

# Exploring Trauma And Resilience In Easterine Kire's Mari: A Literary Analysis

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## Abstract

*Mari* (2010) is the historical work of Easterine Kire, it explains the main protagonist's life, Mari. It captures her life in love and loss during World War II and the Japanese invasion. This explores the personal life of Naga women and it reflects the trauma of the Naga community. This paper examines the life of the Naga community pre-war and post-war in Kohima. This paper mainly focuses on how Mari fell into trauma, and how it became resilience in her life. This paper analyses the life of Mari and the Naga people. This novel Mari is set up as a love story in wartime. It was originally written in the form of a diary. Mari had a habit of registering every event in her life in the time of war. It explores the protagonist's pain, grief, and struggles eventually overcoming all those war years and starting a new life with a bright hope for a better tomorrow.

**Keywords:** *War, death, lonely, army, Struggles.*

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## INTRODUCTION:

Easterine Kire holds a top position in Naga literature due to her powerful storytelling and deep connection to Naga's historical roots. Her English novel *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003) became the first book of its kind from Nagaland which launched her robust literary journey. Her book *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007) gained significant global recognition because the Indian government picked it to translate into six UNESCO languages. In 2015 judges from The Hindu Prize chose her for winning *When the River Sleeps*. This book combines real-world elements with Naga's spiritual practice and traditional folk stories. Through her extensive work, Kire preserves and records the preserved stories of Naga oral traditions as they have been constantly taught from one generation to another. The writer examines Naga's history and insurgency impact through her books *Bitter Wormwood* (2011) and *Son of the Thundercloud* (2016). As an author and translator, Easterine Kire stays active in promoting Naga literature to readers everywhere and she works to keep traditional stories alive.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Lightning and recovery trauma draw strong attention from literary scholars especially when authors write about wars and their former colonies. Professor Cathy Caruth studies how trauma literature reveals essential facts about mind and soul damage in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). Judith Herman (1992) in *Trauma and Recovery*, explains what helps people endure trauma by sharing their stories and rebuilding their identity. These perspectives offer light to understand how Mari mixes grief memories experienced by an individual within historical tragedies.

"Trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (Caruth 58). Most war stories show what people face when they get trapped in violent battling situations. Dominick LaCapra's research (2001) shows the unique differences between traumatic events that happen to a nation and people directly through his work. Just like *The Glass Palace* and *Cracking India* do in their stories about war and partition in India and India, Mari tells the private effects World War II had on Nagaland. Research about North-East Indian writing now emphasizes the special historical experiences of its people including their struggles against colonial rule and battles. North-Eastern literature retells memories says Dolly Kikon 2019 and Nandanda Dutta 2015 to keep history alive. As a Naga author, Easterine Kire records personal experiences of war and political instability through her 2011 publications *Mari* and *Bitter Wormwood*. Easterine Kire bases her storytelling methods on Native practices according to Walter Ong (1982) in *Orality and Literacy*.

According to Tilottoma Misra in 2011 oral history works well for saving indigenous experiences in areas without sufficient reliable documentation. Through oral storytelling, Mari connects actual war stories to

the strength of the entire community. According to Elaine Showalter in her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), literary studies confirm that war novels explain how female characters deal with both physical war consequences and emotional suffering. Throughout *Mari*, the protagonist experiences war survival challenges identical to female survivors described in Alexievich's and Adichie's worldwide war books. These books allow readers to understand better how victims of war use their struggles to regain power over their lives.

In literary study experiments, psychologists measure the ability to heal and maintain traditional ways of life. According to Ann Kaplan in 2005 poems written about trauma depend on the acts of telling stories and building relationships while seeking spiritual meaning. *Mari* Kire shows the character's inner strength alongside how trust in family and society helps people recover. Research published in 2021 on Native American works proves storytelling serves as treatment so Kire's writing methods are supporting evidence. This research field provides effective methods to study *Mari* and her experiences. This study combines trauma theory research with Indigenous literary and feminist views to position Kire's novel in the historic and psychological discourse of survival literature. The next part studies these themes as they appear in *Mari* through an in-depth look at the text.

