literature?

A: He is known for his insightful portrayals of Indian society, culture, and politics, making significant contributions to Indian literature.

Q: Who is Kailash C. Baral?

A: Kailash C. Baral is a renowned professor of India Studies at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.

Q: What are his notable positions?

A: He is the former Pro Vice-Chancellor of EFLU and former Director of the Shillong Campus of the EFL University.

Q: What are his research interests?

A: His research interests include critical theory, India Studies, and literary analysis.

Q: What books has he authored or edited?

A: Some notable works include "Theory after Derrida: Essays in Critical Praxis" and "Cultural Forms and Practices in Northeast India". He has also edited "J.M. Coetzee: Critical Perspectives" and co-edited "Narrative Cultures of North East India: Traditions, Texts and Representations".

Q: What is his current affiliation?

A: He is currently the Vice Chairman of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS) under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Q: What other roles has he held?

A: He is a trustee of the Forum on Contemporary Theory and has been involved in various academic and scholarly activities .

Q: What is the book about?

A: The book explores emerging discourses on migration and identity in Northeast India, delving into the complexities of the region's cultural, social, and political landscape.

Q: Who are the authors?

A: Dipendu Das, a renowned professor, legal researcher, and author, and Anindya Syam Choudhary.

Q: What is Dipendu Das's background?

A: Dipendu Das teaches English at Assam University, Silchar, and specializes in Theatre Studies. He's also a creative writer and poet with a published Bengali short story collection, "Briter Bairey".

Q: What are Dipendu Das's other roles?

A: He's the Convener of the Indian Centre for Child and Human Rights (ICCHR) and Patron of the Centre for Academic Research and Excellence (CARE).

Q: Why is this book important?

A: It provides valuable insights into the region's migration and identity issues, offering a nuanced understanding of Northeast India's complexities.

Q: Who can benefit from reading this book?

A: Researchers, scholars, and anyone interested in understanding the cultural, social, and political dynamics of Northeast India .

Q: What themes does the book explore?

A: Migration, identity, and emerging discourses in Northeast India.

Q: What kind of insights does the book offer?

A: Valuable insights into the region's complex cultural, social, and political landscape.

Q: Who is Dipendu Das?

A: A renowned professor, legal researcher, and author who teaches English at Assam University, Silchar.

Q: What is Anindya Syam Choudhury's expertise?

A: Although specific details about Anindya Syam Choudhury's background are limited in the provided context, the book suggests he is knowledgeable in the areas of migration and identity in Northeast India.

Q: Why is this book significant?

A: It provides a nuanced understanding of Northeast India's complexities, shedding light on migration and identity issues.

Q: Who can benefit from reading this book?

A: Researchers, scholars, and anyone interested in understanding the cultural, social, and political dynamics of Northeast India

Q: What does the book discuss?

A: Emerging discourses on migration and identity in Northeast India

Q: What kind of insights does it provide?

A: Insights into the region's complex cultural, social, and political landscape

Q: Does the book focus on specific communities or regions within Northeast India?

A: The book might explore various communities and regions, but specific details depend on the chapters and authors' focuses.

Q: How does the book approach the topic of migration?

A: It likely examines migration's impact on identity, culture, and society in Northeast India.

Q: What perspectives do the authors bring to the topic?

A: As experts in their fields, Dipendu Das and Anindya Syam Choudhury offer nuanced perspectives on migration and identity.

Q: Are the authors' perspectives influenced by their backgrounds?

A: Yes, their experiences and expertise likely shape their perspectives on the topic.

Q: Can this book contribute to policy-making or social change?

A: By shedding light on migration and identity issues, the book could inform policy-making and social initiatives.

Q: How might readers benefit from this book?

A: Readers can gain a deeper understanding of Northeast India's complexities and the challenges faced by migrants and communities .

Q: Can this book be used as a resource for academic research?

A: Yes, it's a valuable resource for researchers and scholars studying migration and identity in Northeast India.

Q: How might this book contribute to the field of migration studies?

A: It provides new insights and perspectives on migration and identity, advancing the field.

Q: Who is the target audience for this book?

A: Researchers, scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in Northeast India's migration and identity issues.

Q: Is the book accessible to non-academic readers?

A: While it's geared towards academics, non-academic readers interested in the topic may also find it valuable.

Q: What areas of research might this book inspire?

A: Further research on migration, identity, and cultural dynamics in Northeast India.

Q: Can this book serve as a foundation for future studies?

A: Yes, it provides a solid foundation for exploring these topics further .

Q: How does the book contribute to our understanding of Northeast India?

A: It sheds light on the region's complex migration and identity issues, offering new perspectives.

Q: Does the book challenge existing narratives about Northeast India?

A: Possibly, by presenting emerging discourses and nuanced insights.

Q: What methodology did the authors use?

A: The book likely employs a qualitative research approach, analyzing discourses and narratives.

Q: How do the authors engage with existing literature?

A: They probably build upon and critique existing research on migration and identity in Northeast India.

Q: Why is this book relevant today?

A: Migration and identity issues are increasingly important globally, and this book provides valuable insights into these topics in the context of Northeast India.

Q: Can this book inform policy or social initiatives?

A: Yes, its insights could inform policies and initiatives addressing migration and identity issues in the region [1].

Q: What makes this book significant in the field of migration studies?

A: Its focus on Northeast India's unique migration and identity dynamics.

Q: How does the book contribute to our understanding of identity?

A: By exploring how migration shapes and reshapes identity in the region.

Q: Who would benefit most from reading this book?

A: Researchers, scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in Northeast India's migration and identity issues.

Q: Is the book suitable for undergraduate students?

A: Possibly, depending on their level of expertise and interest in the topic.

Q: What future research directions might this book inspire?

A: Further studies on migration, identity, and cultural dynamics in Northeast India, and comparative studies with other regions.

Q: Can this book inform interdisciplinary research?

A: Yes, its insights could inform research across disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies.

Q: Who is Dipendu Das?

A: Dipendu Das is a renowned professor, author, and researcher who teaches English at Assam University, Silchar. He specializes in Drama

Studies, New Literatures in English, Indian English Writing, and Translation Studies.

Q: What are some of Dipendu Das's notable works?

A: He has contributed to books like "Into the Vortex of Migration and Identity: Emerging Discourses on Northeast India" and has delivered lectures on topics like the trajectory of Indian English literature .

Q: Who is Anindya Syam Choudhury?

A: Anindya Syam Choudhury is a professor of English at Assam University, Silchar, specializing in ELT, Stylistics, Indian Writing in English, and Northeast Studies.

Q: What are Anindya Syam Choudhury's research interests?

A: His research interests include World Englishes, English Language Education, Stylistics, and Writings in English from Northeast India ^{3 1}.

Q: Can this book influence public discourse on migration and identity?

A: Yes, by providing nuanced insights and challenging stereotypes.

Q: How might the book impact policymakers' understanding of migration issues?

A: By offering evidence-based insights and recommendations.

Q: How does this book compare to other works on migration and identity?

A: It offers a unique perspective on Northeast India, filling a gap in existing literature.

Q: Does the book build upon existing research?

A: Yes, it likely builds upon and expands existing knowledge on migration and identity.

Q: Might there be future editions or updates?

A: Possibly, if new research emerges or the topic remains relevant.

Q: Would future editions include new perspectives or chapters?

A: Likely, to keep the book current and comprehensive.

Q. Write a short note on the Essay and Poetry by Tilottoma Misra.

A. Tilottoma Misra is a significant literary figure known for her scholarship on the literature and cultures of Northeast India, particularly Assam, as well as her focus on gender and the nationality question. Her essays examine how female writers use literature to protest and depict the trauma of conflict, exploring themes of displacement and the impact of political violence on the psyche. She is the author of influential works such as *Literature and Society in Assam* and edited *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India*, showcasing the region's diverse literary traditions and cultural evolution under external influences like colonialism and globalization.

Misra's essays highlight the way women's writings from Northeast India serve as a powerful form of protest against a background of political violence. She argues that these narratives go beyond mere

representation, delving into the lived trauma and psychological impact of conflict on women.

She explores the complex relationship between oral and literary traditions in North East India, where many communities possess rich oral histories but lack formal written texts. Misra notes how this influences narrative styles and literary development as writers adopt and adapt existing languages and forms.

A central focus of her work is the interplay of gender and the "nationality question," particularly as experienced by women in a region often affected by social and political upheaval.

Her scholarship provides insights into the historical and cultural changes in the literary landscape of the region, acknowledging the influence of colonialism, missionary activities, and globalization.

Literature and Society in Assam: A Study of the Assamese Renaissance (1987): An early foundational work examining the literary landscape of Assam.

The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India

(2011): A seminal work she edited, which compiles and presents the diverse literary outputs from the seven North-Eastern states.

Swarnalata

(1991, English translation 2012): Her acclaimed novel, which she also translated.

Kameikhar Ghar

(2013, English translation High Wind, 2020): Another significant work showcasing her literary talent and translated by her.

Tilottoma Misra is a vital voice in understanding the literature and cultural identity of Northeast India. Through her critical essays and edited anthologies, she illuminates the challenges and triumphs of marginalized communities and their literary expressions, particularly those of women navigating complex socio-political environments.

Q. Write a short note on voice from the indian north east essay by preeti gill.

A. "Voice from the Indian North East" refers to essays within the anthology, *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast*, edited by Preeti Gill. The collection was inspired by protests against the killing of Thangjam Manorama and offers a platform for personal accounts, academic perspectives, and activist insights into the region's long-standing conflicts, national identity issues, and the alienation experienced by its people. The essays explore the challenges, insecurities, and uncertainties faced by communities in the Northeast due to decades of low-intensity warfare and conflict.

Preeti Gill discusses the different streams of literature that have emerged as a direct result of the turbulent history of the Northeast. Literature, like other art forms, shares a dialectical relationship with society and with history and geography. This is particularly true in the case of the Northeast where recent histories have had such a major impact on the writing that has emerged from the different states. 'Terror lore', a term coined by poet Desmond Kharmawphlang to describe the stories that emerge from societies besieged by collective fear and insecurity, works very well to describe the dominant thread that colours much of the literature from the Northeast. The first time I travelled to the region was in search of creative writers for an issue of *The Book Review*, a New Delhi-based journal. As I read and researched, and interviewed writers in Guwahati, Shillong and Kohima, I heard stories that astounded me, for the Northeast does not get much attention in the English-language 'national' press or in the national consciousness.

The new literature of the region, mostly in English, has “sprung from the staccato cry of machine guns” and reflects the changes sweeping across the landscape. As Easterine Iralu writes in biographical pieces, curfews and gunfire were part of her growing up years in Nagaland. Temsula Ao too, sees conflict as a major trend in the writing from the Northeast, the others being identity and the idea of the nation. Younger voices from Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh are much more Westernised compared to an earlier generation, and they have lost touch with their roots, says Ao. The older writers are moored in their tradition and culture, and she talks about Esther Syiem’s Oral Scriptings where Syiem uses a lot of characters from mythology and folk stories. Mamang Dai does the same thing in her Legends of Pensam. Ao also writes about her own people and uses their myths for her arresting collection Songs of the Other Life.

An interesting insight into diaspora writing by young writers living in Bangalore and Delhi is provided by Mitra Phukan, well-known Assamese writer. She says they write of a ‘remembered Assam’, about their memories of home, of life in joint families, of their reactions to what is happening in their beloved homeland.

Despite the literature reviewed above, life in the Northeast (as elsewhere) is not all bleak, tragic or violent. There is love and hope in the indomitable human spirit. In much of the writing there is the serenity and mysticism that is so much a part of the landscape of the region. Each writer from the region is closely rooted within his/her own culture, tradition and history and this is something that provides depth and substance to their writing.

UNIT – 2

CHAPTER – 1

The Curfew Man

Q.What is the main character's role as a "Curfew Man"?

A.Satamba is a government informer who patrols the town during the restricted hours of the army-imposed curfew to spy on his fellow Naga villagers, particularly those who have joined the underground insurgent groups.

Q.Why does Satamba become a "Curfew Man"?

A.He accepts the role of informer and spy due to a combination of the fear of government retaliation and the promise of extra income, as his government superiors coax him into this network of spies.

Q.What is the primary conflict for Satamba?

A.Satamba's conflict is a moral and psychological dilemma, as he initially accepts the informant job but eventually comes to despise it when the information he provides leads to violence and atrocities committed by the army against innocent civilians.

Q.How does Satamba resolve his internal conflict?

A.He resolves his dilemma by intentionally and violently damaging his own knee, a choice that forces the authorities to allow him to retire and escape his role as a government informant.

Q.What does his wife represent in the story?

A. Satemba's wife, who disapproves of his work and desires peace, symbolizes resilience, deep wisdom, and moral integrity within the story.

Q: Who is the protagonist of "The Curfew Man"?

A: The protagonist is Constable Satemba, a Naga man coerced into becoming a government informant.

Q: What is Satemba's primary internal conflict?

A: Satemba is caught in a moral dilemma. He initially agrees to be a spy out of fear and for extra income but is tormented by guilt when his information leads to army atrocities against innocent people.

Q: What role does Satemba's wife, Jemtila, play in the story?

A: Jemtila symbolizes feminine resilience and moral integrity. She berates Satemba for his actions and prioritizes peace over money, influencing his decision to find a way out of his predicament.

Q: How does Satemba resolve his moral dilemma?

A: He takes drastic action to escape his role as an informant. He smashes his own knee, forcing the authorities to let him retire on medical grounds.

Q: What does the story's "curfew" represent?

A: The curfew symbolizes the oppressive atmosphere of fear, violence, and limited freedom under military rule. It dictates the boundaries of normal life and forces people into difficult choices.

Q: What broader themes of These Hills Called Home are reflected in "The Curfew Man"?

A: The story captures several of the anthology's central themes:

Political Conflict: It depicts the friction between the Naga tribe and the government, showing how ordinary people are caught between nationalist forces and insurgent groups.

Psychological Trauma: It explores the guilt, fear, and moral complexity experienced by those living in conflict zones.

Resilience: It highlights the strength and resolve of the Naga people, particularly the women, in the face of oppression.

Q: How does the story's climax reflect a deep understanding between Satemba and Jemtila?

A: Though heartbreaking, the act of self-mutilation and Jemtila's quiet acceptance show a deep, unspoken understanding. Jemtila bravely takes on the burdens of their life while tenderly nursing her husband, recognizing the heavy price paid for his freedom and peace.

Q: What is Satemba's life like before he becomes an informant?

A: Satemba is a retired constable of the Assam police. He is living a relatively peaceful, though financially strained, life with his wife, Jemtila, relying on a small pension.

Q: What incident prompts the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) to recruit Satemba?

A: The SDO enlists Satemba after the army's unsuccessful attempts to gather information on underground Naga insurgents. Since Satemba is a local, he is seen as a more effective source of intelligence.

Q: How does Satemba's self-inflicted injury illustrate his character?

A: The final, drastic act of smashing his own knee shows Satemba's desperation and deep moral anguish. It is the culmination of his internal struggle, as he chooses physical injury and poverty over the moral injury of betraying his own people. This act highlights his ultimate devotion to his community and his sense of identity.

Q: How does the encounter with the other "curfew man" affect Satemba?

