

## The Preservation of Oral Narratives in Easterine Kire's Fiction



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### Abstract

The fiction is set in the breathtaking setting of the Naga hills and portrays the titular character, who is born during a rainstorm and changes his personality and path. Kire elegantly integrates fable and fact as she explores Naga folklore and cultural history, rediscovering timeless themes ingrained in the community's common past. This paper examines Easterine Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud* through the lens of oral narrative, revealing the subtle overtones of contemporary and ancient cultures. This article delves into the complex layers of storytelling in *Son of the Thundercloud*, highlighting and analysing the fiction's conceptual resonance with present-day problems such as the conflict between old and new, the creation of identities, and the search for authenticity in an ever-shifting world. The paper seeks to address two main concerns by shedding light on the invisible connections that connect the past and present. It aims to reveal the hidden historical and intellectual landscapes that serve as the foundation of Naga's identity by analysing the settings. Kire contributes significantly to the preservation of oral narratives by resurrecting the memories and underscoring the significance of the work. It emphasises Kire's significance in revitalising the memories of unwritten storytelling and her dedication to traditional writing.

**Keywords:** fable, oral narrative, creation of identities, preservation, and unwritten storytelling.

### Introduction

Oral narratives, especially Naga folklore and myths, are woven throughout Easterine Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud*, incorporating traditional wisdom, philosophical theology and shared history into the protagonist Pele's journey. Narratives such as the tiger-widow's divine creation by rain, which shapes the world and provides hope against famine, blend reality and the mythical to explore Naga identity and customs. Pele's grandmother recounts the main story, which mirrors themes of resurrection and regenerative nature about a woman who gets conceived by a drizzle and gives birth to an embryo (The Son of the Thundercloud) who

restores wealth and redemption to her impoverished community. The tales underscore animistic ideas and the interdependence of nature by using the three descendants of the ancestral pure woman – tiger, spirit, and man – to symbolise the animal kingdom, consciousness, and mortal realms. The act of listening to elders frames the fiction itself; Pele's journey is sparked by the grandmother's storytelling, demonstrating the importance of oral custom as a way for historical propagation. Kire incorporates the historical tales into a post-apocalyptic environment, employing miraculous phenomena to convey profound traditional principles about soil, livelihood, and ethnicity.

Importance of oral narratives in fiction: Oral narratives have an important role in building Naga regional and communal identities, conserving shared memories and offering a lens through which to interpret the environment. Kire challenges hegemonic memories by amplifying traditional narratives and giving attention to marginalised practices. The narratives frequently embody ecological insight, connecting human welfare to a reverent rapport with the soil, as illustrated in the myth that concludes famine. The fiction employs different cultural narratives to align with the ubiquitous hero's voyage, illustrating the enduring resonance of old myths across diverse civilisations and ages.

The hero's journey in *Son of the Thundercloud* is a collective effort of recollections, regeneration, and renewal rather than an individual quest for knowledge. Oral narratives serve as a bridge between the mythical past and the developing future and a means of societal renewal. It aims to investigate how the oral culture might be re-contextualised and remade to represent alternative perspectives that honour interconnection spiritual biodiversity through an examination of Pele's journey. The historical oral narrative of Naga culture and identity serves as the foundation for mythological stories. Understanding customs and rituals in a system is crucial to know how *Son of the Thundercloud* adapts the hero's sole journey into an ethnically distinct and spiritually based story.

Oral traditional narratives offer valuable insights into the philosophy, religious beliefs, and past of people. In the case of the Naga people of North-East India, oral traditions, and folklore serve as repositories of communal recollection and transmissions of ancestral wisdom, which are crucial to the construction of social identity. These stories are live representations of cultural knowledge that flow from one era to another through spoken narration, song, and recitation. The mythological universe of *Son of the Thundercloud* is shaped by Easterine Kire, an Angami Naga representative, who is both highly inventive and firmly rooted in ancestry. Naga mythology is mediated via the use of metaphors, icons, and recurring patterns. Stories about creation, tribal migration, supernatural creatures, natural forces, and holy spots are frequently included. As the stories are transferred orally, their transference is interpersonal, theatrical, and inherently flexible. Kire uses this adaptability in the fiction to intertwine a mythical tale of miraculous development, angelic intervention and galactic reincarnation with the tale of a lady who gave birth to a god child after being graced by a thundercloud. This tale is distinctly Naga in its metaphors, articulation, and philosophical appeal, even if it is suggestive of universal legendary themes. The story takes place in a post-apocalyptic timeless world where truth and fiction collide. The setting accurately represents seasonal time. The history is a living energy that manifests itself through dreams and hereditary behaviours rather than just a recollection; Pele's journey combines physical mobility, spiritual interactions, and legendary comprehension. His journey ends in Rhaliekhu, an ancestral village that symbolises the flames of hope and primal predictions.

