CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF A NOVELIST
A novelist is someone who writes novels including prose romances. Whenever we discuss prose romance we talk about fiction or literary narrative not historical truth. Oscar Wilde explains, "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what fiction means."¹

M. Abel Chevalley defines novel as "a fiction in prose of a certain extent."²

E. M. Forster further explains, "that the extent should not be less than 50,000 words."³

M. H. Abrams writes:

The novel is characterized as the fictional attempt to give the effect of Realism, by representing complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operates in a highly developed social structure, interact with many other

³ Ibid., p. 25.
characters and undergo plausible and everyday modes of experience. The prose romance has as its ancestors the Chivalric Romance of the Middle Ages and the Gothic Novel of the latter eighteenth century. It typically deploys simplified characters, larger than life, who are sharply discriminated as heroes and villains, masters and victims, the protagonist is often solitary, and isolated from a social context; the plot emphasizes adventure, and is often cast in the form of the quest for an ideal, or the pursuit of an enemy; and the non-realistic and occasionally melodramatic events are sometimes claimed to project in symbolic form the primal desires, hopes and terrors in the depths of the human mind, and to be therefore analogous to the materials of dream, myth, ritual and folklore. Examples of romance novels (as distinct from the realistic novels of Jane Austen, George Eliot or Henry James) are Walter Scott's Rob Roy, Alexandre Dumas, The Three Musketeers, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, and the mainstream of American fiction, from Poe, Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, and Mark Twain to William Faulkner and Saul Bellow.

W.H. Hudson elaborately explains the components of a novel.

In the first place, the novel deals with events and action, with things which are suffered and done; and these constitute what we commonly call the plot. Secondly, such things happen to people and are suffered or done by people; and the men and women who thus carry on the action form its dramatic personae, or characters. The conversation of these characters intro-

duces a third element that of a dialogue, often so closely connected with characterisation as to be an integral part of it. Fourthly, the action must take place, and the characters must do and suffer, somewhere and at sometime; and thus we have a scene and a time of action. The element of style may be put next in our list; and with this it might seem that for practical purposes our analysis is complete.

The sixth element in the novel is, "the writer's criticism, interpretation or philosophy of life." Marion Crowford calls the novel a 'pocket theatre', containing within itself not only plot and actors, but also costume, scenery and all other accessories of a dramatic representation. Fiction may also take the form of short story and novelette. Short story implies all those stories that are short. Short stories are made up of the same components that are essential for a novel. A short story may be composed of a variety of motive and material which are correlated. Edgar Allan Poe defines:

as a narrative which can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours,

6. Ibid., p. 163.
and is limited to "a certain unique or single effect", to which every detail is subordinate.8

A short story has only one plot and the characters too are few in number. Likewise, it does not take readers to many places to advance the action.

A novelette, on the other hand, differs from a short story. It is a prose fiction of middle length. M.H. Abrams explains:

It must be remembered that the name covers a great diversity of prose fiction, all the way from the short story, which is a slightly elaborated anecdote of perhaps 500 words, to such long and complex forms as Melville's Billy Budd, Henry James's The Turn of the Screw, Conrad's Heart of Darkness, and Thomas Mann's Mario the Magician, whose status of middle length between the tautness of the short story and the expansiveness of the novel is sometimes indicated by the name novelette, or novella. This later form has been especially exploited in Germany (where it is called the Novelle) after it was introduced by Goethe in 1795 and exploited by Heinrich Von Kleist and many other writers; the genre has also been the subject of a great deal of critical attention by German theorists.9


It would now be of interest to see what have gone to the making of B.C. Jyrwa a novelist. He is not the first novelist among the Khasis because as early as 1884 John Roberts led the way by adapting a few Biblical incidents into readable stories and novelettes like "U Joseph", "U Abraham" in the Third Reader which was followed in 1895 by "U Moses" in the Fourth Reader. Jeebon Roy adapted from the other sources to produce Ka Ramayan and Ka Kitab Chatanya. The process of adapting continued in U Kausik (1915) and several others. In fact, even Ka Gulabpi (1963) by F.M. Pugh has nothing to do with the Khasi way of life; and for that matter, S.Q. Sumer's Ka Hima Ka Jingieit, too, appears as an adaptation from short stories, published in some newspapers. Nothing at all is found in it about the Khasi way of life. We may hypothesize that adaptation, translation, and transcreation have served as stepping stones to the making of a Khasi novelist. Jyrwa's case is different. He might have gone through all those. Like L.H. Pde who started publishing his own novelettes in 1971, Jyrwa's first novel, U Kynjri Ksiar, too, was published and circulated in that year. This was followed by U Khain Bad Ka Ngen (1973), U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai (1974), and U Pyrkhat (1976).
From the dating of each novel, we see clearly that Jyrwa was rather productive and imaginative in those years. Since no more novel has come out from him, it would be safe to consider both imagination and hard work as some of the qualities which made Jyrwa a novelist. It would have been difficult to write a few thousand pages without hard work in six years; and that too when he was in active service as teacher.