A: Satemba is profoundly disturbed by the encounter. Realizing that he is not alone in his predicament, he sees a reflection of his own inner turmoil in the other man. This shared experience solidifies his resolve to end his role as a spy, no matter the cost.

Q: What does Satemba's knee injury symbolize?

A: The knee injury is a complex symbol:

A release: By incapacitating himself, Satemba frees himself from his morally compromising job.

A sacrifice: It represents the heavy price paid by ordinary Nagas for peace and security.

A loss of identity: The physical disability mirrors the "broken" identities of many Nagas, who are caught between their traditional culture and the demands of modern conflict.

Q: How does the military presence in the story affect the entire community?

A: The military presence imposes a constant atmosphere of fear and suspicion. It disrupts normal village life and creates an undercurrent of violence and danger. The villagers' lives are subject to the arbitrary rules of the army, such as the night curfew, and they are vulnerable to atrocities.

Q: What is the significance of the wife, Jemtila, in the climax of the story?

A: Jemtila's quiet support after Satemba's self-mutilation is critical. She bravely accepts the heavy burden of his decision and cares for him tenderly, demonstrating the quiet strength and resilience of Naga women in the face of immense adversity. Her wisdom and moral fortitude guide Satemba, even if her actions are understated.

Q: How does the story address the theme of betrayal and allegiance?

A: "The Curfew Man" poignantly explores the difficult choices forced upon Nagas by the conflict. Satemba's initial agreement to become an informant is a betrayal of his community, driven by fear and circumstance. His ultimate decision to cripple himself, however, represents a reaffirmation of his loyalty to his people, even at great personal cost. The story shows that in such conflicts, clear-cut allegiance is often impossible.

Q: How does the narrative style of "The Curfew Man" contribute to the story's overall mood?

A: Ao uses a subtle and quiet narrative style to depict the village life under the oppression of the curfew. This creates a sense of foreboding and tension that builds gradually, much like the internal pressure Satemba experiences. The understated prose highlights the profound impact of violence on the psyche of ordinary people living in a war zone, where "violence becomes a mode of life".

Q: What does the story imply about the nature of power and violence?

A: "The Curfew Man" suggests that power, wielded by military forces and the state, corrupts and perpetuates a cycle of violence. The army uses Satemba, a powerless individual, to exert control over the community. The story exposes the tactics of inflating terror to justify the army's presence and portrays the tragic consequences for the ordinary Naga people.

Q: What is the significance of the other "curfew man" that Satemba meets?

A: When Satemba encounters another man hired to spy on his own people, he is horrified by the reflection of his own betrayal. This shared experience confirms the systemic nature of the oppression and solidifies Satemba's resolve to escape his morally compromising role, regardless of the consequences.

Q: What is the primary conflict between the Nagas and the Indian government that provides the context for this story?

A: The conflict stems from the Naga people's demand for an independent state, which the Indian government has denied. The government has used the army to impose its power, leading to a long history of insurgency and military interference. This broader political conflict is the stage on which Satemba's personal tragedy unfolds.

Q: How does Satemba's physical infirmity evolve throughout the story?

A: Satemba begins the story with a bad leg, a pre-existing condition that limits his options. This initial vulnerability is what allows the authorities to exploit him. By the end of the story, his self-inflicted injury on his other leg makes him completely disabled, physically incapacitating him but also freeing him from his moral and emotional burden. His physical state becomes a metaphor for his journey from being morally "lame" to finally achieving integrity at a heavy price.

Q: How does the setting of a "war zone" influence the behavior and relationships of the characters?

A: In the war zone, suspicion and fear erode trust within the community. For Satemba, this creates a constant sense of paranoia and makes it impossible for him to feel safe. The violence and constant threat also strain personal relationships, as seen in the dynamic between Satemba and Jemtila, where Jemtila must bravely bear the consequences of her husband's choices.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. "The Curfew Man" by Temsula Ao is a short story from her collection *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* that portrays the suffering and disruption caused by the Indian government's military presence and strict curfews in the Naga region during the 1950s and

1960s. The story explores the challenges of daily life under the military's control, the fear and loss of identity experienced by Naga people, and the moral compromises forced upon them, such as individuals like Satemba becoming informants to survive, highlighting the profound impact of the conflict on ordinary lives and communities.

The story is set against the backdrop of the Naga freedom struggle, detailing the military crackdown and its effect on the civilian population.

The enforced curfews drastically alter the villagers' routines, disrupting family life and social interactions and creating a constant sense of unease and isolation.

The military's presence and the fear of violence make it difficult for the villagers, especially young men, to maintain their identity and a sense of normal life.

Some Nagas, like the character Satemba, are compelled by circumstances to take on difficult roles, such as becoming government informants, which can create internal conflict and division within the community.

The "Curfew Man" becomes a symbol of the oppressive authority and the government's presence that perpetuates the suffering of the Naga people.

Despite the harsh conditions, the story also touches upon the resilience of the Naga people as they navigate these challenging times, though the overall tone is one of pain and loss.

Satemba takes on the role of a "Curfew Man," someone who moves about the village during the army-imposed curfew hours to spy on his fellow Nagas suspected of being insurgent sympathizers.

His job is a dangerous and thankless one, as he is despised by his community for cooperating with the forces enforcing the oppressive curfew.

The work preys on Satemba's conscience, and he is portrayed as a pitiable, conflicted figure rather than a malicious one.

He eventually quits the job, feeling a sense of relief, which highlights the inescapable circumstances that led many young Nagas to work for either the armed forces or the underground insurgency.

The story explores the profound psychological and social damage inflicted on individuals and the community by the violence and conflict.

The struggle for identity: The story demonstrates how the conflict creates confusion and divides among Naga youth, who are forced to make choices that pit their economic survival against their identity and national movement.

The dehumanizing effect of conflict: The story highlights the way violence disrupts community relationships and erodes personal morality.

Resilience and dignity: Despite the brutality and cruelty faced, the story, along with others in the same collection, shows the resilience and enduring spirit of the Naga people.

This short story is part of Ao's collection *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* and is a powerful depiction of the human cost of political turmoil in Nagaland.

CHAPTER – 2

The Legends of Pensam"

Q. Who is the author of "The Legends of Pensam"?

A. The author of "The Legends of Pensam" is Mamang Dai.

Q. What is the setting of the novel "The Legends of Pensam"?

A: The setting of the novel is in Arunachal Pradesh, a northeastern state of India.

Q. What does "Pensam" mean in the context of the book?

A: In the context of the book, "Pensam" means "the in-between place," referring to the space between the known and the unknown, the physical and the spiritual.

4. Name one major theme of "The Legends of Pensam".

A: One major theme of the novel is the interplay between tradition and modernity.

Q. Who are some of the main characters in the book?

A: Some of the main characters in the book include Hoxo, Moyir, and Tara.

Q. How does Mamang Dai blend folklore with contemporary issues in the novel?

A: Mamang Dai blends folklore with contemporary issues by incorporating the myths and legends of the Adi tribe into the narratives

of the characters' lives, showing how these stories influence their actions and beliefs in modern times.

Q. What role does nature play in "The Legends of Pensam"?

A: Nature plays a significant role in the novel, serving as a backdrop for the stories and as a vital element in the cultural and spiritual life of the characters.

Q. How does Mamang Dai explore the concept of identity in the book?

A: Mamang Dai explores the concept of identity by highlighting the characters' struggles to balance their traditional heritage with the changes brought by modernity and external influences.

Q. What narrative style does Mamang Dai use in "The Legends of Pensam"?

A: Mamang Dai uses a fragmented narrative style, weaving together various stories and perspectives to create a tapestry of the community's life.

Q. What is the significance of oral traditions in the novel?

A Oral traditions are significant in the novel as they preserve the history, culture, and values of the Adi tribe, and they play a crucial role in shaping the characters' identities and worldviews.

Q. How does "The Legends of Pensam" address the theme of change and continuity?

A: The novel addresses the theme of change and continuity by depicting how the characters navigate the changes brought by

modernization while trying to maintain their cultural traditions and values.

Q. What is the role of storytelling in the Adi community as depicted in the novel?

A: Storytelling in the Adi community is depicted as a means of preserving history, imparting wisdom, and reinforcing social bonds. It is a crucial way of keeping the culture alive across generations.

Q. How does Mamang Dai portray the relationship between humans and the supernatural in the book?

A: Mamang Dai portrays the relationship between humans and the supernatural as intertwined and ever-present, with spirits, ancestors, and myths influencing the characters' lives and decisions.

Q. What is the impact of external influences on the Adi tribe as shown in the novel?

A: The impact of external influences on the Adi tribe includes challenges to their traditional way of life, cultural assimilation, and the struggle to retain their identity amidst modernization and political changes.

Q. In what way does "The Legends of Pensam" reflect Mamang Dai's own background?

A: "The Legends of Pensam" reflects Mamang Dai's own background as an Adi woman from Arunachal Pradesh, drawing from her intimate knowledge of the region's culture, traditions, and the issues faced by its people.

Q. How does Mamang Dai depict the generational differences in the novel?

A: "Mamang Dai depicts generational differences by showing how older characters cling to traditional beliefs and practices, while younger characters are more open to change and influenced by modern ideas and lifestyles.

Q. What role do myths and legends play in the personal lives of the characters?

A: Myths and legends play a crucial role in the personal lives of the characters by guiding their actions, decisions, and understanding of the world. These stories provide moral lessons, cultural identity, and a sense of continuity with their ancestors.

Q. How does the environment influence the culture of the Adi tribe in the novel?

A: The environment deeply influences the culture of the Adi tribe, as their customs, rituals, and daily lives are closely tied to the natural world. The rivers, forests, and mountains are not just physical entities but also hold spiritual significance.

Q. Describe the significance of the title "The Legends of Pensam".

A: The title "The Legends of Pensam" signifies the collection of stories and myths from the "in-between place" of Pensam, reflecting the blending of the physical and spiritual realms and the coexistence of past and present in the characters' lives.

Q. How does the novel address the theme of community?

A: The novel addresses the theme of community by highlighting the interconnectedness of the characters' lives, their shared history, and the collective memory that binds them together. The community is depicted as a source of strength and identity.

Q. What is the role of women in the novel?

A: Women in the novel play vital roles as bearers of tradition, storytellers, and central figures in the family and community. They are portrayed as strong, resilient, and integral to the preservation of cultural heritage.

Q. How does the novel explore the conflict between tradition and modernity?

A: The novel explores the conflict between tradition and modernity by presenting characters who struggle to adapt to new ways while trying to maintain their cultural roots. This tension is a central theme, reflecting the broader societal changes faced by indigenous communities.

Q. How do the characters deal with loss and change in the novel?

A: The characters deal with loss and change through storytelling, rituals, and a deep connection to their cultural heritage. These elements help them find meaning and continuity in the face of personal and communal transformations.

Q. What does the river symbolize in "The Legends of Pensam"?

A. The river in "The Legends of Pensam" symbolizes the flow of life, continuity, and the connection between the past and present. It is a constant presence in the characters' lives and a source of sustenance, spirituality, and identity.

Q. How does Mamang Dai use language to convey the cultural richness of the Adi tribe?

A: Mamang Dai uses descriptive language, local terms, and vivid imagery to convey the cultural richness of the Adi tribe. Her writing captures the rhythms, textures, and nuances of the community's life, making the readers feel immersed in their world.

Q. What impact does migration have on the characters and the community in the novel?

A: Migration impacts the characters and the community by introducing new ideas, opportunities, and challenges. It leads to a mixing of cultures, potential loss of traditional practices, and a redefinition of identity as individuals and as a community.

Q. How does the novel depict the relationship between humans and nature?

A: The novel depicts the relationship between humans and nature as symbiotic and respectful. The characters see themselves as part of the natural world, with a deep reverence for the land, animals, and natural phenomena that sustain their way of life.

Q. In what ways do the characters find harmony between the spiritual and material worlds?

A: The characters find harmony between the spiritual and material worlds through rituals, storytelling, and a deep respect for their cultural heritage. They integrate spiritual beliefs into their daily lives, maintaining a balance between the seen and unseen.

Q. How does Mamang Dai address the concept of home in the novel?

A: Mamang Dai addresses the concept of home by portraying it as a place of belonging, memory, and identity. Home is not just a physical space but also an emotional and cultural anchor for the characters, grounding them in their community and traditions.

Q. What lessons do the myths and legends in the novel teach? A. The myths and legends in the novel teach lessons about morality, resilience, the importance of community, and the interconnectedness of all life. They serve as guides for behavior and provide a sense of continuity and identity for the characters.

Q. What is the role of elders in the community as depicted in the novel?

A: Elders in the community are depicted as custodians of knowledge, tradition, and cultural values. They play a crucial role in passing down stories, conducting rituals, and guiding the younger generation.

Q. How does Mamang Dai address the theme of isolation in the novel?

A: Mamang Dai addresses the theme of isolation by highlighting the physical and emotional distances between characters, the challenges of living in remote areas, and the isolation felt due to cultural and generational changes.

Q. How does the novel reflect the author's own experiences and background?

A: The novel reflects Mamang Dai's own experiences and background as a member of the Adi tribe and as someone who has witnessed the changes in Arunachal Pradesh. Her intimate knowledge of the culture and landscape adds authenticity to the narrative.

Q. Describe the significance of dreams in the novel.

A: Dreams in the novel are significant as they often convey messages from the spiritual world, offer insights into the characters' subconscious, and provide guidance or warnings. They are an integral part of the characters' belief system.

Q. How do the characters' relationships with their ancestors influence their actions?

A: The characters' relationships with their ancestors influence their actions by providing them with a sense of duty, guidance, and continuity. Ancestral spirits are believed to watch over and protect the living, and characters often seek their blessings and advice.

Q. What challenges do the characters face in maintaining their cultural identity?

A: The characters face challenges such as modernization, migration, external influences, and generational shifts that threaten to dilute or alter their cultural identity. They struggle to preserve their traditions and values in the face of these pressures.

Q. How does the novel depict the impact of political changes on the community?

A: The novel depicts the impact of political changes through the community's interactions with government authorities, the imposition of new laws and policies, and the influence of political movements. These changes often create tension and uncertainty.

Q. What is the role of festivals and rituals in the community?

A: Festivals and rituals play a crucial role in the community by marking important events, strengthening social bonds, preserving cultural heritage, and connecting the community to their spiritual beliefs and the natural world.

Q. How does Mamang Dai use symbolism in the novel?

A: Festivals and rituals play Mamang Dai uses symbolism to deepen the narrative, with elements like the river, forest, and dreams representing broader themes such as life's journey, interconnectedness, and the spiritual realm. These symbols enrich the storytelling and provide layers of meaning.

Q. What is the significance of oral history in "The Legends of Pensam"?

A: Oral history is significant as it preserves the collective memory of the community, ensuring that stories, traditions, and values are passed down through generations. It is a vital means of cultural transmission and identity.

Q. How do the characters navigate the tension between individual desires and communal expectations?

A: The characters navigate this tension by seeking a balance between fulfilling personal ambitions and adhering to communal responsibilities and traditions. They often face dilemmas that require them to weigh their own needs against the well-being of the community.

Q. Describe the role of nature in shaping the characters' identities.

A: Nature shapes the characters' identities by being an integral part of their daily lives, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. The natural

environment influences their worldview, values, and sense of belonging, making it a core aspect of who they are.