### **Historical and Cultural Backdrop**

Easterine Kire's novel *Bitter Wormwood* and *Life on Hold* explores the relevant issues concerning the political issues in Naga and the effects of war on the lives of the people in Nagaland. Most of her novels contain many historical events with political unrest the brutality of war and the daily lives and struggles of the ordinary people and the consequences of war. She also wrote on the supernatural and the immortal aspects, the spiritual realms in her novels are *When the River Sleeps*, *Son of the Easterine Kire* 's *Mari* is about the life of her aunt *Mari* and the author has collected the information from her and through her diary. This novel *Mari* is set up as a love story in wartime. It was originally written in the form of a diary. *Mari* had a habit of registering every event during the war. It is also a historical novel in the context of the II World War and the brutal facts and effects of the war. Her writing colors her love of her native land and her culture with nostalgia for the golden days, of issues such as identity and ethnicity. In her writing she expresses about her native state far away from home, she also sheds her hope for a better future. She felt that she needed a personal message to write about the conflict that was going on.

*Mari* is a love story during the revolution of World War II. It explains the contrast between the pre-war and post-war in Kohima of the Japanese invasion. This battle was fought from April 4th to June 22nd, 1944. Naga people faced the first time with war. The protagonist *Mari*, known by her short name Khrielieviu *Mari O'Leary*, is a 17-year-old girl. She was the daughter of a Treasury officer in the District Commissioner's office in Kohima, who fell in love with a 30-year-old Staff Sergeant Victor (Vic), a British soldier. It was not a pleasant period because it was a very sensitive time. This novel is not just about Kire's aunt it gives a mirror of the life of the Naga people. *Mari* lived with her family of seven members in a two-story house called Bamboo Villa, in a colony known as Mission Compound on the outskirts of Kohima Village. This place is fully occupied with nature, herbs, a garden, sounds of birds and animals. But it was encounter with misery death, starvation, fear, and separation. This war explained the political background it showed as an object when they saw a dead body.

Kohima town was the headquarters for the administrative office in Naga Hills. This hills border of India and Burma was the district of Assam. Kohima. The people stayed at the top of the houses. This novel is divided into two parts. In the first part, it explores the love story of *Mari* and Vic. The second part will be in the Kohima war. The Japanese Invasion of India in the Second World War was ended by a decisive struggle. Between 4 April and 22 June 1944 in Kohima, the long battle of three months ' war took place. In "Battle of Kohima" was a bloody affair because over 10,000 people were killed on each hand. The whole area was once a sleepy, small British outpost 60. The Nagas have experienced the trauma of war caused by the Japanese invasion and then their struggle for freedom against the Indian government.

The children were very happy and all were waiting for Saturday. On that day they washed their clothes and went out for the day. The same day Mother sent Aneiu to buy tea and lentils. They are crossing the path of the road of mission road. The village people standing outside the police station." What a lot of people 'Aneiu said curiously what do you think they are doing? (24). She saw a man have been arrested for drunkenness he still looked drunk. The Manipuri was popular with local people, they sold dried fish and small yeast balls, and at the same time, non-Christians bought rice beer. The upstairs rooms were frequently occupied by relatives. In one of the rooms occupied by relatives' rooms, another room was stored in heavy wooden and tin trunks filled with clothes. The house's name is Bamboo Villa. Before the

war he worked as a Treasury officer after that he started his career as a teacher. He was employed at the Impal Mission School in 1918 and 1919. The bamboo grove was a wide yard where the younger children played and close to the house's garden fully occupied with flowers and it was attracted to the caterpillars. It all shows the happy and peaceful life of the Naga people. 'He loved to plant different fruit trees and experienced with varieties not usually found in these hills so we had a scrawny apple tree that bore a single fruit once in two years, and a coffee plant that gave very bitter fruit. The other trees that grew abundantly were native plum, peach, and guava trees They gave a lot of fruit in season" (29) The naga village people's house was surrounded with seasonal vegetables like garlic, beans, and mustard leaves.

"On Saturdays, the Nepali women would come by selling milk; Ama!" they would call out to mother. Occasionally, they brought chicken or mustard leaves for sale.'Ama we have brought chickens today 'they would announce. Mother would invite them into the house and serve them tea. She said it wasn't right to send them away empty-handed.'Ama can we pluck some mint leaves one of the women sometimes asked shea was an especially large woman with very red cheeks, her name was Maya; Take what you want; Mother would reply". (30).

