



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 6. Issue.4. 2019 (Oct-Dec)



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

RETENTIVENESS OF WAR AND PEACE IN THE LIVES OF NAGA PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO EASTERINE KIRE'S *MARI*

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doi: [10.33329/ijelr.64.117](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.64.117)



ABSTRACT

Esterine Kire's novel *Mari* projects the battle of Kohima 1944, which is often refers as a 'forgotten battle' by the Naga people. The novel present the lives of common people set amidst horror during the Second World War. In her novel through the story of Mari, she depict the innocent lives attempting to survive amidst it. In this novel she has beautifully intertwined the theme of love, war, peace, meeting and parting of their dear and loved ones. As conflict shatters the lives of the people and it made them to doubt their own identity and existence. The novel revolves around the life of Mari her memories of the nostalgic past and the ravage of war. The portrayal of the battle of Kohima, which wholly altered the lives of the Naga people. The present paper attempts to study the life of Marie's momentous event of conflict and violence in the Naga society. The paper will also help us to understand the endurance depiction from the perspective of war and peace.

**Keywords:** Violence, Conflict, Fear, Insecurity, Nostalgic Memories, Identity, Endurance, Peace

Esterine Kire is undoubtedly one of the finest contemporary woman writer in northeast India. Her memories of love, war and peace for her native land, Nagaland is vividly portrayed in her novel *Mari*. She projects the battle of Kohima 1944, which is often refers as a 'forgotten battle' or a 'forgotten heroes' by the Naga people based on Mari's significant period of her life. Her novel focuses on Mari the protagonist which is set in the midst of love and war. It is the narration of the ravage of war for the lost innocent, unfolding to blossoms as war has greatly change their lives in the contemporary Naga society (viii).

Esterine's novel *Mari* is set in the midst of love and war, she has depicted the tale through her aunt's journal kept during the war period. She portrays the Japanese invasion of Kohima, and the nostalgic memories of war and conflict in the novel. The portrayal of being in love in times of war becoming homeless later left with nothing to eat and the final parting to death with their loved and dear ones. The Second World War which left a significant memory of history in the mind of the innocent villagers, always terrorized, emotionally hardened and fearful in their hard work for the mode of their own existence (xiii). In the novel it narrates how even an old feels excited to have witness the first noise of aeroplane in the war period as they have heard but they have never

seen and thus, they felt they have seen for their lifetimes (viii). While doing so it enables them to develop in themselves a different perspective towards their own lives.

The novel details the descriptions and recollections' of the pre-war times of Kohima and highlighted how Kohima have recreated in the mind and eyes of the Naga people (viii). The Protagonist Mari vividly reminisced the location of her house, shop, school, hospital, the name of her teachers and the number of car in Kohima etc. as in those period the community was small in number and their memories are all that remains for them (ix). Remembering the causes of war and violence is a frequent excitement in the lives of the Naga people. As the lost souls who lived through the war and for others who missed war Kohima was never seen as same again as war has enable them to evolve into a society with new spirit (xiii).

The novel gives us a peek into how Kohima underwent a rapid transformation with the new buildings and the number of new roads build. It reminds themselves for those who saw war that the best years of their lives is about to begin. Hence, it is a romantic novel and a heroic deeds for the lost, fear, insecurity, uncertainty, endurance and deep love etc. which enables them to be persistent for their existing as novel depict. These are all the elements of representations in Mari story (ix). Mountbatten quoted as the chronicle of "the remarkable battle" ever, he gives a description, "the horrendous nature of the country would be enough to recognize with gratitude their accomplishments" (xii).

Mari is not just Mari's story. It is the story of Kohima and its people (xii). The novel present an eloquent narration of how the battle of Kohima is one of the decisive battle fought in the history of the Naga society. It is referred as a 'forgotten battle' in the Naga society as the veteran soldiers who had seen and have taken part in the event and has given their considerable active service but was term them as the 'forgotten heroes' is because it has remain unexplored and against or banned in doing analytical research for a decade in the Naga society(x). Thus, it was termed as the forgotten heroes by the Nagas. Nevertheless the contemporary researchers who are making an effort to intensely explore the war and violence in the Naga society in an attempt to bring about peace is evolving.

