CHAPTER-II

THE PRECURSORS OF THE KHASI NOVEL: A WOMAN'S SUFFERING IN HER QUEST FOR ROMANTIC LOVE

2.0 The year 1963 has been generally accepted by literary critics to have witnessed the first full-fledged novels written in Khari with the publication of F.M. Pugh’s *Ka Gulabpi* and S.Q. Sumer’s *Ka Hima Ka Jingieit* (1966). The publication of these two novels put an end to the age of fables and fairy tales and the age of adapted short stories. It ushers in a new era – the age of the novel. Thus, a new chapter is opened to the Khari literary world. Fables, fairy tales and religious stories have served their turn; it was then time for the Khari writers to digress from the existing circle of story writing to the realm of the novel, a world of imagination and imitation corresponding and correlating to true life. Since these are the only novels which were published during the decade, both are taken for analysis in this study to examine the theme of suffering in their women characters.

Though F.M. Pugh himself was a Khari and had written the novel in Khari language yet the setting he had chosen for this novel was not in Khari towns or villages. He himself states in the sub-title of the novel that this is “An Indian Story”.

Not only are the locations of this novel set in places of North India, but his characters were also members of a community from that part of India. The novelist’s intention perhaps is that this novel is meant to familiarize Khasis about people from other parts of India. However, it was generally accepted that the main reason F.M. Pugh undertook the task of writing this book was to fill the needs of students at the undergraduate level according to the syllabus on subject Khari.(1)

The other novelist selected for this study in this chapter is S.Q. Sumer. He also wrote his novel in Khari language but none of the locations were set anywhere in Khari and Jaintia Hills. In fact, they were set in other places of India and even in far away cities in England. The characters created in his novel were not members of the Khari community but hailed from that part of India and of foreign countries.

It is because of the above reasons that these novels were taken as the precursors of the Khasi novel. Though written in Khasi language, the character in the novels did not represent Khasi men and women nor did the novel depict the Khasi way of life.

2.1 An analysis of F.M. Pugh’s Ka Gulabpi (1963):

F.M. Pugh was a well qualified teacher of English for he passed his M.A. in that subject before he proceeded to become a lecturer in St. Edmund’s College, Shillong. A literature student and teacher, F.M. Pugh was acutely aware of the need of fiction in the form of the novel in the study of Khasi Literature.

In the latter part of his life, Pugh became a noted writer and contributed immensely to Khasi Literature through his translated and creative compositions. His creativity extended to his analysis of some aspects of Khasi Language also. His works include Ka Jingiar Ka Ktien Khasi Volumes I and II, Ka Gulabpi and two plays Ka Sawangka Ki San Ngut Ba Iap and Ka Sawangka Ia Ki Saw Ngut Ba Iap Mynsaw. He also has to his credit a critical work Ka Prosodi Bad Retorik.

F.M. Pugh, therefore, occupies a prominent place in Khasi Literature especially because he happens to be the first writer to write a full-fledged novel in Khasi language.

The novel is made to reflect certain cultural norms and practices of North Indian communities. The novelist starts with a description of a father trying to find the right matrimonial match for his daughter:

U Rangbah Raj Bhadur un dei leit sha temple ryngkat bad ka jingiathuh tarik ia ka sngi bad u bnai ba kha ia ka khun jong u ryngkat bad u lyngdoh ka iing jong ki, bad u ong “ngan leit hangta pat bad ka jingiathuh tarik ia ka sngi u bnai ba kha ia phi”.(3)

3. F.M. Pugh, Ka Gulabpi, p. 83
[Raj Bhadur had to go to the temple along with the family priest, to tell the temple priest about his daughter's date of birth, month and so on in order to prepare for his daughter's marriage.]

This refers to an important cultural practice of that community which places great importance in the matching of the horoscope for matrimonial arrangements, a practice that was unheard of among the Khasis particularly during the period when this novel was written. The suffering of the main female character in this novel, therefore, is set against such a culture and a society of that period.

The novel's main focus is on the heroine's quest for romantic love, that too of an ideal kind. J.S. Shangpliang noted that love with all its complication forms the main theme of suffering in this novel. When the novel start, immediately the reader is transported to a dream-like, ideal and picturesque setting:

“Riang ha ka mariang jong ka umpung la don ki syntiew ki skud, bam shym la thung da ki kti briew hynrei kiba la san la plung da ka jingbeh lyer mariang.”

[Beside the clear and crystal water of the lake, grew beautiful flowers unplanted by human hands and blooming under the care of nature.]

Against such an earthly paradise, the two lovers Gulabpi and Surendar Singh met each other for the first time. The meeting of the two lovers was shown to be accidental.

Surendar Singh had come to that particular place to seek temporary respite from the heat, the din and the bustle of city life. He thought to himself:

“Hangta, u briew na ka nongbah ba ia kawkaw dawdaw u lah ban pynangew jaijai la ki thied jabieng klieh jong u.”