Q. How does Mamang Dai portray the resilience of the Adi people?

A: Mamang Dai portrays the resilience of the Adi people through their ability to adapt to changes, maintain their cultural practices, and find strength in their community and traditions. Their resilience is evident in their storytelling, rituals, and daily life.

Q. What are some examples of cultural assimilation depicted in the novel?

A: Examples of cultural assimilation include characters adopting modern education, wearing contemporary clothing, and integrating into larger societal structures while still trying to retain their traditional customs and values.

Q. How does the novel address the concept of time?

A: The novel addresses the concept of time by blending past, present, and future through its narrative structure. Stories from different times are interwoven, reflecting the cyclical nature of life and the enduring presence of history in the characters' lives.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. The Legends of Pensam by the noted former civil servant, journalist and poet, Mamang Dai, is a delightful blend of myth and history of the tribe of Adis of Siang valley that spans Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet. A raconteur par excellence, Mamang brings her personal knowledge of the primitive customs and beliefs of her people to recount the many legends that influence the lives of Adis. Mamang is in search of her own roots and she documents these tribal lores, as she admits in a later interview, so that they are preserved and not lost and forgotten in the sweep of modernisation. “Ours is an oral tradition you know, I was trying to meet people and collect and record these oral narratives. You know, the small histories which were getting lost and when you talk to people even small things can trigger these memories off.”

She writes, “In our language the word ‘pensam’ means ‘in-between’. It suggests the middle, or middle ground.” In the narration, pensam is literally the middle-ground between myth and reality governing the lives of Adis, and also the transitory phase between the traditional and modern ways of their life. Mamang also suggests that in the world of these beliefs anything can happen and everything can be lived. As if to substantiate this, she starts the book with the story of a boy, Hoxo, ‘who fell from the sky’ and was carried by Lutor to his village. Lutor and his friend had been drafted to work on a massive road project by the ‘migluns’ (the British) across the Siang valley. When they return after 3 years, they bring along a basket containing the child. Lutor’s friend tells the villagers, “There was great noise and fire in the sky and our son fell to earth.” Accepted by the tribe unquestioningly, Hoxo goes on to lead an eventful life and play a key role in the stories that unfold. In the last story, the aged Hoxo is shown spending time with an antique pair of binoculars with his granddaughter. The stories in between take the reader through a fascinating ride over a long period of time and

tribal beliefs, from the legend of the origin of the tribe to modern times of development that throw their lives and customs into disarray.

The Legends of Pensam is a set of stories interconnected across a few generations of a family that makes the book more of a novel. There are a host of memorable characters steeped in traditional tribal beliefs and living vulnerable lives influenced by spirits, shamans and unnatural events. “People have premonitions – women dream dreams, babies are born who grow up unnaturally fast, like deer or lion cubs.” A fisherman has a vision of Biribik, the monstrous water serpent and as everyone could have predicted dies within a year unable to recover from the aftereffects of that terrible vision. This also augurs that something unexpected was bound to happen. So no one is surprised when Hoxo’s father, Lutor, is killed in a hunting expedition mistakenly shot by his own friend. Such deaths are accepted as being caused by displeased nature or spirits.

Like the majority of tribes inhabiting the central belt of Arunachal, the Adis practice an animistic faith that is woven around forest ecology and co-existence with the natural world. Under the malign influence of spirits anything can happen in a life – persons get unnaturally killed in hunting expeditions, children suffer strange illnesses, houses get gutted in fire, husbands go astray. These things happen because certain rites are not performed by people of this or earlier generation. Shamans play an influential role in the tribe as they have the power to exorcise the bad spirits and restore some order in life.

The stories also recount historical developments in the tribal area which was opened up to the world in the 19th-20th centuries. In 1911 a British political officer, Noel Williamson, who had been working among the tribes for two decades, set out on a mission to explore the course of river Siang flowing through the territory of Adis. An angry Adi struck

him down in the village of Komsing. Though the exact cause for this was not known, some believe this could have been due to seduction and romance between a local woman and a Britisher that led to this terrible punishment in retaliation. Not only Williamson but 48 of his accompanying sepoy and coolies were also killed. This massacre resulted in a punitive expedition by the Britishers in 1912, the Abor expedition, to capture the culprits and banish them to Andaman Islands. A memorial stone to Williamson was erected in Komsing where it stands to this day. After this the whole of Siang valley was opened up for exploration and several villages brought under British administration. Presence of migluns (foreigners) in the region had become common thereafter.

One of the most memorable stories in the collection is that of young Nenem, whose great beauty attracts the attention of David, a British officer posted in the region, and the romance that blossoms between them. Mamang handles the ardent love, as it progressively consumes the lovers and leads to a passionate union, with great tenderness. The affair has a sad ending, though, when David is transferred elsewhere and Nenem is unable to leave her roots and go with him. The pangs of separation is well handled. Nenem turns philosophical and moves on with life. “No one dies of love. I loved him, and now I am enough on my own.”

After some years Nenem resigns to her fate and gets married to Kao and bears a girl. As time passes she derives contentment with what she has – a home, a husband and a daughter. Their village is ravaged by floods after a few years and they have to move to another place. That’s when she cannot take the pain and goes to the river one day only to suddenly collapse and pass away.

Mamang’s language is charming. She transports the reader to the Siang valley with her vivid and lyrical description of mountains, the rivers, the rain and life of the people. One gets immersed in her narration of

legends and history of the tribe. As one reviewer says, “not a word is misplaced, nor a metaphor unnecessarily added.” One of her endearing poetic descriptions of nature-



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UNIT – 3

A Terrible Matriarchy

Q: What is the significance of the title, "A Terrible Matriarchy"?

A: The title is ironic, as it highlights how a patriarchal system's negative aspects can be embodied and enforced by a woman in a position of power, making her own family's matriarchal structure a source of oppression rather than empowerment.

Q: Who is the protagonist, and what is her struggle?

A: The protagonist is Dielieno, a young Naga girl who faces constant suppression from her grandmother. Her struggle centers on fighting for her education, which the grandmother opposes, believing it will hinder her marriage prospects.

Q: How does the novel critique traditional gender roles?

A: The novel critiques how women themselves perpetuate gender discrimination within a patriarchal society. The grandmother's actions demonstrate how deeply ingrained beliefs about women's roles in the household and their supposed superiority in domestic labour can lead to the suppression of other women, regardless of their position in the family hierarchy.

Q: What is the ultimate message of the novel regarding power and equality?

A: The novel emphasizes that achieving equality requires more than just overturning one system for another; it requires challenging oppressive systems and dismantling the internalised patriarchal beliefs that lead to gender inequality and the suppression of women's agency.

Q. Who is the protagonist of the novel?

A. The protagonist is Dielieno, a young Angami Naga girl who is sent to live with her grandmother.

Q. Why is Dielieno sent to live with her grandmother?

A. Dielieno's grandmother wants to mold her into a traditional and submissive Naga wife and mother, believing girls should focus on household chores rather than education.

Q. What does the "terrible matriarchy" in the title refer to?

A. The title ironically refers to the grandmother, Vibano, who is a powerful female figure but uses her authority to enforce patriarchal norms. She is a product of a male-dominated system and perpetuates it by suppressing other women.

Q. How does the grandmother treat Dielieno differently from her brothers?

A. The grandmother favors the male children, particularly Dielieno's brothers. She denies Dielieno privileges, gives her a larger share of household chores, and even discriminates against her in the distribution of food.

Q. What is the grandmother's view on girls' education?

A. The grandmother opposes girls' education, believing that an educated girl will not be able to find a good husband. She thinks a girl's value comes from her skill in domestic work.

Q. Does Dielieno manage to get an education despite her grandmother's disapproval?

A.Yes. Despite the obstacles and her grandmother's beliefs, Dielieno proves her wrong by excelling in her studies and eventually getting a job.

Q. How does the novel conclude regarding Dielieno and her grandmother?

A.At her grandmother's deathbed, Dielieno comes to understand the cultural and historical forces that shaped her grandmother's actions and ultimately forgives her.

Q. What does the novel's focus on food highlight?

A.Food is used as a metaphor for the patriarchal power dynamics within the family. The unequal distribution of food, especially meat, symbolizes the marginalization and secondary position of women in Naga society.

Q. What does the story reveal about Naga society's gender dynamics?

A.The story explores the complex gender dynamics in Naga society, showing how patriarchal traditions are upheld not only by men but also by women, such as the grandmother. It shows the tension between traditional roles and modern aspirations.

Q. What genre does this novel belong to?

A.A Terrible Matriarchy is a Bildungsroman, or a coming-of-age story, tracing Dielieno's journey from an oppressed young girl to a mature and successful woman.

Q. Who is Vibano, and why is she so controlling?

A. Vibano is Dielieno's grandmother and the "terrible matriarch" of the novel. Shaped by her own past in a patriarchal Angami society, she believes a woman's security comes from being a dutiful wife and mother. Her harsh methods stem from this belief, as she tries to impose what she sees as a secure future for Dielieno.

Q. How does the novel portray Dielieno's mother?

A. Dielieno's mother is often portrayed as passive and submissive, fearful of Vibano's authority. She is caught between her own submissive behavior, influenced by her upbringing, and her love for her daughter. She helps Dielieno by providing small acts of kindness and explains Vibano's motivations.

Q. What is the significance of the difference in food distribution in the family?

A. The unequal distribution of food, especially meat, is a powerful symbol of the patriarchal hierarchy. The male children receive bigger portions, while Dielieno is given leftovers. This shows Dielieno's inferior status in the household and highlights the systemic gender discrimination enforced by her grandmother.

Q. What does the book reveal about inheritance laws in Naga society?

A. The novel shows that Naga society is patrilineal, meaning property is passed down only through the male line. This practice reinforces the importance of sons over daughters and explains why Vibano so favors her grandsons. Dielieno, being a girl, cannot inherit property, making her future, from Vibano's perspective, less secure.

Q. How does the novel explore the theme of intergenerational trauma?

A. The book explores how patriarchal attitudes and traumas are passed down from one generation of women to the next. Vibano's own difficult experiences in a male-centric world lead her to perpetuate the same oppressive cycle with Dielieno, believing she is protecting her. The novel shows how cycles of oppression can be broken when Dielieno chooses a different path.

Q. How does Dielieno challenge her grandmother's expectations?

A. Dielieno challenges Vibano by succeeding in her education despite all her grandmother's discouragement. Her scholastic and professional achievements prove Vibano's beliefs about educated women wrong, showing that girls are capable of great things.

Q. What is the significance of the reconciliation scene at the end?

A. The reconciliation between Dielieno and her grandmother at Vibano's deathbed is crucial. Dielieno, now a mature woman, is able to move past her resentment and see her grandmother not just as her oppressor, but as a product of her time and culture. This moment allows Dielieno to let go of her anger and find peace with her past.

Q. What is the role of oral storytelling in the novel?

A. Oral storytelling is a central element of the narrative, with Dielieno narrating her own experiences. This storytelling style is reflective of Naga tradition and serves to preserve a woman's lived experiences, giving voice to those who are often silenced within a patriarchal system.

Q. How does the book present the intersection of modernity and tradition?

A.The novel contrasts the traditional Angami village life, with its old beliefs and customs, with the modern changes brought by education. Dielieno's journey shows the tension between these two worlds, and how she must navigate her own path between traditional expectations and modern aspirations.

Q.. Why is Dielieno sometimes called "Lieno" and other times "Dielieno"?

A.Dielieno's name is revealed to mean "errand girl," reflecting her role under her grandmother. Her family often shortens it to the more affectionate "Lieno". This shift in naming highlights how Dielieno's identity is shaped by the perspectives of those around her, especially her grandmother, who initially sees her only as a tool for housework.

Q. Why is the novel's title ironic?

A.The title is ironic because the society portrayed is not a true matriarchy, but a patriarchal one in which the grandmother, Vibano, uses her power to enforce patriarchal norms. Her harsh rule is a consequence of the patriarchal society, rather than a form of female empowerment.

Q. How does the concept of "intergenerational patriarchy" apply to the novel?

A.The novel shows how patriarchal attitudes are passed down through generations of women. Vibano, having suffered under a male-dominated system, internalizes its beliefs and imposes them on her granddaughter, Dielieno.

Q. What role does Dielieno's brother, Leto, play in her life?

A.Leto is one of Dielieno's brothers who shows her support and kindness, especially during her difficult childhood with their grandmother. His actions demonstrate that not all men perpetuate the oppressive system.

Q. How does the novel address the themes of tradition versus modernity?

A.The novel contrasts the grandmother's traditional views, which are based on strict adherence to Naga customs, with Dielieno's modern aspirations for education and a life outside traditional gender roles. The story explores the tensions between these two forces.

Q. What is the significance of the female ghost that Dielieno encounters?

A.The novel reveals that the spirits of old women were greatly feared in Naga lore. This reflects how patriarchy can engulf and suppress women even after their death, portraying them as malevolent figures rather than victims of their circumstances.

Q. How does Dielieno's education impact her relationship with her grandmother?

A.Dielieno's pursuit and achievement of an education become a direct challenge to her grandmother's beliefs. While it initially creates conflict, Dielieno's success ultimately proves the grandmother's traditional views on women's roles wrong.

Q. What does the novel imply about women's complicity in their own oppression?

A.The novel suggests that women, like Vibano, can become agents of patriarchal traditions by internalizing and enforcing discriminatory norms, thereby continuing the cycle of oppression.

Q. How is the theme of female resilience explored?

A.Dielieno's story is a testament to female resilience. Despite the hardships and emotional abuse she endures, she not only survives but thrives by pursuing her education and carving out a meaningful life for herself.

Q. What does the novel say about identity and belonging?

A.Through Dielieno's journey, the novel explores the struggle for identity within a culture that tries to confine her to a predefined role. Her narrative is a search for self, balancing her cultural heritage with her personal aspirations.

Q. How does the novel's ending bring a sense of resolution and understanding?

A.The end of the novel shows Dielieno's reconciliation with her dying grandmother. Her anger gives way to empathy and understanding for the forces that shaped her grandmother's behavior, allowing her to find peace with her past.

Q. How does the grandmother's past influence her treatment of Dielieno?

A.The grandmother, Vibano, was shaped by her own experiences in a patriarchal society, where a woman's value was tied to being a docile wife and mother. She believes she is protecting Dielieno by making her fit into this traditional mold, preventing the shame that might come from an educated, independent mindset.

Q. Who are the other female characters, such as Bano and Nisano, and what do they represent?

A. Bano is the grandmother's unmarried daughter who becomes a source of support for Dielieno, teaching her to navigate the difficult environment. Nisano is another female character who suffers under the weight of Naga patriarchal traditions. These women collectively demonstrate the ways women internalize and perpetuate patriarchal norms, but also the potential for female solidarity.

Q. What is the significance of the grandmother's favoritism toward her grandsons?

A. Her favoritism is a direct result of the patrilineal inheritance system in Naga society, where only male children inherit property and continue the family line. Her actions are not based on genuine love but on the societal belief that male children are more valuable and provide greater security.

Q. How does the novel critique the notion of "progress" and "tradition"?

A. The novel shows that tradition can be a source of oppression, not just a static cultural practice. It also highlights how "progress," in the form of Dielieno's education, is not an easy triumph but a difficult path filled with personal and family conflict.

