CHAPTER IV

THE TECHNIQUES
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By 'techniques' in this chapter, we mean the art employed by the novelist under study to give the reader an information about the complete works of a writer as we find them in print. A novel is not a mere story telling; it is not a parable: it is not a sermon either. In it we look at such techniques pressed into its making as: (a) characterization; (b) plot construction; (c) narrative art; (d) dreams and vision; (e) letters, and (f) prophetic elements or prophecy. There may be other aspects also but I propose to confine myself to what I find in Jyrwa's novels.

Characterization

In *U Kynjri Ksiar*, there is no description about the physical appearance or the dress of the hero and even the tone of his voice is missing. Only at the end of the novel some mention of the dress and appearance of the hero is made.

The author writes:

Juban adjusts his ill-fitting trousers and loose shoes. The blackish trousers
and white shirt matches his complexion. Though he is not tall yet he is attractive. He also wears a belt (pp. 74f).

Moreover, Juban seems to be very dull. He is like a puppet in the hands of the heroine. Though the hero is named Juban yet he could not live upto his name. Juban means 'word of honour'. Maybe for that reason the author makes him suffer; he forgets his duty as preacher.

The author describes the appearance of Sharai once when we are allowed to see her attire; wrapping herself with a shawl and next when she wears ill-fitting clothes complimented by Juban. Ultimately she is seen with a golden necklace (pp. 34, 41, 52).

Following the trial of Juban the author describes the face of Sharai, which changed as if pricked by guilty conscience (p. 63).

The release of Juban brings back happiness once again to Sharai's face. At the end of the novel the author describes the couple as having handsome faces and suited to one another (p. 76).

In *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen*, the main character Khain is the son of rich parents and an honourable person. The author further describes him as a smart and handsome young
man having a good character. So Khain is a befitting name given to the hero, he surpasses all other youngsters in all respects.

In Chapter VI of the same book the author describes the activities performed by the hero as if he were a poor man's son. The author writes:

Paddy has been pounded but not properly cleaned, lunch is on the platform above the hearth and he would come soon. (p. 57).

The way the author describes the activities of the hero needs a fresh look. Questions as: (i) did rich people of the ancient Nonglwai treat their grown up sons the way Jyrwa put it? (ii) Or was it a lapse on the part of the author? The author can examine these questions because failure to attend to these is tantamount to misleading scholars who keep Khasi culture in mind. The questions are referred to him because he will retire from active service in 1986; and has time to do justice to this point.

In the same chapter the author says that the hero is splitting wood and as soon as his friend comes to invite him to go a hunting, he goes inside to take out his soot covered bow to clean it and at the same time orders his maid servant to cook more rice than usual (p. 59). Jyrwa makes a son to do the work of a maid servant also. A strange coincidence.
Khain is made to wear a silk turban once when he visits his lover. Silk cloth may have colour, but no colour is described.

The description of the heroine shows that she is very active. She cooks for the family and at the same time she feeds and looks after the chickens, goats and pigs. Besides the housework she also works in the field (pp. 17, 27).

In chapter V the author says that Ngon applies wild honey on her cheeks (p. 4). The reason for this is that it makes the complexion more attractive than without it. Considering the rural setting of the novel, it seems that from time immemorial the Khasis knew the importance of honey not only as a food but also as a beauty aid.

According to the Homemaker's Cookbook and Guide to Nutrition, honey is classed as a carbohydrate and a "tablespoon contains 65-80 calories".  

Barbara Cartland, the writer of popular romantic novels, advocates the use of honey for "natural health and beauty".


Shahnaz Hussain, maker of the largest selling herbal skin and hair care products of this century also stresses the importance of honey and names one of her products prepared from honey as Barbara Cartland.

On page 57, he describes Ngen as having long black hair, rosy cheeks, red lips and bright eyes which look like windows that brighten a dark room. This description tells that she has a dark complexion.

Ngen, literally means 'suppressed'. For a person having such a name one can conclude that that person would have only limitations in life. That must be the reason why the author gives the name Ngen to his heroine as from the beginning to the end of the novel she encounters only obstacles.