### **Understanding Trauma in Mari**

The reflected scenario shows the rhythm of the lives of the Naga people in Kohima town. Every morning, they did the regular activity and they exchanged greetings with one another. But it was quite changed at the beginning of 1942 the airplanes flew over the skies for the first time. This was such an amazing phenomenon for the Naga people talked about it for days. The aircraft flew over the town were Dakotas on their way to and from Imphal and the British army had their plane. In the middle of 1942, the British army began to enter our lands in large numbers that they never heard before. The army occupied the Dimapur-Kohima highway. The soldiers were accompanied by different nationalities with equal numbers of white soldiers and British soldiers among the group. The war was reached it began with the hordes of refugees and the Japanese invasions pushed into our lands. Naga people addressed all the people British officers as Chaha. It shows the decisive battle of Kohima because of the Japanese invasion in the period of World War II. This battle also called 'the Stalingrad of the East 'around Kohima town. The town was fully occupied by British soldiers in this meantime Kasano met her friend Mari. She had a meeting with Victor and a British sergeant. Both are driven out of town towards Jakhama. She had a question about whether people fall in love in wartime. Every day she prays for the safety of his life. Vic wants to marry and live together "Vic was holding her hand and said 'Listen I'll call you Marigold my Mari do you mind?" (52)

Both are engaged and waiting for the marriage. But the situation changed in March Kohima village turned into a ghost town. Kohima's shops and the schools were closed because of the war. Finally, the family accepts the love of Vic and Mari. He was worried about the safety of Mari. At the same time, he was engaged with duty. Whenever he was free, he came back and saw Mari. The happy life to have passed in a flash and was threatened by war. There were so many rumors about the Japanese. The people heard the gunshot and all were in terrible condition. Vic came and packed all the things Mari and went to Chieswema, they escaped from the place Chieswema then they moved to the forest, where the Japanese soldiers they continuously moving into the interior villages. Food and shelter are the very big problem for the Kohima people. They are searching the food in the forest. When they get food, they can share it with others. After the war, Mari was united with her family, at the same time she lost her lover Victor a Staff Sergeant of the British Army. Mari was pregnant and always prayed to God for a good health condition. Her role has changed as a single parent. She always thinks about the Vic and she decides to search a Vic's grave with the help of Bob.

It was a rainy day it was difficult to find out Vic's grave. Where he died a little bamboo cross bearing Vic's name. She had a girl child her name is Madison. It means happy again. After some days the government declared the war was over. Kohima people think they come back to their homes, first, they do the renovation work. In their village, there are animals because the soldiers killed these animals and ate them. The government appointed a teacher to reopen the Mission school. In the new school, Mr. Lhuviniu Lungalang was appointed as the headmaster and they operated the school as a local teacher. Rev Suplee came back to Kohima in 1945. As soon as he returned, and shifted the school into hospitals. Mari dedicated her life to her daughter. The government constructed the cemetery was neatly organized. The family members easily go and put the flower in the grave. After the war, the church was one of the houses to be built. The village people turned slowly in their normal life. At this time, she had love with Jimmy's friend Dickie. He knows her past life and she had a child. Dickie loved music He was a clarinet player

but he couldn't play in Kohima, because he didn't have the instrument. He had a proposal in Shelia and was working in Military nursing service. But she was only love in Mari. She had another baby named Lily. He promised to come back, but he never came back. Mari decided her life and to fulfill her dream, of becoming a qualified nurse. She joined a college and weekly twice she visited her home.

### **Psychological Transformation and Growth**

At the end of the story, Mari completed her studies and joined an oil company hospital. In the meantime, she had a surprise announcement the visitors had come, the person was Patrick Oleary the eldest son of the O Leary family. In the year 1957, on February 15 both are married. Both lead her happy life, and he retired from his job in the Assam oil company. "The loss of Pat was more deeply felt by the family than I had thought. The youngsters missed their uncle. Alone in our house in Kohima, I imagined he would come into the door calling out.... (187). The naga people life was because of the war it has affected the people mentally and physically. The memory of the war is integrally associated with the memory of trauma. The children are the victims to see about the war and lose their natural laughter and happiness, freedom in their own country. War makes Jimmy prematurely a man because his cheerful boyish attitude is gone and he does not respond to any smiles and waving (Kire 86). In this novel, each character shows the victims and loss of happiness. In the novel, each of the characters experienced and experiences death, violence, disease, and physical and emotional torture.

### **CONCLUSION**

Easterine Kire uses Mari's experiences to show the personal and historical effects of the Battle of Kohima while sharing her main character's life story. The book connects the personal stories of war survivors with worldwide history to show how people lived through combat. By mixing direct life stories with real records Kire makes sure the Battle of Kohima's history stays relevant through time. Mari advances from being a traditional story to a historical book that educates readers about Angami Naga's endurance and tribal identity. The book reveals how war transformed Nagaland during World War II as it demonstrates the Naga people's particular way of life was impacted both socio politically and culturally. Through Mari Kire demonstrates how to keep historical narratives alive by telling stories that enduro memory and value fiction as a vehicle for preserving past events. Kire uses his stories to show history and restore dignity to the people affected by the Battle of Kohima for future listeners to understand.

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