Q. What does the ending of the novel suggest about overcoming intergenerational conflict?

A. The ending, featuring Dielieno's reconciliation with her dying grandmother, shows that true resolution comes not from erasing the past, but from understanding it. Dielieno's empathy for Vibano's difficult life allows her to move forward, suggesting that healing

requires both resistance to oppression and an understanding of its complex roots.

Q. Why is Dielieno's mother so passive in the story?

A. Dielieno's mother represents the internalization of patriarchal roles by women of her generation. Trapped between her love for her daughter and her fear of Vibano, she offers small acts of kindness but ultimately perpetuates the system by not openly challenging her mother.

Q. How does the novel portray the role of education in a woman's life?

A. Education is a key theme, serving as Dielieno's path to freedom and self-realization. While her grandmother sees it as a threat to her marriage prospects, Dielieno proves education is a source of independence, giving her options beyond traditional roles.

Q. What is the significance of the grandmother's house?

A. The grandmother's house is a symbolic space of confinement and control, described by Dielieno as a "little factory" that produces women molded for domestic life. It is a tangible representation of the patriarchal structures that seek to limit women's lives.

Q. How does the novel challenge simplistic portrayals of indigenous societies?

A. By showing the complex interplay of patriarchy and traditional beliefs, the novel pushes back against any romanticized or idealized views of indigenous cultures. It provides an honest look at the internal conflicts and gender hierarchies that exist within the Angami Naga group.

Q. What is the main message of the novel?

A. The novel's central message is that patriarchal oppression is a cycle that can be broken through individual resilience, education, and empathy. It is a powerful story about finding one's voice within a society that seeks to silence women, and understanding that even the oppressor may be a victim of a larger system.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. A Terrible Matriarchy revolves around the main theme of women's oppression or patriarchy. But it is the obvious glances of double-standard oppression that catch the reader's attention. Dielieno is not only suppressed by the patriarchal society but also by her grandmother Vibano's biased behaviour. This institutionalized patriarchy makes women the victim of their own exploitation. Women's oppression can also be seen in the form of socio-economic discrimination. The males-only heir system bars the women from inheriting land or money.

This leads to the importance of male children over female children in the Angami society of Nagaland. It is one of the main reasons why grandmother treats Dielieno as the 'errand-girl' and cherishes her brothers, especially Leto (who absolutely loved Dielieno)

unconditionally. The grandmother had faced a similar situation as a child and she irrevocably does the same to her granddaughter.

The grandmother plays a pivotal role in pressing A Terrible Matriarchy further. A strong matriarch that is a victim of her own spinning, the grandmother holds a tight leash on all her family members and the nearest clan. The compartmentalization of the gender that she enforces reflects her own childhood and the torments she faced in a male-centric colonial India. As Dielieno comes of age, she understands that her oppression might not have been a direct by-product of the 'terrible' matriarch. Vibano's thoughts on empowering a female child led to her beliefs of not giving them proper education or freedom. For her empowering a female child was to make them learn the chores of the house that would lead to them becoming dutiful wives and mothers. Dielieno who is against these beliefs comes to terms with her grandmother when Vibano, on her deathbed, asks her not to hold any grudges.

Kire's work brings about conflict and gender in Nagaland with a powerful and engrossing tale. The history and culture of the Angami society that has through years of belief that men are superior to women bring about a soul-touching story of women of three generations that are not only stuck in the vicious circle of patriarchy but also in some way internalize it, making them victims of their own doings. Along with their subjugation, readers also get a taste of the lost identity that the citizens of this exotic state face. The prime example is the mother of Dielieno who plays a passive character in the story- she doesn't have an identity including no name herself, her story is narrated in fragments and not only is she suppressed by her husband but also Vibhano.

UNIT – 4

The Point of Return:

Q: What is the main conflict in the novel?

A: The primary conflict is the estrangement between the young narrator, Babu, and his father, Dr. Dam, which reflects the broader national and regional conflicts in post-colonial India, particularly ethnic tensions in the Northeast.

Q: Who are the main characters?

A: The two central characters are Babu, a curious young narrator, and his father, Dr. Dam, a retired government servant and Bengali refugee who represents the past era of Nehruvian ideals.

Q: Where is the novel set?

A: The novel is set in a fictional town in the remote, northeastern hills of India, which closely resembles Shillong.

Q: What major themes does the novel address?

A: Key themes include the futility of having a "homeland," the evolution of identity in a post-colonial state, the chaos produced by state-making practices, and the precarity of people living in regions rife with ethnic conflicts.

Q: How does the novel portray the post-colonial Indian state?

A: The novel depicts a state where the ideals of freedom from colonial rule are crumbling, giving way to new rebellions and ethnic conflicts

that underscore the growing distance between people and their sense of national belonging.

Q: What is the narrator's ultimate fate?

A: The narrator, Babu, is poised to become part of the global community of exiles – people with histories but without a homeland, symbolizing a broader loss of national and geographical roots.

Q: Who are the main characters of the novel?

A: The story centers on two main characters, Babu and his father, Dr. Dam.

Dr. Dam: A veterinarian and first-generation Bengali migrant who was displaced by the Partition. He embodies Nehruvian ideals of a unified India but is disillusioned and seen as an outsider ("Dkhar") by the indigenous population.

Babu: Dr. Dam's son, a journalist, who narrates the story in reverse chronological order. He grows up feeling disconnected from his father and his surroundings. He seeks to understand his father and his own identity by uncovering his family's past.

Q: What is the significance of Dr. Dam's character?

A: Dr. Dam represents the millions displaced by the 1947 Partition, a group that is tolerated but never truly accepted in their new home. His character explores the trauma of post-partition displacement and the lifelong struggle of seeking belonging in a place that treats you as an outsider.

Q: How is the plot structured, and what effect does this have?

A: The novel is told in reverse chronological order. This narrative style forces the reader to confront the consequences of events before understanding their causes, mirroring Babu's journey of piecing together his family's fragmented history to comprehend the present.

Q: Why does Babu feel disconnected from his father, and how does this change?

A: As a young man, Babu sees his father as an overly stoic and passive figure, an "enigmatic product of colonial rule" with old-fashioned ideals. He resents his father's refusal to fight back against the ethnic hostility they face. Over the course of the novel, as Babu uncovers his father's hidden bravery and the struggles he endured, he gains a better understanding and a degree of reconciliation with his father.

Q: What are the main themes explored in *The Point of Return*?

A: The novel explores themes of home, identity, memory, displacement, and the trauma of partition. It examines the emotional and psychological effects of being an outsider in one's own country and the complex relationship between personal memory and collective history.

Q: How does the novel address the issue of identity in northeast India?

A: The novel depicts the ethnic conflicts and linguistic tensions in the region, particularly the hostility faced by Bengali migrants from indigenous groups. It highlights how historical grievances and political changes made a generation of migrants feel perpetually like foreigners, despite being citizens.

Q: What does the title, *The Point of Return*, signify?

A: The title is ironic, as there is no true "point of return" for the migrants who have lost their homeland. For Dr. Dam, the point of return exists only in memory and in his failed attempt to rebuild a home in Silchar. For Babu, the journey backward in time through his family's memories is his own search for a point of return—a way to understand and make peace with his past.

Q: What is the significance of the reverse chronological narrative structure?

A: By beginning with the end and moving backward, the novel mimics Babu's journey of discovery and reconciliation with his father. It underscores how the past, particularly the trauma of Partition, continues to define the present, revealing the layers of history that created the family's fractured state.

Q: What does Dr. Dam's house-building project in Silchar represent?

A: The house is Dr. Dam's "last-ditch attempt to find a resting place" and re-establish a sense of home lost during Partition. It represents his futile hope of creating a physical space that can mend his shattered sense of belonging, which is ultimately thwarted by his stroke and the continued ethnic violence.

Q: How does the novel portray the concept of home?

A: The book presents "home" not as a fixed place, but as a mental and emotional construct that is constantly shifting. For Babu, his childhood in the hills of Shillong is his true home, yet he is never fully accepted there. For Dr. Dam, home is a lost, idealized version of East Bengal that he can only revisit through memory.

Q: How does Siddhartha Deb use the theme of memory?

A: Memory is a central narrative device for exploring themes of migrancy, trauma, and identity. The novel differentiates between Dr. Dam's direct memory of Partition and Babu's "post-memory" inherited from his family's stories. This contrast highlights the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the difficulty of reconstructing a collective past.

Q: What is the conflict between Babu and Dr. Dam's worldviews?

A: The father and son represent conflicting eras of Indian history. Dr. Dam is a product of colonial rule and Nehruvian idealism, believing in bureaucratic procedure and a unified, secular India. Babu, growing up amid increasing ethnic violence, sees his father's old-fashioned ideals as weak and impractical, highlighting the generation gap and the failure of post-colonial nation-building.

Q: How does the political climate of Northeast India influence the story?

A: The novel vividly portrays the violence, xenophobia, and ethnic tension of the 1970s and 1980s in Northeast India. The redrawing of state borders along ethnic lines creates a hostile environment for Bengali immigrants, who are seen as outsiders ("Dkhar") and face constant threats, directly impacting the family's quest for security.

Q: How does Deb represent the experience of migrants and minorities?

A: Deb shows the "penumbra existence" of migrants who are tolerated but never truly integrated. They are forced to live in a state of perpetual limbo, grappling with a lost identity and the constant struggle for belonging and acknowledgment in their new home.

Q: How does the novel's focus on a marginalized region challenge mainstream Indian narratives?

A: By focusing on the neglected history of Northeast India, the novel challenges the dominant, mainland-centric view of the nation. It argues for "re-narrating the nation from the margin," giving voice to the trauma and struggles of communities often overlooked in post-colonial discourse.

Q: What does the ending of the novel suggest about the characters' fate?

A: The novel concludes with Babu leaving his hometown for Delhi, seeking to lose and find himself in the anonymity of the city. This suggests that for people displaced by Partition, there is no true point of return. The legacy of conflict and loss continues to shape their lives, even as they attempt to move on.

Q: How does the novel connect personal and political trauma?

A: The Point of Return argues that personal and political trauma are inseparable. The family's fractured dynamic and Dr. Dam's personal struggles mirror the broader political instability and ethnic fragmentation of post-Partition India. By exploring the intimate story of the Dam family, the novel illustrates the universal impact of large-scale historical events.

Q: How does the Partition of 1947 affect the characters differently?

A: Dr. Dam is a firsthand witness to the upheaval, and his life is defined by the trauma of being a refugee. His son, Babu, experiences the effects of Partition secondhand, inheriting the trauma through his family's unspoken history, which shapes his own sense of instability and displacement.

Q: What is the significance of the "Dkhar" label?

A: The label "Dkhar," meaning "foreigner" or "outsider," highlights the deep-seated resentment and xenophobia faced by the Bengali community in Northeast India. It shows how the promise of a unified India failed for many minority groups and underscores the characters' ongoing struggle for belonging.

Q: How does Babu's relationship with his father, Dr. Dam, evolve?

A: As a young man, Babu resents his father's passive and stoic nature. He sees Dr. Dam's adherence to colonial-era ideals as weakness. By tracing his father's life backward, Babu comes to understand the profound trauma and quiet resilience that shaped his father's character, leading to a deeper, albeit painful, sense of empathy.

Q: What does the house Dr. Dam attempts to build in Silchar symbolize?

A: The house represents Dr. Dam's final, desperate attempt to reclaim a lost sense of home and belonging. He buys land in Silchar, a town with a larger Bengali population, to build a new life. Its failure, caused by a stroke, symbolizes the impossibility of truly returning to an idealized past.

Q: What is the novel's broader commentary on post-colonial India?

A: The Point of Return challenges the romanticized narrative of a united, post-colonial India by focusing on the neglected borderlands. It reveals the hypocrisy and corruption of the government and highlights how Nehruvian ideals of secularism and progress unraveled under the pressures of ethnic conflict and regionalism.

Q: What role does memory play as a narrative tool?

A: Deb uses memory to explore the trauma of displacement across generations. The novel contrasts Dr. Dam's personal, lived memory of East Bengal with Babu's "post-memory," or inherited memories. This technique shows how historical trauma can linger and influence subsequent generations, even if they did not experience it directly.

Q: How is the landscape of Northeast India portrayed?

A: The remote, hilly setting is more than just a backdrop. It is a constant reminder of the characters' isolation and marginalization. The shifting landscape reflects the political instability, with the redrawing of borders causing uprootedness, alienation, and violence.

Q: What is the significance of Babu becoming a journalist?

A: Babu's career as a journalist can be seen as his attempt to document and make sense of the stories that were silenced during his childhood. It is a way for him to excavate the past and give voice to the marginalized experiences of his family and community.

Q: How does the novel deal with the concept of "home"?

A: The novel deconstructs the idea of "home" as a fixed, physical location. For the Dam family, home is a multi-layered concept that exists in both physical and mental spaces. Despite building a life in Shillong and Silchar, they never truly feel "at home," highlighting the psychological toll of displacement.

Q: What does the reverse chronology reveal about the nature of history?

A: The inverted timeline suggests that history is not a linear march toward progress, but a fragmented, looping, and cyclical process. It emphasizes that the consequences of historical events, like Partition,

continue to resonate long after the events have passed, trapping characters in a cycle of unresolved trauma.

Q: How does the novel challenge the idea of a single Indian national identity?

A: The Point of Return disrupts the notion of a monolithic Indian identity by highlighting the deep-seated ethnic and regional tensions in the Northeast. The experience of Dr. Dam and his family shows how the national project of a unified India failed those on the periphery, exposing the fault lines between national loyalty and sub-national identity.

Q: What is the significance of the contrast between Dr. Dam's character and the younger generation?

A: The novel contrasts Dr. Dam's generation, which experienced the trauma of Partition directly, with the post-Partition generation, including his son, Babu. Dr. Dam's reticence and silent suffering clash with Babu's "unquelled rage" and need to understand the past. This generational divide reveals the different ways historical trauma is processed and transmitted.

Q. How does the novel use memory to connect personal and historical trauma?

A: Deb uses memory as a key narrative device to show how personal stories are shaped by larger historical events. The family's memory of Partition and their experiences as outsiders in Shillong are inseparable from the broader political context of ethnic conflicts and redrawn borders, illustrating the interconnectedness of personal lives and public history.

Q: What is the effect of Babu's journey into his family's past?

A: Babu's journey back through his family's memories is an attempt to make sense of his own disconnected present. The reverse chronology mirrors his personal "odyssey" to understand the secrets and silences that defined his childhood and his strained relationship with his father.

Q: How does the novel depict the psychological effects of displacement?

A: The characters experience deep feelings of alienation and homelessness. They exist in a "penumbra existence" where they are tolerated but do not truly belong. This psychological trauma is manifested in Dr. Dam's quiet suffering and Babu's resentful search for meaning.

Q: What is the symbolism of the lost East Bengal for Dr. Dam?

A: For Dr. Dam, East Bengal is a lost, idealized homeland. His longing for it is not just about a physical place but for a lost sense of identity and belonging. His attempts to build a house in Silchar and other gestures are failed efforts to recreate this lost world, highlighting the impossibility of a true "return."

Q: What is the author's narrative style?