In U Pyrkhat, the hero is bold, helpful and outspoken young boy. He is the leader of the group, whether it is a school picnic and in a school play, as his friends always rely on him (pp. 4, 10, 38).

As the name implies, Pyrkhat is a thoughtful person. Even as a young school boy he does not act irrationally. To prove this point the author shows that though his friends become excited at the picnic yet he remains very calm and thinks before he accepts his part (p. 15).
This quality remains with him even when he grows up. As a young college boy he refuses to become a part of a mad crowd without knowing the reason. Before completing his studies he already has plans for a happy future life. He thinks that by marrying a doctor he would lead a peaceful life. Though Pyrkhat is a successful lawyer yet he is not greedy (pp. 28, 88, 122).

On page 163, the author describes that during the prolonged illness of his wife his routine life is disturbed. He forgets even to bathe and change his clothes; he even forgets that he has a son. With the sad demise of his wife, Pyrkhat is consoled by his only son. The ways of God to men are always hidden from us all. Pyrkhat proposed something, now God disposes off man's plan.

Bakor the heroine of this novel is first introduced as a medical student. After the completion of her studies she marries Pyrkhat, the hero. She is good-looking, humorous, and a daughter of well-to-do parents (pp. 82, 83, 104). Soon after the marriage she becomes very sick and during her illness she delivers a baby boy. Though she recovers briefly after the delivery yet she relapses till she dies in March of an unknown year (pp. 156, 164).
The hero of *U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai* is introduced from childhood. He is made a good looking baby who studies very hard that at 18 he is admitted into a Medical College at Dibrugarh. Normally, students can join such professional college after the Pre-University in Science stage. We do not know about the hero's college years, at least two, in Shillong. Nevertheless, Bhakupar is sociable and has a Khasi friend like Teilang and others from other communities. Teilang is Bhakupar's reliable guide. He is the only one of friends who consoles the hero when the news that his real parentage is unknown as the childless couple are not his real parents. For the readers, this fact is made known from the beginning; the hero is yet to know it; not until he overhears his friends. We do not get the detailed description of each major character; and Jyrwa has failed in characterization.

**Plot Construction**

According to Aristotle, plot is the soul of the tragedy. E.M. Forster defines a plot as a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. He further explains, mystery is essential to a plot and cannot be

appreciated without intelligence.\textsuperscript{5}

F.L. Lucas comments:

Of the plot of tragedy Aristotle makes three general observations that it must be of certain size; that it must be a certain structure; and that is the most important thing — "the soul" of drama.

Its size is obviously limited, because it must on the one hand be long enough for the catastrophe to occur, and on the other hand be short enough to be grasped as a single artistic whole, and not like a creature a thousand miles long.\textsuperscript{6}

H.W. Sten maintains that plot is important in a novel, drama or any story that relates the account of more than four characters in proper sequence according to importance.\textsuperscript{7}

There are three popular categories of plot.

(1) A good plot: Aristotle calls it complex in which the element of reversal of the situation or peripeteia is present. "The peripeteia, in short is the working in blindness to one's own defeat".\textsuperscript{8} It also contains an element of recognition which Aristotle calls anagnorisis. "The anagnorisis is the realisation of the truth, the

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 88.
\textsuperscript{8} F.L. Lucas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 99.
opening of the eyes, the sudden lightning flash in the darkness.9

(2) **Simple Plot**: Where the incidents proceed without peripeteia or anagnorisis.

(3) **Episodic Plot**: In this type of plot the author can narrate the events that happened in ancient times.10

*U Khain Bad Ka Ngen* has a simple plot as it has only the beginning, the middle and an end.

**Part I: The Beginning** — The novel begins with a narration that Khain the hero and Ngen the heroine meet at a market place and fall in love. Their love for one another continues and it is at their meeting at Wah Thap-balieh that they vowed that they would never part.

**Part II: The Middle** — Ngen gets worried because after their meeting at Wah Thap-balieh, she does not see or hear from Khain. Accidentally she meets her close friend Dit who is shocked to see the change in Ngen's appearance. Dit consoles Ngen and tells her that she would try to get information about Khain through her boy friend, Rang.