5. op. cit. p.3
6. Ibid., p.4
[In that serene place, away from the din and bustle of the city
a man can find peace and relaxation.]

Gulabpi also happened to be at that place for a holiday. The setting was perfect
for a stirring of the two young hearts in the midst of the beauty of nature. The moment
Surendar Singh saw Gulabpi, he felt that his long-cherished dream of meeting a
perfect woman was realized. Gulabpi also felt a tremendous attraction towards
Surendar Singh. The novelist at this point compares the beautiful tender feelings of the
two lovers for each other to a germinated seed moistured by an April gentle shower:

“Kine ki jingwanphai pa wanphai jong ka jingpyrkhat ki
hap kum ki lap-praw u laiong bad ki iapynjlih pynsngem
ia ka khyndew hapoh jong kata ba shong i symbai jingieit.”  

[Thoughts of love fell like an April shower moisturing the
soil where under it lies the seed of love.]

The intense passionate love of Surendar Singh for Gulabpi affected him almost
to a point where he could no longer hide his feelings for her:

“Ki khmat jong u ki la ba leilieh, ka met jong u ka la khih
kyiuuh bad kum u sing ba khlem shongthait.”

[His eyes felt like they were struck by lightning, his body
quivered and he trembled like a restless lion.]

The novelist juxtaposed such passion with Gulabpi’s quiet demeanor, an
attribute the novelist states as nature’s gift to a woman:

“Ka mariang ka ai kham bun ka bor synshar ha ka kynthei
ha ki kam jingieit.”

[Nature bestows more strength and self control to a woman
in matters of the heart.]

7. Ibid., p.9
8. Ibid., p.10
9. Ibid., p.10
But along with the joy of discovering their love for each other, Surendar Singh had a sense of foreboding of some future trouble which was transformed into reality at a later stage:

“Ka dei shisha ka dur khmat jong ka hi, ka la i-raikhoh, thangiong bad blad rong.” (10)

[The foreboding was reflected in her face; she looked thin, drawn and pale.]

The meek and gentle girl was made to go through tremendous suffering at a later stage, as Gulabpi unfortunately got caught in a love triangle. Surendar Singh was a man of good character – sober, spontaneous, large-hearted and patient:

“U long uba jrong ka rynieng bad bawandur ka met ka phad bad ka main briew ba i-khia thew bad ba i riewialam.” (11)

[He was tall and had a good physique. He had an impressive personality, clearly one with leadership quality.]

At the same time he was neither domineering nor brash but gentle and caring:

“Uba i-jai jai bad lui lui kum ka paro.” (12)

[He was humble and gentle like a dove.]

As the novel progresses, the lovers’ feelings for each other became more intense with the passage of time:

“O, ko ieit jong nga, hato phi tip ma haduh katno ba nga ieit iap khlem miet sngi ia phi?” (13)

[O, my darling, do you know how much I really and truly love you?]

10. Ibid., p.23
11. Ibid., p.6
12. Ibid., p.51
13. Ibid., p.23
Although the meeting took place only once, yet the deep love between them was overwhelming. They did not exchange many words between them but seemed to have communicated their feelings for each other almost in total silence.

However, trouble brewed up with the entry of Pyrdip Kumar into the scene for he also had fallen deeply in love with Gulabpi. In an attempt to win over the object of his heart’s desire, Pyrdip Kumar first threatened Surendar Singh not to stand in his way and he then approached Gulabpi’s father for her hand in marriage. It was at this juncture that Gulabpi showed her courage and strength of character and withstood the evil scheming of Pyrdip Kumar. The very idea of marrying Pyrdip Kumar was totally repulsive to her because she had given her heart to Surendar Singh.

In a desperate bid to marry Gulabpi, although well aware of her intense dislike for him, Pyrdip Kumar asked her:

"Phin shah ia nga ban doh ia kato ka kti ba la pynbat ia ka klat ha nga?" (14)

[Will you allow me to kiss the hand that held my glass?]

Gulabpi made her feelings very clear in her reply:

"Em ngam shah, bad phim dei ban khmih lynti eiei kaba kum kane ka rukom na nga." (15)

[No, I will not allow that, and you should not expect such an act from me.]

Pyrdip Kumar was an unscrupulous character: sly, cunning, manipulative and ready to resort to any means to achieve his end. This could be understood from the author’s own statement:

"U Pyrdip u long riew-sianti buit ha ka pyniaid kam pyniaid dam." (16)

14. Ibid., p.36
15. Ibid., p.36
16. Ibid., p.79
Pyrdip was very cunning and manipulative in carrying out his schemes.

Pyrdip Kumar used different tactics when he approached Gulabpi’s naive father Raj Bhadur for her hand in marriage. He knew how to dupe Raj Bhadur’s close friend and even the family priest. He deceived them by giving suggestions which sounded very impressive to them. Since her father was totally unaware of his daughter’s love for Surendar Singh, he readily consented to the proposal thinking Pyrdip Kumar was a suitable match for Gulabpi. Pyrdip Kumar presented his proposal to Gulabpi’s father in the following words:

“Nga kwah ban kylli ia phi shaphang ka khun jong phi nga mut shaphang kaba kyntiw kurim bad nga.” *(17)*

[I wanted to ask you about your daughter, I mean to ask for her hand in marriage].