Thematically, Jyrwa prefers accidental marriage in his first work; broken hearts in his second to which he projects a lot of excursion to the novelistic action with his uncalled for cultural inclination; parentage and loves (parental, filial, brotherly, marital) dominate his third novel; while respect to teachers and the human fate dominate the last. So, selection of the main theme for each novel has gone to the making of Jyrwa a Khasi novelist. It is not saying that his themes are either good or bad because I shall soon examine his themes in a separate chapter.

Whether or not Jyrwa has spelt out his aims for writing his novel is another point to be considered. A few well known authors made their purposes of writing books clear enough in their prefaces and when we come across such authors we are at ease to follow them through
their works. Jyrwa is clear only in the first two novels. The purpose of writing *U Kynjri Ksiar* is to show divine predestination for his creature, though the text proves that anything can happen by accident. His aim in the second novel is to discover the cultural wealth of the society; though in respect of Khain and Ngen we find him influenced by the Sohlyngngem (imperial pigeon) theme where where the girl is deserted by her lover simply because her parents do not want her to marry a rich person lest he ill-treat her some day. The fear is unfounded; because no Khasi young man in normal circumstance, brings his wife home and makes her become one of the members of the family. Granted that a few are there, they have been made so by social circumstances. We can maintain, then, that wide reading of traditional accounts contributes to the making of Jyrwa a novelist.

Man, as we find in the experiences of Juban, Khain and Pyrkhat could not shape his own destiny. Man is helpless, while God and people around are more powerful than he is. But God's way to man in the three novels seem to have no justice at all. That man cannot rise above his relatives is exemplified in *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen* and in *U Kynjri Ksiar*. In *U Pyrkhat* man is left at the hands of either God or fate. As against this attitude, we find
that in *U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai* man cooperates both with God and with fact, so it ends in a convincing manner. So, the next consideration which made Jyrwa a novelist is his view of human nature. To be human means to suffer. All his major male characters: Juban, Khain, Bhakupar, and Pyrkhat suffer in their own ways and in different degrees; hence, the realisation of human suffering also has made him a novelist.

Raijesh K. Lyngdoh has examined Jyrwa's first novel; and he does not have high opinion of Jyrwa's handling the episodes in the novel. This aspect will be examined in one of the chapters to follow.

None has rated him as a great Khasi novelist; so, there must be something in all these consideration. That he is not a keen observer of life as is the author of *Kwah Bym Ju Kut* would appear clear to a scholar who reads and understands Khasi. Hence, I shall devote a few pages to characterization to support this view.

Jyrwa has never been under the influence of any Western writer because no trace of either technique or narrative art can lend support to such assumption.
Human beings express their thoughts, feelings and ideas either verbally by spoken words or by way of writing. Human beings differ from one another in their mental and physical make up. Therefore the way of speaking or writing of one person differs from that of another, though they may speak or write of the same fact.

While writing, style is very important as it gives the reader a clear idea of what is being written and every writer expresses in a particular style.

Alan Warner comments:

As a man thinks and feels, so will he write. If his thoughts are muddled his style will be muddled. If his thoughts are clean and sharp his writing will be clean and sharp. 10

Style is something that comes from within the individual and it is not like something that can be added on a plain sentence to make it sound more attractive. In fact, every person has a particular style of expressing himself which always reflects his personality and perception of life. Buffon, a French writer and naturalist of

the eighteenth century wrote that "Style, it is the man himself." 11

A writer should always keep in mind that his style of writing should suit his reader or audience. Style should differ according to the need of the situation, for example, the style of a letter to a friend should not be the same as an essay, it should be appropriate and suitable for the occasion. Therefore, the same writer may adopt different styles to suit different occasions. R. C. Trench explains:

It is the first characteristics of a well-dressed man that his clothes fit him; they are not too small and shrunken here, too large and loose there. Now it is precisely such a prime characteristic of a good style that the words fit close to the thoughts; they will not be too big here, hanging like a giant's robe on the limbs of a dwarf; nor too small there, as a boy's garments into which the man has with difficulty and ridiculously thrust himself. You do not feel in one place that the writer means more than he has succeeded in saying; in another that he has said more than he means; or in a third something besides what his intention was: and all this from a lack of dexterity in employing the instrument of language, of precision in knowing what words would be the exactest correspondents and fittest exponents of his thought. 12

11. Ibid., p. 2.
12. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
While writing the writer should always keep in mind that the words he uses should give a clear and distinct meaning be it an overstatement or understatement but appropriate to the occasion. The whole idea should be clear, appropriate, lucid and easy flowing. Whenever the readers appreciate an author or show their preference of one author over another they simply refer to his style. The degree of difference lies in their personality and mental make up.