Part III: The End — The narration of Rang, Khain's best friend in the course of conversation with Dit and Reit. The narration clarifies the feelings of opposition of the respective parents.

U Pyrkhat has a simple plot as it is made up of the beginning, the middle and the end.

Part I: The Beginning — The meeting with Bakor at the end of the College function. While Pyrkhat goes for Law at Gauhati Law College, Bakor studies medicine at Dibrugarh Medical College and they keep their love alive by exchange of letters.

Part II: The Middle — The consent of the respective parents and thereafter the lavish wedding celebrations.

Part III: The End — Bakor becomes very sick and after delivering a child her condition deteriorates and ultimately she dies. She leaves behind her only son and her loving husband. The novel ends when the teacher comes to console Pyrkhat.

U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai falls within the category of a good plot as it contains the beginning, the complication, the middle, the denouement and the end.

Part I: The Beginning — There is an expectant
mother who is taken to Robert's Hospital at Jaiaw, Shillong. She delivers a son but has to abandon him because she is unable to pay the hospital dues. The hospital authorities give the child for adoption to a childless couple who live at Jaiaw, who name the child Bhakupar. The foster parents treat Bhakupar as their own son and educate him to become a doctor at Dibrugarh Medical College.

Part II: The Complication — During his stay at the College hostel he overhears the conversation between two friends that reveals his identity. The revelation fills Bhakupar with shame and worries.

Part III: The Middle — Bhakupar is determined to find out the truth from his foster parents. On learning that what he had heard is true, he cannot believe that his mother could do such a dreadful thing. The foster father explains the circumstances that lead to his abandonment and the subsequent adoption. This makes him aware of the importance of finding his real mother.

Part IV: The Denouement — Bhakupar along with his foster parents and their friends go in search of his real mother. In the meantime Bhakupar falls in love with a lady doctor who happens to be his colleague.

Part V: The End — Once again Bhakupar and his
real mother are united in the same hospital where he was abandoned as a child and now works as a doctor. After the reunion Bhakupar and the lady doctor get married and live happily ever after.

_U Kynjri Ksiar_ again falls within the category of a simple plot but it is better than in _U Khain Bad Ka Ngen_ or _U Pyrkhat_.

**Part I: The Beginning** — Juban, the hero who hails from Siah Pongdeng goes around preaching the gospel of God and accidentally reaches Shillong. On reaching Shillong he meets Phylla who foretells his fortunes and advises him to leave Shillong. He sends him to another person named Kyrmen who possess supernatural powers.

**Part II: The Middle** — The meeting of Juban and Sharai on that fateful night. As they become man and wife after a very brief meeting the need for having a shelter is felt. As they wander from place to place the need for selling the golden necklace becomes imperative. While selling the necklace Juban is caught red-handed by the C.I.D. as it could not be verified that he was selling his wife's necklace.

**Part III: The End** — Juban is jailed and once again Phylla comes to meet him. Shot the maternal uncle of Sharai
comes to bail him after Sharai confesses that Juban is a good and honest man. The novel ends when Juban and Sharai are united once again as man and wife.

Dreams

In order to make the intensity of love in U Khain Bad Ka Ngen more interesting, B.C. Jyrwa has made his characters nocturnal as well as day dreamers. Dream as we understand is the result of a deep feeling that we have consciously but which due to certain circumstances cannot be fulfilled when alert or we can say it has to be repressed. In spite of this repression that deep feeling persists. So once again it appears in the form of a dream.

According to Sigmund Freud:

Dreams serve as a substitute for a number of thoughts derived from our daily life, and which fit together with perfect logic, we cannot, therefore, doubt that these thoughts have their origin in our mental life. All the qualities which we value in our thought processes and which mark them out as complicated performances of a high order we shall find repeated in the dream thoughts.11

The author writes:

Being worried Khain is not able to sleep that night. He thinks about the ways and means to meet his beloved once again.