She gives a depictions of how certain changes became visible in the beginning of 1942, as the Naga people felt overjoyed to have seen the first aeroplane in those period but slowly and steadily the situation grew fearsome in Kohima. She continue to depict how Nagas forgot about war and discuss how they were filled with joyful moments to be young and in love even during the war times. In the later years, Mari tries to recall how she has spent those days. She had no clear memories of them. As happy times leave no fear and anxiety over the anticipated event. The memories of loss are the ones that is remembered in the significant manner. Mari recall how happy she had been in her parents' home with her sisters. She now feels unhappy as war and conflict had taken over them but she never lose her hope in God. Her vivid memories of gunfire and bombardment of Kohima. She remembers those sounds which came closer to them her terror was enlarged in her mind and increased greatly a several times (pp. 1-51). Thus, her fond recollections of love in the times of conflict is portrait or represented in the work.

Mari recalling of prolonged noises of gun and the roaring sound of explosive bomb mercilessly exploding is vividly portrayed in the novel. The recurrent theme of war is describe and the scenario of how people were stricken with fear, grief, insecurities and uncertainty of their lives and to have seen Kohima, burned in flame right in front of their eyes horrifies them. The peaceful memories of peace in Kohima, their homes vanishing out of their sight abruptly in a fire and how it made them transfixed were all given a detail analysis in the novel. She further depict how they felt cold at night and misses the comfort of their homes. But for once they felt safe and secure away from the awful Japanese. The terrified memories of lightning struck and the sound of thunder echoing through the woods, the crashes' of falling leaves that frost their hearts, the sound of wild birds and animals and the forked lightning that came so close that seems to be threatening to hit their little shelter which made them more fearful and in tears they thought the end of their lives has come and pray to God to save them during their heartbreak is being projected in the novel (pp. 50- 69).

Easterine Kire's vivid portrayal of Mari's feeling of lonesome and the beautiful golden sunset that made her even more miserable. It details the sound of plane above their heads the constant sound of heavy fire that

have become a part of their normal live. She further elaborate how the explosive blast felt usual to them and the silence became rather unusual in their live for once. With the declaration of the war coming to an end in 1944, with the year-end Naga people never thought their land would recover from the ravage of war. But when spring came the remaining trees sprouted new growth of plants, wild flowers became to bloomed in abundance, and new grasses covered the ground surfaces that have been bombed and left behind and have become shallow in the explosion on the bomb spots. It further depicts how nature was repairing the damage that had suffered. The government and the Naga society worked hard to restore, reconstruct and to bring back the normal functioning to their town and village thus, Naga spirit was once again resilient (p.107).

The novel projects how Mari takes flower to Victor's grave. However, she resolve to take care of their child as a beautiful declaring of their undying love. It details how government has preserved the Lee Tank in the memory of war which is kept in the national highway in Kohima, during the war period. The portrayal of the reconstruction of new church once again in 1954, and how Marie's relatives in the Kohima village had new houses they now begin to resumed their works in going to the fields as the summer month saw a new grains in the fields once again the familiar natural scenery of young paddy field and freshly green trees returned to Nagaland. It gives an account of Kohima in their fifties a small town regaining from the damage of war. Most of the houses were recently built with a silvery malleable roofs and a pretty windowpane. She states, there is a glow about the small town and community of the people. Everyone knew each other which made it a warm comfortable and a friendly neighbourhood (pp. 115-148).

The novel further present a picture of how Lily met her dad, Dickie, in U. K, during the year in 1996-97, later after two years of their meeting Dickie died in a tragic car accident. That follows the death of her mom in 1971 and her dad in 1973 following each other within a span of years made her life difficult to endure. In October Patrick died abruptly without a battle in a gentle manner as her mom and dad had parted away with them Patrick adds the departure in her life and in their family (pp.161- 168).

She has eloquently projected how Mari's children and grandchildren had their own fond memory of Patrick as a loving uncle. In spite of her terrible pain to a great depth she was filled with a gratitude heart deeply grateful for the man who has loved her devotedly throughout their married lives always trying to remove and replace the losses she has suffered and endured in an early life of here's (pp.169).

Thus, the undertaken journey of love and departure with her loved and dear ones is closely articulated in the novel and the enduring or unpleasing memories she recall. The story of a young dauntless woman caught in the midst of a horrible war what if without war the novel would have long ended and the ecstatic spirit of Mari might not have been possible but it was her strength, courage, love and endurance that enables the novel a tone of spirit to grant forgiveness, reconstruct, be at peace with oneself and to show their joyful heart for the mode of their existence anew.

#### Work Cited

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