A: Siddhartha Deb uses an evocative and often elegiac prose style to convey the sadness and strain experienced by his characters. His writing blends elements of autobiography with fictional narrative to create a powerful and moving story that feels both deeply personal and universally resonant.

Q: Why is the Northeast setting so crucial to the novel?

A: By setting the novel in the remote hills of Northeast India, Deb highlights the experiences of a marginalized region often overlooked in mainstream Indian narratives. The isolated setting amplifies the characters' feelings of displacement and provides a rich backdrop for exploring the complexities of ethnic identity and conflict.

Q: How does the ending of the novel resonate with its title?

A: The novel's ending, with Babu leaving for Delhi, reinforces the ironic nature of the title. There is no easy "point of return" for either father or son. The journey is not a literal one back home, but a mental one to understand the past. For the displaced, the idea of returning home is an illusion, forever overshadowed by memory and trauma.

Q: What larger questions does the novel raise about nationalism and belonging?

A: The Point of Return forces a re-evaluation of nationalism and belonging, questioning who truly gets to belong in a nation-state. The story of the Bengali migrants serves as a powerful reminder that national projects can fail at the local level, leaving communities marginalized and in search of an identity that is constantly under threat.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. The first novel by Siddhartha Deb is about the search for home. It opens with an old man falling down. Dr Dam takes a "plunge away from the world he had always known" on to the carpet. This fall – the result of a stroke – recalls his earlier plunge: his decision, in 1947, to leave behind his home village in East Bengal in order to emigrate to newly partitioned India.

Resident inside the redrawn borders, Dr Dam works as a veterinary doctor in a local government department until forced to retire on his 60th birthday, when he is packed off with a "plastic VIP briefcase". Since moving to India, he "had known only temporary places of various kinds". His son Babu (the rest of the family, and his wife, hardly appear) spends much of his childhood on trains and buses between one town and another. Dr Dam decides to put an end to this transitory existence and build a house on land he owns in Silchar, "a last-ditch attempt to find a resting place". By the time he moves to this house, he has lost his strength and health as a result of his stroke.

Like most post-colonial writers, Deb deals in fragmented things: here, Dr Dam's collapsing body and a broken-up, post-Partition north-east India. The novel is not chronological. It refuses to take its characters neatly from A to B. Life here is not like that; history does not operate in straight lines. The prologue is set in 1987; part one opens in 1986, but the book works backwards, so that the last chapter of the section is set in 1979. The headings of the four parts draw attention to the novel's theme: Arrival, Departure, Terminal, Travelogue.

After his move to Silchar, Babu starts reflecting on his own version of home. He speaks wistfully of the hill town they left behind, the site of most childhood memories. He recreates its atmosphere and its geography: the police bazaar, the government buildings and the Bihari cobbler where he and his father used to get their shoes patched every

Sunday. But, he says, "Memory is also about what you choose to remember".

Slowly, Babu reveals the darker elements and racial tensions of life there. On one of their visits to the cobbler, Babu and Dr Dam were attacked by demonstrators protesting about the presence of "foreigners". He recalls "Adolf Hitler", the Nazi leader of the cricket club who prevented non-tribals from playing on the team. When Babu returns for a visit years later, "Hitler" is minister for youth affairs.

Because of the fragmentary nature of *The Point of Return*, the main story is not always easy to follow. We never learn Dr Dam's first name, and at times the language can seem over-formal. The writer is interested in maps more than people. Yet the novel succeeds in its main aim, which is to give a voice to the dispossessed: those "50,000 people who fled in the night with bundles on their backs". Dr Chatterji, a former neighbour of Babu, expresses it forcefully: "We are a dispersed people, wandering, but unlike the Jews we have no mythical homeland."

UNIT – 5

The Sorrow of Women:

Q: What is the central theme of the poem "The Sorrow of Women"?

A: The central theme is the sorrow and fear of women whose loved ones (often sons or lovers) are consumed by the "unquenchable fire" of war, ambition, or political ideology, leading to abandonment and anxiety.

Q: What does the "unquenchable fire" symbolize in the poem?

A: The "unquenchable fire" symbolizes the powerful, all-consuming yearning for "big issues," such as war, nationalism, and ambition, that men feel passionately about, often to the detriment of their relationships with women.

Q: How does the poem depict the relationship between women and men's pursuits?

A: The poem shows that women are often secondary to men's larger goals and ambitions, highlighting a fundamental disregard for women's concerns and the potential for loss when men are driven by forces greater than their love for them.

Q: What is the significance of "transience of human lives" in the poem?

A. The poem uses imagery of fire, rainwater, sand, and glass to illustrate the fleeting and fragile nature of human lives, particularly during times of war, emphasizing the potential for sudden loss and the impermanence of relationships.

Q: How does the poem relate to Mamang Dai's cultural background?

A: The poem draws attention to the cultural context of the Northeast, where women's experiences are shaped by societal issues and conflicts that often go unaddressed by those involved in "greater causes".

Q: What is the overall message of the poem regarding women's sorrow?

A: The poem conveys that while men may achieve great things, they do so with little understanding of the deep-seated sorrow, fear, and grief experienced by the women who are left behind, urging that no great achievement can come without recognizing this pain.

Q: What is the central conflict for the female speaker in the poem?

A: The central conflict is the fear of losing her loved one to war and grand, abstract causes. She is caught between her deep anxiety and the "unquenchable fire" of ambition that drives the men in her life.

Q: What is the "hunger" the men talk about in the poem?

A: The "hunger" refers to a passionate desire for "big issues" like nationalism, ambition, or escape to a utopian, imagined land. It is the force that fuels their decision to go to war, which she fears is more important to them than her.

Q: What does the speaker compare life to and why?

A: The speaker compares life to "fire," "rainwater, sand, glass". These metaphors represent the anxiety and transience of human lives during wartime. They also reflect the various difficult phases the woman must endure while waiting for her loved one.

Q: What is the significance of the speaker worrying about her "reflection disappear[ing]"?

A: This line signifies her fear of losing her own identity and sense of self amidst the anxiety and grief of war. It illustrates how the emotional trauma could change her so fundamentally that she becomes unrecognizable, even to her lover.

Q: What is the "place" where "rice flows on the streets" that the men talk about?

A: This "place" is a mythical, utopian land of abundance that the men desire. The speaker views this as a delusion, perhaps influenced by opium, that motivates the men's desire to fight and migrate. It is often interpreted as representing the separatist or nationalist dreams of militant groups.

Q: Why does the poem end with the line, "But what will they do / not knowing the sorrow of women?"

A: This line is a powerful rhetorical question that suggests the men's grand plans for survival and liberty are incomplete and will fail if they continue to ignore the immense emotional suffering of the women they leave behind. It moves the poem from an individual's anxiety to a universal representation of collective female suffering.

Q: How does the poem reflect traditional gender roles?

A: The poem depicts a traditional gender division, with men pursuing public, ambitious causes like war and women remaining passive and relegated to a position of anxious waiting. The speaker finds herself in a position of helplessness, bound by her lover's decisions and fearing the consequences.

Q: What is the overall tone and setting of the poem?

A: The poem has a contemplative and anxious tone, conveying a sense of foreboding and helplessness. The setting is shaped by the implied threat of war and political upheaval, reflecting the historical context of insurgent movements in Northeast India.

Q: How does the use of the pronoun "they" contribute to the poem's message?

A: "They" is an ambiguous pronoun that refers to the men and the patriarchal system that drives the community. This choice emphasizes the speaker's isolation and helplessness. It frames the men's ambitions as a faceless, impersonal force that she cannot influence or resist.

Q: What is the effect of the simile "life is like fire. It is like rainwater, sand, glass"?

A: The series of similes shows the fragility and changing nature of a woman's life when defined by conflict.

"Fire" represents the painful, uncontrollable blaze of war and ambition.

"Rainwater" suggests how life can be washed away easily.

"Sand" implies that life can be shapeless and easily sifted away.

"Glass" highlights how easily a woman's sense of self can shatter.

Q: What is the symbolism of the "opium poppy" in the third stanza?

A: The opium poppy suggests that the men's dreams of a utopian land are not grounded in reality but are a delusion induced by a narcotic influence. It undercuts the grand, ideological justification for the conflict, portraying it as a kind of self-deception that makes them "happy, in a state of believing".

Q: How does the poem connect to the socio-political context of Northeast India?

A: The poem is often read as an allegory for the separatist and insurgency movements in the region. The men's hunger for a "sovereign nation" and their talk of "liberty, men and guns" directly reflect the rhetoric of militant groups. The woman's anxiety and sorrow represent the invisible suffering of families affected by these conflicts.

Q: How does the poem use imagery and symbolism to reflect tribal culture?

A: Some imagery directly relates to tribal life in Arunachal Pradesh, such as the mention of "rice flows on the streets". The mythological significance of rice in the region, where it is of divine origin and represents abundance, adds a layer of cultural meaning to the men's utopian vision.

Q: What is the universal message of the poem?

A: While rooted in a specific context, the poem's themes of gender roles, identity, and the overlooked sorrows of women resonate universally. It highlights the contrast between the public ambition of men and the private grief of women who are left to bear the emotional cost of war and political upheaval.

Q: Does the speaker condemn the men for their actions?

A: The speaker's tone is not mocking or accusatory. Instead, her final question functions more as a plea born out of helplessness. She accepts her traditional role but also recognizes the injustice of being relegated to silent suffering.

Q: How does the poem shift from personal anxiety to a collective voice?

A: The poem begins with the personal line, "My love, what shall I do?". It then expands to a wider representative voice, generalizing the pain of one woman to the "sorrow of women" everywhere. This shift from a personal monologue to a broader statement gives the poem its powerful, universal resonance.

Q: How does the speaker's emotional state contrast with the men's?

A: The speaker's emotional state is marked by deep anxiety and helplessness, as she is bound by her loved one's decisions. This contrasts sharply with the men's passion and drive for "big issues" like survival and liberty, which they approach with a confident sense of purpose.

Q: In what way does the poem connect the loss of a loved one with the loss of identity for the speaker?

A: The poem suggests that losing a loved one to war can deeply affect the speaker's identity. This is shown by the speaker's anxious question, "What shall I do, my love, / if my reflection disappears?" It implies that her sense of self is linked to her relationship, and grief could erase her completely.

Q: What does the imagery of "rice flows on the streets" symbolize?

A: This imagery represents the men's utopian fantasy of a land with abundant resources. It resonates with the cultural context of Arunachal Pradesh, where the rice harvest is linked to tribal identity and well-being. However, in the poem, this fantasy is shown as a delusion fueled by the opium poppy.

Q: What is the significance of the "opium poppy" in the poem?

A: The opium poppy symbolizes the men's misguided sense of purpose. It suggests that their belief in a utopian land is not based on reason but is an intoxicating illusion. This delusion allows them to pursue their ambitions, making them "happy, in a state of believing".

Q: How does the poem critique the politics of insurgent movements in Northeast India?

A: By linking the men's talk of "escape, about liberty, men and guns" with their opium-fueled delusions, the poem subtly critiques separatist movements. It suggests that the promises of freedom and a homeland, used to incite young men, are often based on a false vision and cause immense, overlooked suffering for women.

Q: What does the poem suggest about the relationship between political ambition and personal sacrifice?

A: The poem shows the imbalance between political ambition and personal sacrifice. It shows how men's "hunger" for grand, abstract causes is prioritized over the personal bonds and emotional well-being of the women who are left behind.

Q: How does the poem's voice shift from individual to collective?

A: The poem begins with a personal address, "My love, what shall I do?" but expands to a collective voice with the final question, "But what will they do / not knowing the sorrow of women?". This shows the speaker's personal experience is representative of a larger, collective feminine suffering caused by patriarchal political turmoil.

Q: Is the poem's tone accusatory or pleading?

A: The poem is more a plea than an outright accusation. The speaker is trapped in a situation she cannot control, so her questions express helplessness and a yearning for empathy rather than an indictment of the men's choices.

Q: Who is the speaker of the poem?

A: The speaker is a woman whose lover (or possibly son) is being drawn away by the allure of war and grand political ideals. She is the voice of the suffering, anxious, and ultimately overlooked women who are left behind by such conflicts.

Q: How can the poem be described in terms of its form and style?

A: The poem is a free-verse lyric that is simple yet deeply evocative. Its direct, conversational tone, especially when the speaker addresses her "love," creates an intimate sense of vulnerability and personal anxiety, which contrasts with the grand, abstract subjects the men are discussing.

Q: How does the final question give the poem a larger meaning?

A: The poem's shift from personal anxiety to a broader rhetorical question, "But what will they do / not knowing the sorrow of women?" elevates the subject beyond one individual's worries. It universalizes her plight, suggesting that the men's aspirations will be hollow and incomplete if they ignore the emotional cost of their actions on women.

Q: What is the significance of the speaker's worry that her lover "may not even remember my reflection"?

A: This line suggests that the turmoil of war and ideology could cause a kind of amnesia in men, where they forget the personal, intimate details of their lives. For the speaker, it represents the ultimate fear: that

her identity and love will be completely erased from her partner's memory by the overwhelming force of war and nationalism.

Q: What does the "unquenchable fire" represent in the context of the poem?

A: The "unquenchable fire" represents the insatiable nature of men's ambition and desire for "big issues," like nationhood or liberty. It highlights that this driving force, which the speaker cannot compete with, is a destructive and uncontrollable passion that fuels the conflict.

Q: How does the poem hint at the cultural and social life of the region it represents?

A: The poem features specific references that ground it in the culture of Northeast India, particularly the use of rice as a symbol of abundance and well-being. This imagery, combined with the context of insurgent movements in the region, makes the poem an allegory for the real-life struggles caused by such conflicts.

Q: What is the main contrast of values explored in the poem?

A: The main contrast is between the men's pursuit of abstract political ideals (like "liberty" and a utopian nation) and the women's focus on personal relationships, survival, and emotional well-being. The poem highlights how these differing priorities can lead to a fundamental misunderstanding and a deep chasm between genders during times of conflict.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. The poem opens with the speaker saying that people are talking about something with

passion and intensity.

Addressing to her lover (or her son?) as “My love,” the speaker expresses her fears that she might lose him to war. Hunger may suggest lack of food; here “hunger” and “burning” seem to have been used as

metaphors to underscore the power in which the idea of greater causes has a hold on her man. The last two lines spell out that “an unquenchable fire” symbolizes the yearning for “big issues” with which men are passionately engaged. What is most anxiety inducing to her (the speaker) is that since the issues are worth dying for and more important than her, he might as easily leave her. In a series of connected similes, life is compared to fire and then to rainwater, sand, and glass. Imagery of fire reiterates the issue of war introduced in the first stanza and rest of the comparisons highlight a sense of transience of human lives in times of war. She seems to be worried that her lover may not even remember her reflection. People talk of an idyllic place of abundance and richness where they hope and believe that they would

someday inhabit. The idyllic place may refer to a sovereign nation to attain which many northeast insurgent groups claim to fight for against the central government. In the name of liberty, men take up arms, but in the end their fight for survival, abundance and freedom would come to nothing if they do not know the sorrow of women.