Kire's depiction of Naga oral narratives includes divine cartography, which is particularly powerful. Hills, streams, woodlands, and wind carry depth and vitality. Pele's voyage through different landscapes is divine, rather than literal. The area serves as an intermediary, offering guidance and challenges. The fiction's appreciation for nature reflects local ecological wisdom that humans are part of a larger, interconnected network of existence. This all-encompassing view challenges anthropocentric viewpoints and aligns with the primitive philosophy ingrained in Naga culture, which holds that every living being has an essence and that each act has spiritual consequences. In Naga civilisation, verbal communication serves as both a cultural guardian and a spiritual interpreter. The storyline of *Son of the Thundercloud* is an outgrowth of this technique. The writing has a lot of oral tone and is poetic and melodic.

Kire's story mimics the expression of an aural storyteller, making the reader feel as if they are listening in an overlapping recollection. The narrative follows a looping structure, revisiting elements and requiring reassurance, like oral storytelling. Kire's utilisation of native wisdom is cognitive as well as conceptual. The oral narrative offers emblematic, contextual, and divine knowledge of the universe. Rhalie's divine birth is not rationally described but rather recognised as an ethereal fact. This pedagogical perspective supports divine wisdom, emphasising the importance of metaphor and experience over factual evidence. The occult features of the story are not imagination but rather reflections of actuality made tangible through mythological consciousness. Kire adapts the story for literary purposes while maintaining its divine meaning. The birth of the Son of the Thundercloud demonstrates that life may be revived with divine intervention and human determination in the ashes of disaster. Kire refutes the exoticisation of local myths, citing their intellectual understanding and spiritual complexities. The personas are not clichés but rather complex individuals dealing with issues like loss, uncertainty, romance, and the meaning of life. Pele's journey focuses on mending deep wounds and restoring confidence in a broken world, rather than overcoming external enemies. The fiction offers an oral narrative method that is both mythoreal and authentic rather than a creative opposition between truth and fantasy.

Stories are passed down from generation to generation, century after century, and are made up of events that happened years, decades or even centuries ago. In the process, stories take up space in our current lives along with in history: "Stories are what make history, and history makes for good stories" (Patton 4). People preserve their culture, traditions, and uniqueness through the art of storytelling. But regrettably and incorrectly, those who do not write are now viewed as primitive and archaic. It is commonly believed that these primitive people think in a harder and simpler way, or that their thought processes are inferior. Instead, one could argue that these individuals are motivated by a desire and requirement to comprehend the world, its nature, and the community in which they live. They think that knowledge, no matter what form it takes, has great power. Specifically, an Angami youngster of six or seven years old joins other kids of roughly the exact age to create an age group called the thesu: "During these formative years of thesu, the parents continue to encourage this peerage to work together as a group." (Zetsuvi 26). After reaching the age of roughly twelve or thirteen, the youngsters of various clans develop enough to assume social responsibilities. After that, they officially unite as a group to create an age group. These age groups must fulfil various roles and obligations in society during various phases of their lives. These separate age groups have separate houses that "...impart knowledge of the natural and the supernatural to you so that you go out into the world with knowledge of both, and not disrespectful of either world as some people are..." (Kire, *When the River Sleeps* 28).

Tribes all around the world continue to practise oral tradition and storytelling. This is the only explanation for why, despite their shared characteristics, the world's tribes have managed to maintain their distinct individuality to this day. In *Son of the Thundercloud*, Easterine Kire crafts a captivating tale of faith, hope, creation, and death in Angami civilisation. The fiction tells an intriguing tale of Pele, who wanders the world after leaving his town after his closest relatives perish in a famine. Pele's spiritual journey that leads him to the village of Weavers began when he saw the two bony, skeleton-like sisters in the deserted village. Kethonuo, who was four hundred years old, and Siedze, who was three hundred and eighty years old, were kept alive in the unthinkable, bleak, and empty region by hope. Land, the all-encompassing mother and nurse, has become utterly inert over the ages: "We haven't seen rain since we were born!" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud* 29). Although Pele, the traveller, had grown up hearing the narrative from his grandmother, he had no idea that he would be the one to witness the event and bear testimony to the rain "One afternoon, a raindrop fell on her from the sky. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son..." (Kire 39). Mesanuo lived by herself on the outside of the Village of Weavers after being expelled by the locals. She was punished because a tiger killed her husband and seven sons. Human religion has always been influenced by symbols. In contrast to immersion in water, which represents the breakdown of forms, immersion from water represents the cosmogenic action of formal manifestation. Water thus represents both life and death. Immersion results in impregnation, which raises the possibility of life, or contact with water always results in birth through the disintegration of a form that must be after a new birth. Aquatic cosmology holds that humans are born of the seas. In addition to bringing joy and fertility to the world, the birth made Mesanuo, who was hundreds of years old, appear younger because she was a strong carer for her son. The annual growth of a fresh crop is comparable to the ongoing production of something new. The river's re-flowing through the village after it had been absent for years was seen as their mother returning to feed her kids because she had never left anyone without food. The secret of life's origin and generation is revealed via fertility: "The river runs. We are saved!" (Kire 53).

