

# B. C. JYRWA AS A NOVELIST

ABSTRACT

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B. Chedrack Jyrwa is a novelist of the 20th century. His contemporary writers are Leslie Hardinge Pde, and Warning Tiewsoh. They are contemporary in terms of writing novels only not in terms of age. Till 1970s very few novels came out in the Khasi language by the Khasis themselves. Adaptation was there right from the 19th century when John Roberts adapted some stories from the Bible, notably "U Abraham", "U Joseph", and "U Moses". The process of adapting continued with the publication of U Kausik in 1915. It took a long time for Khasi novel to flourish: even Frank M. Pugh adapted an unknown source in the newspaper or short story and wrote a full length novel entitled Ka Gulabpi in 1963. S. Quotient Sumer brought out a novelette in 1966. It is a work which is full of the free play of the mind or imagination for short. Still it does not relate to the Khasi way of life. Dewi Singh Khongdup opted to enter the world of prose romance. I learnt that one of the M. Phil scholars is working on the works of Khongdup, and I should not venture to say anything on his works. They outnumber those of Jyrwa. But I chose to study Jyrwa's novels because he is still with us. Chances are fifty per cent that information which cannot be recorded without research study may go astray. The University has approved the proposal, and therefore, I progress with my research study with Prof. H. W. Sten as my supervisor. I understood it lately that he hardly agreed to supervise the doctoral research proposal unless a scholar is either an M. Phil passed or a teacher of literature for two years and more. At the preliminary discussions, I decided to work on B.C. Jyrwa's novels which proposal was approved by all statutory bodies of the North-Eastern Hill University.

The approved proposal is summarized below.

In the first chapter, an examination of the qualities which make a novelist is made. In the second chapter, an examination of the social settings which aim at identifying the scenes for the action like rural and urban. In the third chapter, attention is made to the major themes Jyrwa chooses for his novels. A wide scope is allowed to the examination of the techniques employed by the novelist. I shall come to each of the techniques immediately in the next section.

Being the first work on Jyrwa's novels of this length, the study has to be inductive. This method demands that each text has to be scrutinized as a primary source. Observation and analysis have to be done inductively. In the process of writing, however, I have to rely heavily on secondary sources for theoretical frameworks and for bases for my interpretation. Due acknowledgement is sought to be given both in the form of footnotes and bibliography to make it easier for readers to verify the material for themselves.

Having studied Jyrwa's novels according to the plan approved, it is now imperative on my part to summarize my major findings.

What went to the making of Jyrwa as a novelist were his keen interest in the development of the Khasi novel during the seventies; his imaginative skill, and his confidence in the wisdom of thinkers he acknowledges in his prefaces. Jyrwa cares more for the story of each novel than for the structure. My study shows that with the exception of U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai, the plot he designed for the other three novels is simple. A simple plot has three distinct parts: the beginning, the middle, and the end, as Aristotle defines it in his Poetics.

Jyrwa selected a purely rural setting for his U Khain Bad Ka Ngen, and a mixture of rural and urban setting for the other three novels. When I say urban I mean strictly what the texts show: Shillong. I find, too, that Jyrwa avoids realistic presentation of either rural or urban setting. By realism as I conceive it, a novelist has to or is expected to portray his scenes of action which readers feel as if episodes are those they witness in their day to day life, which Jyrwa's novels are lacking.

In the selection of themes, I find that Jyrwa gave weightage to love in its various manifestations like romantic love, platonic love, marital love, brotherly love but the accent is on filial love. This is more pronounced in U Khain Bad Ka Ngen and U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai where children are made to submit to the parents' wishes even in matter of marriage.

Suffering is another theme used by the author. Man suffers in different ways and in different degrees. Suffering of the characters in U Khain Bad Ka Ngen, U Kynjri Ksiar and U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai are man-made sufferings as they are imposed upon by other persons resulting in mental suffering of the victims. In U Pyrkhat, suffering is predestined by God against man from which man cannot escape.

Power as another theme finds place in his novels. In U Kynjri Ksiar he describes political power when he tells about the law and order. In the same novel he mentions about supernatural power when two characters Phylla and Kyrmen who possesses this power predict the future of Juban the hero. Another kind of power mentioned in this novel is social power where the rich influence not only the poor but have an influence on the verdict of the Court as well. In U Khain Bad Ka Ngen the author shows that rich people

look down on the poor. In U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai and U Pyrkhat, Jyrwa shows that people prefer to marry only those persons belonging to the same social class.

Culture is another theme projected in Jyrwa's novels. In U Khain Bad Ka Ngen, the author tells about the various activities like hunting, harvesting, arrow shooting, cremation and a visit to the market place which are associated with Khasi culture. The author also hints at the idea of getting a wife to go over and live with her in-laws which is not the usual practice but at the same time he shows that as per custom a man cannot share his ancestral property with his wife. In U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai the author depicts a Khasi custom that forbids marital connection within the clan which is strictly followed even today. In U Pyrkhat the author describes the Khasi custom at the time of bereavement, where it is the duty of all concerned to share and extend all possible help. This custom is still prevalent to this day.

Marriage is reflected by Jyrwa. According to the author, the celebration of a marriage ceremony depends on the wish of the families. It may be a grand celebration or a simple ceremony. In all his novels respectable marriage involves love, consent of the parents and acceptance of the society. Only in the case of Juban and Sharai was their marriage accepted at a later stage. Jyrwa reflects in his novels the different ways of marriage that are prevalent in the modern Khasi society as well.

In characterisation the author has not been able to give a clear description of each major character, as such he is not successful here.

With respect to narrative art the author gives a direct narration in all his novels. However, in U Khain Bad Ka Ngen the author makes use of another method where one character describes

another and also the combination of the above two methods.

In U Khain Bad Ka Ngen, Jyrwa has successfully used dreams to project the working of the subconscious mind of the characters. Besides dreams he also uses allegory in the form of a harpist's song to predict the sad end.

In U Kynjri Ksiar, the author makes use of prophecies to foretell the fortunes.

Jyrwa uses letters in order to maintain a link of relationship between characters as it happens in U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai and U Pyrhat.

B.C. Jyrwa's novels show that he has imagination and dedication. More so, his choice of the themes have enabled him to bring out the novels. The suffering of all his major characters in all his novels clarifies his concept of human suffering. His knowledge of Khasi culture, customs and traditions have motivated him to take to writing novel.

Till date we have only two novelistic critics to rely upon: H. W. Sten and J. S. Shangpliang; because they have published works to support my contention. Shangpliang, who has two volumes of critical works on fiction has not shown me an example of a good novel; Sten has two. B.C. Jyrwa, a teacher of Khasi literature must not be compared with Sten or expected to see the new light in the craft because the valuable works from Shangpliang and Sten came out much later than the establishment of the Khasi Department in NEHU. Ranking of achievements can be done when all the major novelists are studied. L.H. Pde has been studied; and Jyrwa falls short of Pde. I study his works as they appear to me and I estimated him according to his work. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that this pioneering work on Jyrwa's novels will provoke others to test my findings.

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