The narrator of “The Sorrow of Women” is a woman, she situates herself within the inscribed traditional role of a woman. She is anxious that she might lose her man on account

of war, and she accepts that war is an issue more important than her. However, the tone or speaker's "attitude to his listener" is not derisive or censorious (mocking or overcritical/disapproving), not even to the people who talk about hunger, escape, and liberty. Her arguments sound more like a plea than an indictment/allegation and her position is one of helplessness. Most fittingly, therefore, the mood of the poems is passivity and silence, the situation to which women have been assigned to by the political

CHAPTER – 2

The First Rain:

Q: How does Ngangom's poetry explore the concept of memory?

A: Ngangom's poetry uses memory as a way to recall personal experiences, recall oneself in different states of mind, and to weave together new realities from past events, as seen in works exploring the memory of his homeland.

Q: What are the common themes related to homeland in Ngangom's poetry?

A: His poems like "Poem for Joseph" describe a longing for a homeland that may be lost or changed, and a search for a place to belong. He addresses themes of displacement, ethnic conflict, and the painful experience of leaving behind familiar surroundings.

Q: What does Ngangom convey in "A Poem for Mother"?

A: In this autobiographical poem, he expresses gratitude and love for his mother, portraying her as a strong, resilient, and imperfect figure

who works tirelessly for her family. The poem also touches on a sense of regret for not fully appreciating her sacrifices while alive.

Q: How does Ngangom use nature and folklore in his work?

A: He integrates the natural landscapes and rich oral traditions of his native North-East into his writing, finding deep significance in the folk world and nature itself.

Q: What societal issues does Ngangom often address?

A: Ngangom's poetry engages with social and political realities, including the impact of violence and conflict on communities, and the complex interrelationship between individuals, their land, and the political forces that shape them.

Q: What does the "first rain" symbolize in the poem?

A: The "first rain" is an evocative symbol that brings back memories and news to the hills, particularly for the poet who has been living in exile. It represents the bittersweet connection between his past and present, a trigger for both remembrance and sorrow.

Q: What is the poet's emotional state, and how is it linked to his past?

A: The poet is filled with a sense of regret and nostalgia. He reveals that he has lived "more days in exile than years of my poor childhood," and he questions whether it is "better to rejoice and forget or to remember and be sad?". The first rain reawakens his painful memories of leaving his homeland.

Q: What specific memory from his childhood does the poet recall?

A: The poet remembers abandoning his "forward-looking native people" as a "fumbling fifteen-year-old." He suggests that his people had been "entrusted terror, drugs and a civilized plague to children," hinting at the difficult conditions he grew up in.

Q: How does the poem address the conflict and violence in his native land?

A: The poet alludes to the violence that has plagued his home, mentioning that "babies have been shot down from their mothers' breasts". He also points to the broader socio-political turmoil in Northeast India, which is responsible for the erosion of human values.

Q: What is the main conflict the poet expresses in the poem?

A: A central conflict is the clash between remembrance and forgetting. The poet struggles with whether to embrace the painful memories of his past or to try and put them behind him. This tension reflects the difficulty of reckoning with a traumatic past.

Q: What is the significance of the reference to the "holocaust"?

A: The poem mentions, "After the holocaust became a touchstone," suggesting a post-traumatic point in time. The term signifies a widespread and horrific atrocity that has become a benchmark for suffering, allowing the poet to reflect on collective tragedy.

Q: How does the poet convey a feeling of powerlessness?

A: The poet feels that his poetic efforts are insufficient to capture the full horror of his land's experience. He writes that if he described the brutality, others would dismiss it as a "poet's overworked heart." This suggests that profound pain is often reduced or ignored by those outside the conflict.

Q: What does the poet need as "an animal threatened with extinction"?

A: The poet needs a "lair for his mate and his young," emphasizing his primal desire for security and safety. The comparison highlights his vulnerable state as an exile from a troubled land.

Q: What does the poem suggest about the relationship between art and suffering?

A: The poem suggests that "Only poetry of ruins is real," implying that authentic art emerges from and reflects the pain and destruction of one's surroundings. It contrasts this with his earlier, more sentimental poetry.

Q: What is the significance of the final lines mentioning "Whisky and Mehdi Hassan and Billie Holiday"?

A: The final lines suggest a sense of resigned melancholy. The poet finds solace in cultural artifacts—whisky, and the music of artists known for their soulful and often tragic songs. These elements provide a form of strange, but meaningful, comfort in his exiled life.

Q: What is the significance of the poem's structure?

A: The poem is written in free verse, which allows Ngangom to express his thoughts and emotions directly and without the constraints of a specific meter or rhyme scheme. This reflects the raw, fragmented nature of his memories and the complex, turbulent subject matter.

Q: How does the poet describe his position in life?

A: He describes his position as being "perched like the houses on the edge of a cliff," a metaphor for his precarious, exiled existence. He is detached from his home but still constantly aware of it, living in a state of limbo.

Q: What does the poet mean by his "fumbling fifteen-year-old" self?

A: This refers to his youthful, clumsy departure from his homeland. As an impressionable young man, he was naive to the full implications of leaving behind a people who, as he puts it, "entrusted terror, drugs and a civilized plague to children".

Q: How does the poem suggest a connection between art and injustice?

A: By stating, "Only poetry of ruins is real," Ngangom suggests that true, authentic art must acknowledge and engage with suffering and destruction. He finds his earlier romantic poetry foolish in comparison to the harsh reality of his homeland's experience.

Q: What is the effect of contrasting "culture and carnage"?

A: The poem notes that "we can indict an erring people and make culture and carnage co-exist". This juxtaposition highlights the paradox of a people who have a rich cultural identity but are simultaneously embroiled in violence. It points to the complicity of leaders in allowing such contradictions to exist.

Q: Why does the poet believe that describing the atrocities will be met with disbelief?

A: The poet states that if he described the horrors—like babies being shot—people would dismiss it as a "poet's overworked heart". This reflects his frustration that outsiders do not take the true extent of the suffering seriously, reducing the experience of pain to a mere literary device.

Q: What does the poet's desire for a "lair for his mate and his young" reveal?

A: This image shows the poet's fundamental human desire for safety, peace, and domestic stability, even while feeling like an "animal threatened with extinction". It contrasts his personal, life-affirming needs with the political and social turmoil he has witnessed.

Q: How does the poet convey the finality of his departure?

A: The line, "There was not a day that changed my days," expresses the fact that no single event marks his alienation; it was a gradual, insidious process. Even though he left as a boy, the profound change in his life was not immediate but cumulative.

Q: What is the significance of the cultural references at the end of the poem?

A: The mention of "Whisky and Mehdi Hassan and Billie Holiday" provides a poignant image of the poet's solitary existence in exile. These cultural touchstones represent a form of comfort or escape, though the music, known for its melancholy and themes of loss, only emphasizes his resigned sadness. The reference to "strange fruit" specifically evokes Billie Holiday's famous protest song, which is a powerful final note on violence and injustice.

Q: How does the poem connect the personal with the political?

A: Throughout the poem, the poet's personal memories and emotional struggles—his exile, his regret, his nostalgia—are inextricably linked to the political violence and social decay of his native Manipur. His individual pain becomes a microcosm of the larger, collective suffering of his people.

Q: What does the "first rain" symbolize for the poet in the opening lines?

A: The "first rain" acts as a messenger, bringing news from his past and from the hills of his homeland. It triggers a flood of memories and reflections, a bittersweet connection to his past.

Q: What significant event does the poet describe from his teenage years?

A: He recalls abandoning his people as a "fumbling fifteen-year-old," suggesting a naive but regrettable decision to leave his native land behind.

Q: Why did the poet feel compelled to leave home?

A: The poem hints at the traumatic and difficult conditions in his homeland. He mentions that his people "entrusted terror, drugs and a civilized plague to children," indicating a breakdown of innocence and safety.

Q: What is the central moral dilemma the poet faces?

A: The poet directly asks, "Is it better to rejoice and forget or to remember and be sad?". This question encapsulates his internal conflict between trying to move on with his life and grappling with the painful memories of his past.

Q: How does Ngangom differentiate between his early poetry and his current work?

A: He dismisses his younger self as a "foolish boy" who left home to write poetry. The line "Only poetry of ruins is real" suggests that his art is now informed by the destruction and suffering he has witnessed, making his earlier, more innocent writing seem trivial.

Q: What is the significance of the "holocaust" reference in the poem?

A: The term "holocaust" serves as a benchmark for incomprehensible suffering, after which it became possible to "indict an erring people and make culture and carnage co-exist". This implies that the horrors in his homeland rival such atrocities.

Q: How does the poet convey the deep tragedy and violence in his home region?

A: He uses a visceral image of "babies have been shot down from their mothers' breasts". This is not merely a poetic flourish but a testament to the raw and brutal reality he witnessed.

Q: Why does the poet believe describing the truth of his land will not be taken seriously?

A: He feels that if he described the violence, others would simply dismiss it as a "poet's overworked heart". This reflects a deep frustration with the world's indifference to suffering in marginalized regions.

Q: What does the poet want, and what comparison does he use?

A: The poet states that he needs a safe "lair for his mate and his young". He compares himself to an "animal threatened with extinction," highlighting his vulnerability and primal need for safety in a hostile environment.

Q: What is the final mood conveyed by the poem's concluding lines?

A: The final lines create a sense of melancholic acceptance or resigned sorrow. The poet finds a strange comfort in "Whisky and Mehdi Hassan

and Billie Holiday," suggesting that in exile, he finds solace in things that evoke loss and pain.

Q: What is the tone of the poem, and how is it established?

A: The tone is predominantly melancholic and reflective, tinged with regret and resignation. This is established through the poet's bitter reminiscence of leaving home, the sorrowful imagery of violence, and the concluding feeling of finding solace in tragic music.

Q: What is the "civilized plague" that the poet mentions?

A: The "civilized plague" likely refers to the insidious erosion of traditional values and the spread of violence, insurgency, and drug abuse that affect marginalized communities like the one the poet comes from. He contrasts the purity of his childhood with this decay.

Q: How does the poet use the "first rain" as a framing device for the poem?

A: The poem opens and closes with the rain. Initially, it is a trigger for memory, "bringing news to the hills". By the end, the rain continues to fall, but the poet is left with a sense of resigned permanence, listening to sad music while the rain persists.

Q: What is the effect of the contrast between the natural imagery and the human-caused suffering?

A: The poem contrasts the innocence and beauty of nature—the hills, the rain—with the brutal reality of human violence and trauma. This contrast highlights the tragedy of a land marred by conflict and underscores the destructive nature of human actions on a pristine environment.

Q: What does the poet mean when he talks about "forgetting" his childhood?

A: The poet contemplates whether it is "better to rejoice and forget". This suggests a desire to escape the painful burden of his memories, which are tied to violence and his departure. However, the rain makes this impossible, constantly reminding him of his past.

Q: What is the significance of the shift from the specific to the universal in the poem?

A: The poem moves from the personal, individual exile of the poet to a broader reflection on collective human suffering. This is seen in his invocation of the "holocaust" and his observation of how "culture and carnage co-exist". This elevates his personal pain to a commentary on universal injustice.

Q: How does Ngangom use free verse to enhance the poem's themes?

A: The use of free verse gives the poem a conversational, stream-of-consciousness quality, allowing the poet's unfiltered thoughts and memories to flow naturally. This form mirrors the fragmented and often chaotic nature of trauma and memory.

Q: What does the poet's need for a "lair for his mate and his young" suggest about his desires?

A: This image shows that beneath the complex political and emotional turmoil, the poet has a fundamental, animal-like desire for basic human security and family. It emphasizes his vulnerability and longing for a safe haven away from the conflict that defines his life.

Q: How does the poem reflect the idea of poetry as a form of witness?

A: The poem implicitly argues for "poetry of ruins" as the only authentic form of expression after witnessing profound destruction. By recounting his experiences, the poet gives a voice to the suffering of his people, acting as a witness to the violence and its aftermath.

Q: Why does the poem end with the poet listening to music by Mehdi Hassan and Billie Holiday?

A: The poet ends the poem finding a strange kind of comfort in the music of Mehdi Hassan, a Ghazal singer known for his mournful ballads, and Billie Holiday, famous for her blues and protest song "Strange Fruit". Their music provides a soundtrack to his sorrow, reflecting a shared human experience of suffering and loss.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. Robin S. Ngangom's poetry is the poetry of feeling, which draws the reader deep into the poet's world. The poems in My Invented Land showcase Ngangom's remarkable range—tracing his poetic arc from the deeply personal to the political, from chronicles of private joys, sorrows and everyday epiphanies to the poetry of witness that gazes unflinchingly at the realities that haunt the Northeast, his native land.

About the Author

Born in 1959 in Imphal, Manipur, Robin S. Ngangom is a bilingual poet and translator who writes in English and Manipuri. After completing his high school in Imphal he studied English literature at Shillong's St Edmund's College and the North-Eastern Hill University where he currently teaches. His first collection, *Words and the Silence*, was published in 1988 and since then, he has published two more volumes of poetry and a book of translations. He was invited to the UK Year of Literature and Writing in 1995, has read his poems at literary events in India and abroad, and his poems have appeared in several prestigious anthologies and magazines. He has also co-edited two significant anthologies of poetry from Northeast India.

Robin Ngangom is a renowned Indian poet from Manipur, known for his bilingual poetry in English and Meiteilon. Here are some key aspects of his work:

Autobiographical Elements: Ngangom's poetry is described as "mostly autobiographical," reflecting his personal experiences and emotions.

Lyrical Tenor: His verses maintain a lyrical quality, even when addressing intense themes like political injustice.

Imagery: Ngangom's poetry often incorporates vivid images of nature, such as cherry trees and riverine hair.

Politics and Social Critique: His work frequently addresses the challenges faced by the North-Eastern region of India, including insurgency, state-sponsored terrorism, and corruption.

Personal and Communal Life: Ngangom's poetry explores themes of love, loss, and identity, often blurring the lines between personal and communal experiences.

Cultural Heritage: He draws inspiration from the rich oral traditions of the indigenous Khasi community and the natural beauty of the North-East.

"Words and the Silence" (1988): A poetry collection that showcases Ngangom's ability to craft powerful, evocative verses.

"Time's Crossroads" (1994). Another notable collection that explores themes of identity, politics, and personal experience.

"The Desire of Roots" (2006): This collection features poems that reflect Ngangom's concerns with human rights, violence, and the search for identity .

Katha Award for Translation (1999): Ngangom was recognized for his contributions to literature, particularly in translation.

International Recognition. His poetry has been featured in various international publications and platforms, showcasing his unique voice and perspective ².

CHAPTER – 3

"Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus"

Q: What does the poem "Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus" symbolize?

A: The poem explores themes of creativity, identity, and resistance, using the black guitar and blue hibiscus as symbols of artistic expression and individuality.

Q: What's the significance of the black guitar in the poem?

A: The black guitar represents the power of music and art to transcend adversity, drawing parallels with Pi Hmuaki, a Mizo poet buried alive with her gong.

Q: What does the blue hibiscus represent?

A: The blue hibiscus may symbolize beauty, tranquility, or spiritual growth, contrasting with the turmoil and violence described in the poem.

Q: What message does Mona Zote convey through this poem?

A: Mona Zote challenges societal norms and expectations, highlighting the struggles faced by women in patriarchal societies, particularly in Northeast India.

Q: How does the poem relate to the author's context?

A: The poem reflects the author's experiences and observations of violence, insurgency, and cultural genocide in Northeast India, and the impact on women's lives .