Alan Warner explains:

There are always three influences that will exert their pressure on a writer's style. One is his own personality, his own way of thinking and feeling that determines his mode of expression. The second is the occasion on which he is writing, the particular purpose which directs his pen at the moment of writing, so that the same man may employ different styles on different occasions. The third is the influence of the age in which he lives. These three influences do not exert equal pressures. A man of strong personality may go against the current of the age. For this reason it is sometimes said that a minor writer reveals the characteristics of his age better than a major writer. But no writer is ever completely cut off from his age. He may seem to be going against the current, but it will be found that every age has its cross-currents as well as its main tide.13

13. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
The style of writing is composed of the use of slangs, short informal colloquial and 'rarely aims at grandeur or purple passage'. Besides there is another style of writing that is used by specialists. Alan Warner writes:

The language of much specialist writing today, particularly perhaps in the social sciences, is very far from being colloquial and informal. It is often difficult for the layman to read. It is not only that technical terms are used; a technical term is often a kind of short hand for a concept that it would need a sentence to express in plain language. The reader who is prepared to explore a specialist subject will be ready to learn and accept a reasonable number of technical terms. But he is often faced with a ponderous abstract jargon that seems to obscure rather than clarify meaning. The specialist seems reluctant to write the language of ordinary men if he can possibly avoid it.14

From the style of writing used by the specialists a new style emerged known as the gritty style.

Alan Warner explains:

The gritty style, as its name suggests, is not clean and smooth. Its rough surface grates on the ear and the mind of the reader.15

15. Ibid., p. 181.
Benjamin Franklin further explains:

We can understand what a writer is saying when he writes gritty English, but we cannot feel that he has considered his readers. As a reader I find that this irritates me; the writer is asking me to make the effort that he should have made himself.\textsuperscript{16}

In the gritty style the writer cannot make his reader understand easily what he is writing. The writer may not use technical terms but it is not smooth and clear.

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the style of writing differs from one to another depending on one's personality and angle of seeing things. At every age or era different styles of writing emerged and were always dynamic but never remained static, so it is not possible to have one particular standard style of writing. But it is very important that the writers should always keep in mind, whenever they write, that their writings are clean, smooth and easy to understand.

The writer under examination is a novelist not a specialist and his style of writing is of the gritty style as his way of narration is not easy for the reader to understand. He tries to pack too many things in his

story and fails to assign any proper role to his characters.

The flow of events is not smooth, as the readers are supposed to make up what should have been written by the writer, as an example, morning should be followed by noon, then by evening and then night but in B.C. Jyrwa's novel the sequence is of a different order. Besides the stories in his novels are forcefully bent to a certain ending making it very artificial.

Jyrwa's first novel, _U Kynjri Ksiar_ appears to have been written with a possible film in mind. Sometimes the dialogue is somewhat hesitating to tell the obvious as in Juban's reply to a question by the landlady at Madanrting in Shillong. On many occasions his narration may not stand the test of structural grammarians of the present decade. This observation applies to his other three novels as well. If these texts are difficult to understand, the attention he has paid to the grammar of the language is largely responsible for it. Not to refer the scholars to many instances, they are invited to analyse the first paragraph of Jyrwa's _U Khain Bad Ka Ngen_ grammatically to discover one evidence. I am afraid if they proceed further; they will think that I am generous enough to a living author.
Again, his style of writing seems to have been conditioned by his multifarious aims. The second novel invites us to places and scenes not connected with the theme. Jyrwa has to show the style of a Khasi harpist and attune himself to it which, though prophetic in respect of the angle characters, Khain and Ngen, deviates from his individual style. That Jyrwa has an inclination for poetry is understood easily to any one scholar who has time to examine both his novel and poetry. He has published two volumes of poetical works. Readers should not wonder if the difficult sentences are impregnated with poetic quality.

This observation holds good for all his novels. The meaning is clear, since he is still strong he can take a fresh look to his works with the help of friendly critics.