The foretelling had been viewed by the headman and others as a meaningless myth. The hamlet was to be saved from the tiger's enchantment, which had slain his father and siblings, by Rhalietuo, the redeemer, as the prophecy had come to pass. Only spiritual weaponry could defeat the tiger, who was a spiritual tiger. The two spiritual weapons Rhalie possessed were a specially crafted spear and a good, prideless heart. The spiritual realm is not a place for pride. Purity of will and intention triumphs in the tangible world. Rhalie also feels this way. Rhalie prevailed over the tiger spirit, but man's avarice and jealousy defeated her. The dark-spirited individuals who could not accept and believe the historic tales were the ones who thrived on terror and greed "...when the storytellers were killed, one after the other, people slowly forgot what they had been told, or believed they were just myths, and they allowed their minds to accept the darkness" (Kire 64).

Rhalie's life was put to an end. A monstrous downpour brought about by the end of Rhalie utterly destroyed and decimated the Village of Weavers. Water is the most powerful slayer, dissolving and eliminating all forms. For a devout Angami man, death is not the end of life; rather, it is merely a shift in the way that people live their lives, since "... Angamis believe in life after death" (Kire, *Walking the Roadless Road* 64). However, accidents are inevitable when people disregard their culture, religion, and beliefs. Folktales and stories start to play a part in this. Folktales are multi-layered narratives that highlight human virtues and shortcomings. Several consequences followed the murder of the Son of the Thundercloud out

of jealousy, as rain carried the entire town away, signifying that there is no mercy for the dark ones and the gloom of life. The marginalised people and nature are connected through folktales, and it is evident from careful examination that oral literature supports the sustained growth of both life and the natural world. A harmonious co-existence of mankind and the natural world result from the conviction that every object on earth contains a spiritual component. Rereading the folktales from many angles helps one comprehend the environment and culture better. In the essay, “Who Made Nature Our Enemy?” people realise that “We cannot touch nature, we cannot communicate with nature as living natural creatures; an invisible barrier separates us” (Mies & Shiva 92). In this fiction the three sisters, Kethanuo, Siedze, and Mesanuo, as well as Pele’s elderly grandmother, are shown to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of nature. Folktales also help to unite culture and nature. Based on careful observation, we discover that civilisation is influenced by nature. Folktales clearly illustrate how nature and life are interrelated. The Village of Weavers and the deserted village both exhibit the same interconnectedness between nature and life. Hope helped the two sisters by “Harvest us, eat us, so we can grow up again” (Kire 83).

In addition to warning against errors in society and the environment, folktales also propagate the concept of non-violence. They could be viewed as offering rules for people and their actions. The differences and relationships between human beings and the environment are discovered via close observation, and subsequent research reveals how people are classified according to factors such as race, social class, religion, wealth, beauty, and ugliness. Human inequality brought on by differences eventually leads to jealousy and avarice for wealth, fame, and power. These characteristics make people ignorant to the kindness that exists in the world, driving them to injure their own brothers while losing sight of their ancestry, which ultimately leads to self-destruction. As “Vipru’s jealousy of Rhalietuo ran very deep...” (Kire 133), Vipru performed the heinous act of finishing Rhalie’s life. Pele experienced cosmic epiphanies while living with his sisters in a deserted village, where humanity seemed unthinkable. After meeting the sisters, he became aware of the paradoxical nature of time. After witnessing the earth being pulled eastward by the stars in the night sky, the question arises in Pele’s heart: “Is this some sort of preparation for coming of the Son of the Thundercloud?” (Kire 28). Pele was ignorant of the natural world and the cosmos. He had matured hearing the tale of the Son of the Thundercloud’s arrival, but he wasn’t ready to see the prophecy come to pass. So, storytellers must be correct and have a close vision of the days to come.

Conclusion: Nature and culture are interdependent. Among native people worldwide worshipping nature is a significant part of their culture worldwide. Most tribes engage in the practice of planting and harvesting grains. Additionally, all of these demonstrate each aspect of nature’s significance in these people’s lives. Their way of life and the environment are also rigorously preserved because they think that imposing severe penalties for taboo violations. They see nature as an integral aspect of their lives that is inextricably linked to them. As a result, the Angami Nagas of Nagaland likewise live lives that are entwined with nature, culture, convention, and spirituality. Rhalie, a young child, had a straightforward idea for ending droughts because he pointed out, “Mother, if we plant more trees, there will be no more droughts” (Kire 67). Even the most difficult tasks could be easily accomplished by a man with an honest and pure heart. Additionally, the small child had taken all his mother’s stories at face value. The storytellers and believers were killed owing to the hypocrisy and cruelty of those who ignored ancient prophecies and stories about natural surroundings. With the advent of technology and widespread industrialisation in contemporary civilisation,

individuals had started to disregard the ancient tales and, as a result, had begun damaging the environment. Large-scale deforestation started out abundantly under the pretext of development. However, nature retaliated in its unique manner, punishing the wrongdoers, demonstrating the importance of myths and stories. According to the tribal people, Mother Nature will only look after the people if they take care of the planet. The universal truth lies in the fact that:

We are not here without a purpose, .... Our purpose is to fulfil our destiny. The life of a man is measured by his actions and his actions are good if their origin is pure... (Dai 57).

As humans, we should endeavour to complete our allotted tasks with a pure heart for the good of our world.

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