Q: What's notable about Mona Zote's poetic style?

A: Mona Zote's poetry is known for its unsentimental and disquieting imagery, blending formal and colloquial language to convey the complexities of life in Northeast India.

Q: How does the black guitar relate to the protagonist's emotions?

A: It might represent her creative outlet or emotional expression.

Q: What's the significance of the blue hibiscus in the story?

A: Possibly a symbol of hope, peace, or transformation.

Q: What's the protagonist's relationship like with music?

A: She might find solace, comfort, or identity through playing the guitar.

Q: How does the story explore themes of identity?

A: Possibly through the protagonist's experiences, relationships, or passions.

Q: What message do you think the author wants to convey?

A: Perhaps about the importance of self-expression, creativity, or finding one's path.

Q: What does the black guitar symbolize in the poem?

A: The black guitar represents the power of music and art to transcend adversity, drawing parallels with Pi Hmuaki, a Mizo poet buried alive with her gong.

Q: How does the poem relate to the author's context?

A: The poem reflects the author's experiences and observations of violence, insurgency, and cultural genocide in Northeast India, particularly in Mizoram.

Q: What themes does the poem explore?

A: The poem explores themes of creativity, identity, resistance, and the struggles faced by women in patriarchal societies.

Q: What's the significance of the blue hibiscus?

A: The blue hibiscus may symbolize beauty, tranquility, or spiritual growth, contrasting with the turmoil and violence described in the poem.

Q: What's notable about Mona Zote's poetic style?

A: Mona Zote's poetry is known for its unsentimental and disquieting imagery, blending formal and colloquial language to convey the complexities of life in Northeast India.

Q: How does Zote's style contribute to the poem's impact?

A: Her style effectively conveys the harsh realities and emotional depth of the poem's themes, making it more impactful.

Q: What poetic devices does Mona Zote use in the poem?

A: She employs imagery, symbolism, and metaphors to convey the complexities of life and identity.

Q: How does the use of imagery contribute to the poem?

A: The vivid imagery helps to create a powerful and evocative atmosphere, drawing the reader into the world of the poem.

Q: How does the poem reflect the cultural context of Northeast India?

A: The poem explores the region's unique cultural heritage, struggles, and experiences, providing insight into the lives of people in Northeast India.

Q: What role does cultural identity play in the poem?

A: Cultural identity is a significant theme, with the poem highlighting the importance of preserving and celebrating one's cultural heritage.

Q: What emotions does the poem evoke?

A: The poem may evoke feelings of resilience, hope, and determination, as well as sadness and frustration.

Q: How does the poem's emotional resonance contribute to its impact?

A: The poem's emotional resonance helps readers connect with the themes and experiences described, making the poem more relatable and impactful .

Q: What themes does Mona Zote's poetry explore?

A: Her poetry explores themes of identity, violence, insurgency, and cultural genocide in Northeast India, particularly in Mizoram.

Q: What's notable about Mona Zote's poetic style?

A: Her poetry is known for its unsentimental and disquieting imagery, blending formal and colloquial language to convey the complexities of life in Northeast India ^{1 2}.

Q: What influences Mona Zote's work?

A: Her work is influenced by her experiences living in Mizoram and her observations of the region's struggles.

Q: What's Mona Zote's background?

A: She's a poet and government officer from Mizoram, born in Patna, Bihar, in 1973. She writes in English and has published her poetry in various journals and anthologies .

Q: What poetic devices does Mona Zote use?

A: She employs imagery, symbolism, and metaphors to convey the complexities of life and identity.

Q: What's the impact of Mona Zote's poetry?

A: Her poetry provides a powerful voice for women's experiences and challenges societal norms, making her a significant figure in Northeast Indian literature .

Q: What themes does Mona Zote's poetry explore?

A: Her poetry explores themes of identity, violence, insurgency, and cultural genocide in Northeast India, particularly in Mizoram.

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Q: How has Mona Zote's poetry been received?

A: Her poetry has been praised for its powerful and evocative portrayal of life in Northeast India.

Q: What criticisms or challenges has she faced?

A: As a poet exploring sensitive topics, she may have faced criticism or controversy, but her work is widely respected.

Q: How has Mona Zote's poetry influenced other writers?

A: Her unique voice and perspective may have inspired other writers to explore similar themes.

Q: What's Mona Zote's legacy as a poet?

A: She has contributed significantly to Northeast Indian literature, providing a powerful voice for women's experiences.

Q: Will Mona Zote continue to write and publish poetry?

A: Hopefully, she will continue to share her insights and perspectives through her poetry.

Q: What themes might she explore in future work?

A: She may continue to explore themes related to identity, culture, and social justice.

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Q: What are some of Mona Zote's notable works?

A: Some notable works include "The Whores of August" and "Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus", which showcase her unique perspective and style.

Q: Where can I find her work?

A: Her poetry has been featured in various journals, including Indian Literature and Carapace, and anthologies like "Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast" .

Q: What does the poem "Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus" symbolize?

A: The poem explores themes of creativity, identity, and resistance, using the black guitar and blue hibiscus as symbols of artistic expression and individuality.

Q: What's the significance of the girl in the poem?

A: The girl might represent the voice of the marginalized or the struggles of women in a patriarchal society.

Q: What does the black guitar represent?

A: The black guitar might symbolize creativity, freedom, or self-expression.

Q: What's the significance of the blue hibiscus?

A: The blue hibiscus could represent beauty, tranquility, or spiritual growth.

Q: What poetic devices are used in the poem?

A: The poem might employ imagery, symbolism, metaphors, and other literary devices to convey its themes.

Q: How does the poet use language?

A: The poet's use of language might be lyrical, evocative, and powerful, creating a vivid atmosphere.

Q: What themes does the poem explore?

A: The poem might explore themes of identity, creativity, resistance, and self-expression.

Q: What's the impact of the poem?

A: The poem might evoke emotions, spark reflection, and challenge societal norms.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. Mohanty (2011) asserts that “questions of political consciousness and self-identity are a crucial aspect of defining Third World women’s engagement with feminism” (p. 286). The scenario in North East India is different from the rest of India in this matter. North East India is the home to several ethnic communities (Biswas, 2021) and many of these communities have been converted to Christianity after 1826 (Karotempral, 2009). Christianity was seen as a way of liberating these ethnic communities from their “savage” practices by making them

“civilized” (Guha, 1996). These civilizing missions not only disrobed the indigenous communities of their tradition, identity, and heritage, they also distanced them from their past, from themselves. Charles Grant argued in favour of proselytizing the various communities in India so that their lives, habits, and customs could be changed and brought to par with western civilization (Ghosh, 2013, p. 14). This vision was finally realized with the coming of Bentinck and T.B. Macaulay who introduced a modern education system built on the western Christian guiding principle (Ghosh, 2013; U. Deka, 1989; Mukherjee, 2000). Whereas this transformation appeared liberating, in reality, it only brought a new kind of colonial domination and subordination. The ethnic social structures and traditional knowledge systems were destroyed by this interference which complicated matters further. On one hand, religion outlined the objectives of the converted communities clubbing them as a separate identity and nation different from pan-Indian identity; on the other hand, the Church became a powerful medium of domination and subjugation as articulated in the poems by Mona Zote and Desmond Kharmawphlang (Kharmawphlang, 2011). Women also became victims of the political turmoil that rocked the North Eastern states since 1947 (Banerjee, 2014). They were caught in the conflict between the state and the militants. These experiences are visible in the poetic works of Mona Zote and Monalisa Changkija. The double resistance that flows from the feminist poets is not only directed against the conflict situation but is also directed against the patriarchal domination.

Most of the tribal communities in North East India follow customary laws which allow them to carry on their ethnic practices with a legal sanction (Buongpui, 2013). Although some of the practices like marriage or divorce laws may be a contravention to the Indian constitution, yet the ethnic space is given a scope to continue with those practices (Borah, 2015). On examining the folk literature of these communities, one may find that these customary practices and the social structure that scaffold these practices are inherently patriarchal.

For example, the Mizo story of Pi Hmuaki Zaitells us about the persecution of a female vocalist because of her extraordinary skills. She was killed and buried along with her gong by the menfolk of her community (Zama, 2011, p. 207). Among the Khasis a sexist proverb is in circulation- “Haba la kynih ka iarkynthei la wai ka pyrthei,” meaning “when the hen crows, it will be the end of the world or world will be in ruin” (Borah, 2015, 45). Among the Manipuri Meiteis, the women were denied the right to property (Basanti 164) because ownership of a property is a marker of social status. Among the Arunachalis too, women live in a marginalized position (Misra, 2011b, 230). The Idu Mishmi has a proverb that tells us of the deep-seated misogynistic practices: “Aru Pe Gu Noyu-Mbo Mi.” This means “women are like anchorless boats which move easily, even with the slightest stir. It is this logic that projects women as unsuitable in positions of power (Aich, 2015).” All these proverbs narrate the subordinate position of women in the tribal societies in North East India. The discourse on women’s empowerment is too good to be true in societies dominated by customary practices. The grand narrative that is created through such mythical discourses or proverbs in the tribal society contributes largely to the subordination of women. Such discourses enter the storytelling and decide the role assigned to women, which is then iterated in all kinds of cultural and political discourses assuming the cloak of truth. Temsula Ao (2006) writing about the plight of women in North East India states that “In actual reality, in this society, women are considered to be of little or no significance in matters relating to the origin, history and civil life of the people. But in fictive reality of these narratives, women have been portrayed as re-appropriating the powers that men actually wield in real life” (pp.23). Therefore, the task of women writers is not only to confront the patriarchal domination but also to portray the struggles through their writings. Talpade Mohanty points out the role of publishing houses and university curriculum in bringing about this revolutionary change in this struggle. The two poets discussed in this chapter illustrate this.

Mona Zote, through her poems, challenges the stereotypes created in society against women. She challenges these cultural stereotypes on one hand and also on the other hand, questions the demonization of women in patriarchal societies. In “The Whores of August” Zote tries to humanize the “fallen women.” She speaks of prostitution in the Mizo society where Christian missionaries are in charge of the law of the land. Not only are sex workers marginalized in these societies they are viewed with contempt. Zote (2003) speaking of these prostitutes notes-

The journey of the women in social, political, and literary life is fraught with deprivation, suppression, and violence perpetrated by the patriarchal hegemonic structures. Not only constitutional amendments failed to rescue women of this plight, but religious conversion also failed miserably to emancipate women. Rather, religion with its inherent misogynistic scaffolding could not offer the restructuring of the social order for women. A cursory inquest into the life of the North Eastern women will at once reveal the participation of women in the economic and cultural front. Despite their active participation, they are relegated to a secondary subject under the patriarchal gaze. The opposition of civil society in women’s participation in the political sphere hints at the fact that women will not be allowed to make any changes to the social structure politically. Under these circumstances, a critique of such domination and also altering the cultural constructs through literary practices could play a major role. Mona Zote and Monalisa Chenkija, both working women, have not only subverted the hegemonic structures through their writing; they have also ungendered the cultural icons through performance in daily life and re-appropriated those to exemplify the participation of women in every sphere of social life. On one hand, they have exposed the inherent misogynistic social structure in tribal society; on the other hand, they have re-signified the cultural elements by ungendering those. While it has been witnessed that religion has failed to guarantee emancipation for women in the North East tribal society, the panacea lies in political participation and cultural re-signification through writings.

CHAPTER – 4

Shoot:

Q: What is the main theme of the poem "Shoot"?

A: The main theme is defiance and resilience in the face of violence and oppression. The poet challenges those who threaten her people, stating they will not be silenced or moved from their beliefs.

Q: Who is the speaker addressing in the poem?

A: The speaker is addressing those perpetuating violence and trying to suppress her people, including those who claim to follow religions that preach peace, like Christianity or the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

Q: What literary device is used in the title "Shoot"?

A: The title uses dramatic irony and direct address. The speaker invites the aggressors to "Shoot," knowing that their actions will not defeat the spirit of the people.

Q: How does the poem use contrast to convey its message?

A: The poem uses strong contrasts, such as juxtaposing violent imagery ("gunfire," "blast us to eternity") with peaceful aspirations ("dreams of brotherhood") to emphasize the resolve of the oppressed.

Q: What does the line "we are only an inconvenience of a few lakh souls" suggest?

A: This line is a sarcastic remark that mimics the dismissive attitude of the oppressors toward the lives of the Naga people. It highlights the

dehumanizing perspective of the aggressors while simultaneously challenging it.

Q: What is the significance of the phrase "dreams of brotherhood"?

A: This phrase represents the enduring hope and vision of the Naga people for a peaceful and unified future, which cannot be destroyed by violence. It provides a powerful contrast to the conflict and hostility that surrounds them.

Q: What does the speaker mean by "after all, we are only an inconvenience of a few lakh souls"?

A: This is a use of dramatic irony and sarcasm. The speaker mockingly parrots the dismissive attitude of the oppressors, highlighting their dehumanization of the Naga people by treating them as a minor problem instead of a population with a right to self-determination.

Q: What is the significance of mentioning figures like Christ and the Mahatma?

A: By challenging those who "swear by Christ or the Mahatma," the poem critiques the hypocrisy of those who use religious or moral teachings of peace to justify violence and oppression. It exposes the double standards of the attackers.

Q: How does the poem use imagery?

A: The poem creates a vivid contrast between violent imagery like "gunfire" and "blast us to eternity" and the spiritual, steadfast nature of the Naga people represented by their "songs" and "dreams of brotherhood".

Q: What does the speaker predict will be the outcome of the violence?

A: The speaker asserts that despite the attempts to "wipe us out from the face of the earth," the Naga people will "stand firm and not move". The violence will fail to eradicate their spirit or their "dreams of brotherhood".

Q: What is the overall tone of the poem?

A: The tone is defiant, confrontational, and resilient. It is a voice of protest that is simultaneously angry at the injustice and hopeful for an eventual peace.

Q: How does the poem connect to the history of the Naga people?

A: The poem is a direct response to the turbulent history of the Naga insurgency, documenting the trauma and resistance of the Naga people. It elevates their unwritten, often ignored history into a powerful poetic testament.

Q: What is the primary message of the poem?

A: The primary message is that violence cannot extinguish the soul, culture, or aspirations of a people determined to resist. It is a statement of resilience in the face of oppression.

Q: How does the poem use satire?

A: The poem uses satire to expose the hypocrisy of those who commit violence while claiming to be moral or religious. The line "You, all of you who swear by Christ or the Mahatma" sarcastically points out the disconnect between the oppressor's supposed values and their actions.

Q: What is the significance of the speaker's willingness to be shot?

A: This is a key element of the speaker's defiant stance. By inviting the act of violence, she demonstrates that physical aggression cannot defeat their spirit or cultural identity. It suggests that her people have already faced so much that the final act of violence holds no terror.

Q: How does Changkija connect the personal and the political in this poem?

A: The poem reflects the trauma and oppression experienced by Naga women within the larger sociopolitical conflict. For Changkija, the personal experiences of violence and resistance are inseparable from the political struggles of her community.

Q: What does the repeated phrase "we will stand firm and not move" symbolize?

A: This repetition symbolizes the unwavering resolve and resilience of the Naga people. It emphasizes that despite violence and intimidation, their core beliefs and dreams for a peaceful future, described as "dreams of brotherhood," will not be shaken.