He keeps on thinking till midnight but is unable to arrive at any decision. Ultimately when it is past midnight he decides that the only way is to meet her when she would go and wash her clothes at Wah Thapbalieh and thereafter falls asleep. In his sleep he dreams about the decision he had just taken. Moreover, that he has sent word through Dit that they meet at Wah Thapbalieh, where he would also take a bundle of clothes and expects Ngen to help him in washing. After the clothes are washed, Ngen washes her hair near the waterfall and Khain admires her beautiful long hair. Thereafter she sits on a rock and requests Khain to hand over her bag.

The bag is heavy, as it contains oranges, an earthen plate, betel nut and leaf and some mustard. While Ngen is cutting the fruits and mustard to mix in the earthen plate Khain’s mouth waters. As they are enjoying their eats Khain suddenly stiffens pricks up his ears as he hears someone approaching and turning towards that direction he thinks he saw Ngen’s father armed with a dao. He awakes with a start, only to find himself in bed and the sound of the rat eating the maize stored at the top of his bed (p.56).

On waking he keeps on thinking till dawn on how to interpret the dream. Since it is commonly believed that getting something in a dream means a loss, he concludes that Ngen’s father would never see them if they met in reality. After a while he falls asleep again but has no further dreams. His parents are surprised that he should be sleeping so late that morning as he is an early riser but he explains that he was too tired from
the trip to the market even though his eyes betray his lack of sleep. So he excuses himself from going to the field that day and stays home to sharpen the new dao. To get rid of his sleepiness he takes half a sack of paddy to dry on the mat outside so that he could pound it before going to sharpen the dao at the riverside. When everyone is away attending to their respective duties the house is quiet and he becomes preoccupied with his thoughts and starts day dreaming. He plans on how to converse on the appointed day so as to know Ngen's real feelings for him. In his day dream he admires his beloved as she is perfect in all respects. He is awakened only by the cackling of the fowls (p. 56).

In the nocturnal as well as in the day dream Khain dreams about his beloved. It appears that his dream is the result of wishful thinking. It seems as if his mind is occupied all the time by thoughts of his beloved only.

This intense feeling that he has consciously in the waking state is transferred to his sleep, so he dreams exactly what he thinks in his day or nocturnal dreams.

Sigmund Freud explains:

Day dream as an analogy is waking life...
Like dreams, they are wish fulfilments...
If we trace their formation, we become
aware how the wish motive which has been operative in their production has taken the material of which they are built, mixed it together rearranged it, and fitted it together into a new whole. 12

In the same novel another instance of day-dreaming that the author mentions is that of the heroine. It seems that Ngen also is constantly haunted by the thoughts of her beloved and in her intense love for him she forgets about the immediate surrounding and resorts today-dreaming about him.

The author writes:

While the potatoes are boiling Ngen sits on a piece of wood and thinks fondly of the days when she along with Khain would be working happily in the fields. While she delves in these thoughts her mother calls to say that she could get the smell of something burning (p. 21).

Besides dreams, B.C. Jyrwa has employed prophecies also in yet another novel U Kynjri Ksiar. Prophecy, according to the Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, is a prediction or we can say foretelling the future. 13

According to E.M. Forster:

12. Ibid., pp. 352-353.
Prophecy — in our sense — is a tone of voice. It may imply any of the faiths that have haunted humanity — Christianity, Buddhism, dualism, satanism, or the mere raising of human love and hatred to such a power that their normal receptacles no longer contain them; but that particular view of the universe is recommended — with what we are not directly concerned.14

In U Kynjri Ksiar, the author introduces two characters, Phylla and Kyrmen who foretell the fortunes of Juban. To the astonishment of Juban whatever they have predicted come true but they are unable to avert the sad events from happening in their family even.

In one place Jyrwa made use of an allegory also to foretell the sad end of the love which holds Khain and Ngen when he made a harpist to sing about young people in love in that the Umsawmat lovers have to part with each other.

In U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai and U Pyrkhat letters are made to maintain a link of relationship between the characters though we are not allowed to read all their contents.

Narrative Art

Having examined the other techniques employed by the novelist in all the four novels, it would be quite appropriate, I believe, to have a brief look into his narrative art also.