Q: What is the larger context of Changkija's poetry concerning the conflict in Northeast India?

A: Like many writers from the region, Changkija uses her poetry to protest the violence and to articulate the complex identity issues of her people. Her work serves as a record of the struggles and as a tool for resistance against colonial notions of modernity.

Q: How does the poem "Shoot" contribute to the feminist perspective in Changkija's work?

A: While the poem primarily addresses political violence, its assertive voice is inherently feminist, as it comes from a woman who refuses to

be silenced by male-dominated political conflicts. It challenges the notion that women should remain silent observers during periods of conflict.

Q: What is the significance of the term "genocide" in the context of the poem?

A: The poem alludes to a threat of cultural and physical genocide faced by the Naga people. The speaker's willingness to be shot is a bold response to the threat of extermination, transforming a victim's role into a powerful act of defiance.

Q: How does the poem use the concept of an "inconvenience of a few lakh souls"?

A: This phrase is used with profound irony to highlight the dehumanization of the Naga people. The speaker sarcastically acknowledges the view of the oppressors, who see the Naga population not as human beings with rights, but as a minor obstacle to be removed.

Q: What is the significance of the poem's terse, direct style?

A: The poem's simple, unadorned language lends it a blunt, direct power. The lack of flowery prose emphasizes the gravity of the situation and the immediate, urgent nature of the protest. It is a no-nonsense, straightforward challenge to the oppressors.

Q: How does the poem capture the experience of collective trauma?

A: The poem uses collective pronouns like "we" and "our" to speak for the entire community, transforming the individual speaker's voice into a collective outcry. This reflects the shared trauma and injustice faced by the Naga people during the conflict.

Q: What is the effect of the poem's final, defiant tone?

A: The poem ends not with a plea for mercy, but with an unyielding declaration of resistance. This final, powerful stance leaves the reader with a sense of the resilience and indomitable spirit of the Naga people. The violence is met not with fear, but with a fierce refusal to surrender their identity.

Q: What does the poem suggest about the relationship between physical violence and cultural identity?

A: The poem argues that physical violence, symbolized by the act of "shooting," is ultimately ineffective against a people's deeply rooted cultural identity and dreams. While violence can destroy bodies, it cannot destroy the collective spirit, which "will stand firm and not move".

Q: How does "Shoot" fit into the larger body of Monalisa Changkija's work?

A: "Shoot" is a clear example of Changkija's consistent use of poetry to address political conflict and human rights issues in Nagaland. It reflects her role as a voice for the marginalized, protesting injustice, and upholding the dignity of her people.

Q: What is the importance of the poem as an act of resistance?

A: As a piece of protest literature, the poem itself is an act of resistance. By writing and publishing this work, Changkija defied intimidation and used her words as a weapon against violence and silence. The poem is a way of documenting and testifying to the experiences of her people, preventing their struggle from being erased.

Q: How does the mention of "gunfire" and "songs" create a powerful contrast?

A: This contrast juxtaposes the violent, destructive forces of oppression (gunfire) with the enduring, creative, and unifying force of the Naga people's culture and spirit (songs). It highlights that their cultural strength will ultimately outlast the violence.

Q: What is the significance of the poem being a form of "resistance"?

A: The poem itself is an act of resistance. By writing and publishing it, Changkija uses her words to protest violence and injustice, giving voice to a marginalized community and refusing to let their story be silenced or forgotten.

Q: How does the poem use a collective voice?

A: The poem uses collective pronouns like "we" and "us" to speak on behalf of the entire Naga community. This transforms the individual speaker's voice into a powerful collective declaration of defiance and shared purpose.

Q: What is the larger historical context behind the poem?

A: The poem is rooted in the long-running Naga insurgency in Northeast India, a conflict characterized by violence and political turmoil. Changkija's poetry is a direct response to these specific socio-political realities.

Q: How does the poem reflect the feminist voice in Changkija's work?

A: As a woman writing about a male-dominated political conflict, Changkija's assertive voice is inherently feminist. She challenges the

traditional expectation for women to remain silent observers and instead empowers the female voice in a domain often reserved for men.

Q: What is the main paradox presented in the poem?

A: The central paradox is the speaker's invitation to "Shoot," which is a gesture of empowerment rather than surrender. By daring the oppressors, the speaker shows that true power is not found in weaponry, but in the unwavering spirit and dignity of the people.

Q: What is meant by "dreams of brotherhood"?

A: The phrase "dreams of brotherhood" represents the enduring hope of the Naga people for a future of peace, dignity, and unity. It stands in stark contrast to the violence and disunity of the present and cannot be eradicated by force.

Q: How does the poem highlight the theme of cultural identity?

A: The poem asserts that the Naga identity, represented by their "songs" and shared purpose, is indestructible. The oppressors may be able to inflict physical harm, but they cannot erase the deeply rooted culture and history of the Naga people.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

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Write the summary of this lesson

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Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. Resistance and Empowerment : Changkija's poetry often expresses resistance to patriarchal norms and societal expectations, advocating for women's empowerment and individuality.

Challenging Traditional Roles: Her work challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes, encouraging women to break free from societal constraints.

Social Commentary: Changkija's poetry critiques the social and cultural context of Northeast India, addressing issues like insurgency, militarization and cultural erasure.

Poetic Style:

Imagery and Symbolism: Changkija uses vivid imagery and symbolism to convey the complexities of women's experiences in Northeast India.

Unconventional Structure: Her poetry often employs unconventional structures and language, reflecting the turmoil and disruption caused by societal expectations.

Context:

Northeast Indian Society: Changkija's poetry is deeply rooted in the cultural and social context of Northeast India, addressing the unique challenges faced by women in this region.

Feminist Perspective: Her work offers a feminist perspective on the experiences of women in Northeast India, highlighting the intersections of patriarchy, violence and cultural norms ¹.

Themes

Feminism and Identity: Changkija's poetry challenges patriarchal norms and stereotypes, advocating for women's empowerment and individuality. Her poem "Shoot" questions societal expectations, with lines like "I see it nowhere written / that your unironed shirts / deserve my attention / more than my flying lessons".

Environmental Degradation: In "Of a People Unanswered," Changkija laments the destruction of nature due to industrialization and urbanization, highlighting the consequences of human actions on the environment: "Yes, I've seen our rice fields / turn into factories and mills / our green hills / reduced to barren brown".

Insurgency and Politics: Changkija's poetry also touches on the themes of insurgency, trauma and memory, reflecting her experiences growing up in Nagaland.

Poetic Style

Imagery and Symbolism: Changkija uses vivid imagery and symbolism to convey complex emotions and ideas, often drawing from her Naga heritage.

Unconventional Structure: Her poetry often employs unconventional structures and language, reflecting the turmoil and disruption caused by societal expectations.

Impact

Challenging Societal Norms: Changkija's poetry challenges readers to question societal norms and expectations, particularly those placed on women.

Environmental Awareness: Her poetry raises awareness about environmental degradation and the need for sustainability.

Personal and Collective Identity: Changkija's work explores the intersection of personal and collective identity, reflecting her experiences as a Naga woman .

Notable Works

"Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain": A powerful collection of poems reflecting the emotional and socio-political turmoil in the Northeast.

"Monsoon Mourning": A book combining poetry with political reflections.

"Cogitating for a Better Deal": A collection of editorials and essays.

Feminism and Identity: Changkija challenges patriarchal norms and stereotypes, advocating for women's empowerment and individuality.

Insurgency and Politics: Her work critiques the violence and societal conditions leading to unrest in Nagaland.

Environmental Degradation: Changkija highlights the destruction of nature due to industrialization and urbanization ¹.

Achievements

Journalistic Career: Founded and owned "Nagaland Page," a prominent newspaper in Nagaland.

Advocacy: Member of the Working Group on Women's Empowerment in the Indian National Planning Commission.

Literary Contributions: Featured in anthologies and literary journals across India and abroad .

CHAPTER - 5

"Maymanshing"

Q: Who is Ananya Guha?

A: Ananya Guha is a poet and writer known for exploring themes of identity, culture, and social issues in her work.

Q: What are some common themes in her poetry?

A: Her poetry often touches on themes of refugees, identity, love, nature, and social commentary.

Q: What does Ananya Guha's poetry say about refugees?

A: In her poem about refugees, she describes them as "seekers of change" who are "whip-lashed by wind and bathed with waters, roaring yawning seas".

Q: How does Ananya Guha use nature in her poetry?

A: Nature is often depicted as a powerful force, with imagery like "summertime will come, cherries will blossom" and "rains prattle unceasingly".

Q: What's Ananya Guha's background?

A: Ananya Guha is from Shillong, Meghalaya, and has a doctoral degree on the novels of William Golding. She's a Regional Director at Indira Gandhi National Open University and a freelance writer with six poetry collections published.

Q: What anthology is the poem "Mymensingh" from?

A: "Dancing Earth: An Anthology of Poetry from North-East India".

Q: Who are the editors of the anthology?

A: Robin S. Ngangom and Kynpham Singh Nongkynrih.

Q: What themes might the poem "Mymensingh" explore?

A: Possibly identity, culture, nature, or social issues specific to the region.

Q: What's the significance of the poem's title?

A: Mymensingh is a region in Bangladesh, potentially influencing the poem's themes and context.

Q: What style of poetry is featured in "Dancing Earth"?

A: The anthology showcases diverse poetic styles, reflecting the unique voices and experiences of North-East Indian poets.

Q: How does the poem contribute to the anthology?

A: "Mymensingh" likely adds to the anthology's exploration of identity, culture, and social issues in North-East India [2].

Q: What does the speaker mean by "still, like dust, I'll rise"?

A: She will overcome adversity.

Q: What natural elements are used to symbolize resilience in the poem?

A: Moons and suns.

Q: What does the poet suggest about keeping one's head?

A: It is essential during chaos.

Q: What is the significance of the oak tree's "timeless soul"?

A: The oak tree's timeless soul represents its enduring presence and connection to the past.

Q: What is the mood created by the poem about the wind?

A: The poem creates a mood of both intensity and calmness, reflecting the wind's fierce and gentle nature.

Q: The person addressed in the poem is still subject to the frown of the great.

A: False.

Q: The poem implies that the sceptre, learning, and physic are eternal and indestructible.

A: False

Q: Synonym for "rages" in the second line

A: Furious outbursts.

Q: Synonym for "clinging" in the last line

A: Holding onto .

Q: What is the central concern expressed by the speaker in the poem?

A: Fear of death, fear of darkness, loss of talent due to blindness, or desire for wealth.

Q: How does the speaker feel about the talent they possess?

A: Pleased, proud, useless, or confident.

Q: What does the speaker mean by "still, like dust, I'll rise"?

A: The speaker will overcome adversity.

Q: What natural elements are used to symbolize resilience in the poem?

A: Moons and suns.

Q: The speaker believes that winter is more unkind than man's ingratitude.

A: False.

Q: The winter wind's breath is described as gentle in the poem.

A: False.

Q: Synonym for "stand" in the last line:

A: Remain.

Q: Synonym for "mazy" in the last stanza:

A: Confusing.

Q: What qualities define a true friend according to the poem?

A: A true friend is understanding, supportive, and shares dreams.

Q: How does the poet illustrate support during tough times?

A: Friends are present "through thick and thin" and offer words of wisdom.

Q: What does the poet compare stars to?

A: Diamonds bright.

Q: What does the moon represent in the poem?

A: A glowing pearl .

Q: What is the tone of the poem?

A: Reflective, melancholic, joyful, or sarcastic.

Q: What is the speaker's attitude towards the subject?

A: Admiring, critical, nostalgic, or indifferent.

Q: What is the central theme of the poem?

A: The poem explores themes of love, loss, nature, or identity.

Q: How does the poet use imagery?

A: The poet uses vivid descriptions of nature, emotions, or settings.

Q: Synonym for "whisper" in the poem.

A: Murmur or soft speech.

Q: Synonym for "sorrow" in the poem.

A: Grief or pain.

Q: What literary devices are used in the poem?

A: Metaphors, similes, personification, or symbolism.

Q: How does the poem's structure contribute to its meaning?

A: The structure may emphasize certain themes or emotions.

Q: What emotions are evoked by the poem?

A: The poem may evoke feelings of joy, sadness, nostalgia, or wonder.

Q: What is the central theme of the poem?

A: The central theme may be love, nature, identity, or social commentary.

Q: How does the poet use imagery?

A: The poet uses vivid descriptions to create powerful images in the reader's mind.

Q: What literary devices are used in the poem?

A: Devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, and symbolism may be used.

Q: How does the poet use tone?

A: The tone may be formal, informal, reflective, or critical.

Q: What does the poem reveal about the poet's perspective?

A: The poem may reveal the poet's thoughts, feelings, or experiences.

Q: How does the poem relate to broader themes or issues?

A: The poem may touch on universal themes or specific social issues.

Q: What is the significance of the poem's title?

A: The title may set the tone or provide context for the poem.

Q: How does the poem's structure contribute to its meaning?

A: The structure may emphasize certain themes or create a specific atmosphere.

Q: What is the poem's tone?

A: The tone may be reflective, melancholic, joyful, or sarcastic.

Q: How does the poet use language?

A: The poet may use vivid imagery, metaphors, similes, or other literary devices.

Q: What is the poem's central message?

A: The poem may explore themes of love, loss, identity, or social commentary.

Q: How does the poem relate to the reader?

A: The poem may evoke emotions, spark reflection, or challenge perspectives.

Q: What literary devices are used in the poem?

A: Devices such as imagery, symbolism, personification, or alliteration may be used.

Q: How do literary devices contribute to the poem's meaning?

A: Literary devices may add depth, complexity, or emotional resonance to the poem.

Q: What is the historical or cultural context of the poem?

A: The poem may be set in a specific time period, culture, or location.

Q: How does the context influence the poem's meaning?

A: The context may shape the poet's themes, tone, or language.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. The Poem "Mymensingh": It speaks of the poet's mother being born in Mymensingh, describing it with a sense of "desolateness of a pauper" and "sagacity of a saint," embodying "Primeval wisdom" and being a "Festering pot of cultures" where "Hindus and Muslims" both coexisted and experienced conflict ("Hindus versus Muslims"). The poem concludes with the line "Mother says 'the smell of the good earth is the same everywhere'," suggesting a universal connection despite regional experiences.

About the Poet: Ananya Guha, born in Shillong, Meghalaya, in 1957, is a published poet with four collections and has had his poems featured in journals and anthologies both in India and internationally.

About Mymensingh: It is identified as a city in northeastern Bangladesh, situated on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, approximately 120 km north of Dhaka. The post notes that "Mymensingh" is the anglicized pronunciation of its original name, "Momenshahi". Historically, during the British Raj, the area was

predominantly Hindu and ruled by Banik Zamindars, with a significant influx of Muslim inhabitants occurring in the early 20th century.

The poem reflects on the Partition of India, specifically mentioning the violence between Hindus and Muslims in Mymensingh during that period.

It expresses a sense of enduring astonishment and pain regarding the historical events.

The poet describes a deep, unyielding connection to Mymensingh, comparing the roots to cacti that will remain on the "opal shores of history".

The final lines refer to a "long unwritten poem" and "the hammerings of the heart," suggesting a profound and unresolved emotional connection to the city and its past.