Three ways of telling the story with the action to the readers are already evident in the novels in the language. We must note when we refer to B.C. Jyrwa’s novels one fact: that he has not published a new novel after 1976, excepting revising *U Kynjri Ksiar* in 1986, at the instance of his junior friend, an eminent literary critic, H.W. Sten. We would not have known this too without Raijesh K. Lyngdoh who examined *U Kynjri Ksiar* at a great length and who took the first opportunity among the scholars of the Khasi Department of the North-Eastern Hill University to interview the author; because, Jyrwa himself never changed the wording of his preface excepting changing the date from 1971 to 1986 which has never been done by any Khasi novelist. Without overburdening the readers with many other names, I would draw their attention to only two Khasi novelists who did the correct thing: Kitbor W. Nongrum who authored *Ka Pung Ka Jingieit* (1973) cared to print the preface to the third edition (1981) with new information for researchers; H.W. Sten wrote a preface to the second edition of *Ka Samla Nongkyndong* (1982) keeping in tact the preface of the first edition which came out in 1981. Jyrwa did nothing of the sort, even the improvement made on *U Kynjri Ksiar* is still kept in oblivious secret. I prefer to let the new generation of Jyrwa’s specialists to unearth this (he is still strong). I under-
take an excursion to the objectionable change of date only for the old preface because I feel it has a lot to tell on the art of the writer, if not of his view of life.

Now the three ways or methods of narrating the story with the action deserve to be spelt out.

**First.** The direct narration by the author. Jyrwa did this in all his four novels. Sometimes he takes to himself the role of a judge to pass judgement on the characters. One example will open the eyes of many other researchers for there are many. In *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen*, for example, he commented that Dit is ka riew phlek phleck meaning that Dit, a character, speaks out what she feels and does not care for the feeling of others. One can also examine just one paragraph out of the many in *U Kynjri Ksiai* (p. 63) to discover how the author intruded himself as a commentator. To be fair, except Leslie Harding Pde and Sten, the younger ones aped this kind of art.

**Second.** Authors do allow one character to describe another. This is more evident in the novels of H.W. Sten (*Ka Samla Nongkyndong* and *Kwah Bymjukut*) in which the memory, an area of psychology, was pressed to service. Unconsciously, Jyrwa made use of this art only in *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen*. 
This art has been made full use of by Pde who made a character, Raimon, to advance both the story and the action. This is much after the art of the writers widely known as *stream of consciousness novelists* where the sun should stand still as the narrator tells the story. If I am allowed to compare this technique with poetic creation, it resembles the dramatic monologue. Jyrwa has not tried the technique; Sten preferred a combination for variety; because he believes in the law of *cause and effect* of which Jyrwa might be aware without being able to use it.

Third. The combination of the two above. Only in *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen* had Jyrwa allowed this combination to take place; not in the other three novels.

Now that the young generations are exposed to TV, Video Films and various other means of seeing what happen in the world; the way Jyrwa made use of this art needs improvement. To praise a character without justification in action or to run down another in a similar way does not speak well of a modern novelist or a dramatist.

The technique needs more attention in *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen* and *U Pyrkhat* than in the other two.

The hypothetical statement may need legs to stand;
hence two such metaphorical legs would perhaps be sufficient: in the first novel referred to, the narrative has been too far to wrongly project Khasi culture like the cremation, the hunting, the visit of some characters to a harpist and many other episodes without involving both the hero and the heroine. In the second, Pyrkhat was forced to present a short play, a rare art in the Khasi novel, perhaps to testify to the capacity of a hero (if not of the novelist himself) to write a short play also. However, Jyrwa had not published any play. He succeeded in attracting criticism by inserting a play within a novel, though not a good one as its number of pages is. Sten's Shaphang, Ka Novel (Of the Novel) came not too late to offer a remedy to authors like Jyrwa in narrative art as well as in any of the arts mentioned in this chapter because all the authors who have to order a reprint are still up and kicking.

It appears to me that Jyrwa would have done well if in all the four novels he takes the responsibility to narrate and comment on the action and the character of the characters, and be consistent in that.

As a narrator, Jyrwa cannot be ranked as a victorious one. There is room for improvement upon his second and fourth novels.