Impressed by Pyrdip’s wealth and status, Raj Bhadur felt sure that the match would be the best for his daughter and he started making the marriage arrangements for Gulabpi. The author states:

“U Raj Bhadur ba u sngewskhem ha lade ba u la dang leh kaei kaei kaba dei bad babha tam na ka bynta ka khun.” *(18)*

[Raj Bhadur was confident that what he was doing was for the good of his daughter.]

Therefore, the marriage between Gulabpi and Pyrdip Kumar was fixed without the knowledge and the consent of Gulabpi.

From this point on, the novelist focused mainly on the intensity of suffering that Gulabpi had to go through in order to be re-united again with the man of her choice. Her initial suffering was caused by her ignorance of her father’s decision to give her hand in marriage to Pyrdip Kumar. She only became aware of her father’s

17. Ibid., p.75
18. Ibid., p.79
marriage arrangement for her later on:

"Nga la ia pyndep ia ka jingpyniateh sai-iong na ka bynta ka jingiaknytiew kurim jong phi lashai lashisngi bad u Pyrdip Kumar."^{19}

[I have fixed your marriage with Pydip Kumar and the ceremony will take place within the next few days.]

When Gulabpi learned of the arrangement she was totally aghast and collapsed in total shocked and distress:

"O, ko pa !.... ha ka jingieng treng u nuihkhlieh da ka jingsngewphieng khlieh bajur bad kram ka kyllon ha madan kumu dieng iap-ieng."^{20}

[O, father!.... She felt her hair standing on its end and in great shock she collapsed and fainted.]

Thus, when Gulabpi was told about her impending marriage to Pyrdip Kumar, she was horrified and overwhelmed with her emotions, she collapsed and fainted with shock. Humiliated and enraged at Gulabpi’s refusal to marry him, Pyrdip Kumar bowed to get his revenge and then resorted to evil means to force her to marry him. Fortunately for her, when her father discovered the truth about his daughter’s feelings for Surendar Singh, he was eager to avert the disaster in her life. The wedding plans between Gulabpi and Pyrdip Kumar was cancelled:

"Kat kum ki kot niam ka jingiatehktien kam long kaba da skhembha eh ha u Raj Bhadur."^{21}

[According to the guidelines in the Scripture, engagement was not as binding as a marriage to Raj Bhadur.]

Later on, Gulabpi was sent to Rajasthan with her escorts to visit her father’s cousin Anupgarh. They were to travel by camels through the vast desert of Rajasthan.

19. Ibid., p.90
20. Ibid., p.90
21. Ibid., p.122
Then came a drastic turn of events at this stage, events that led to both physical and mental agony to Gulabpi. Humiliated and enraged at Gulabpi’s refusal to marry him, Pyrdip Kumar hired a group of villains to kidnap Gulabpi and to kill Surendar Singh. The villains hired by Pyrdip Kumar were able to overcome Surendar Singh and his men. In fact, the leader of the gang shouted to his men:

“Siat pynkylloon ia ki briew.” \(^{(22)}\)

[Shoot at his men]

During the fierce fight that ensued, Surendar Singh was seriously injured and Gulabpi was kidnapped by these wicked men:

“U la mynsaw jur; u la shah siat bun kuli, ia ka kynthei dei ban pynkhamtì kaba khlem lei lei bad khlem jingmong jingmysaw.” \(^{(23)}\)

[He was seriously injured after being hit by a number of bullets. The lady, as instructed, was to be captured unharmed]

Surendar Singh was thus seriously wounded and Gulabpi was taken to a secluded place where Pyrdip Kumar was waiting for her.

The vengeful spirit of Pyrdip Kumar found satisfaction at the success of his plan. Moreover, the knowledge that Surendar Singh was wounded and was lying helpless in the desert and that Gulabpi was at his mercy gave him immense pleasure. Gulabpi was kept confined in a small dark room all alone where she can neither see her beloved nor hear his voice. The author states:

“Ka Gulabpi ka la sah marwei bad ia ka jingkhang bah la khang tala na shabar kamra.” \(^{(24)}\)

[Gulabpi was kept in solitary confinement and the door was locked from outside.]

22. Ibid., p.143
23. Ibid., p.144
24. Ibid., p.229
Devoid of light and company, Gulabpi’s suffering multiplied a thousand times not only because of her confinement but also particularly because of the unknown fate of Surendar Singh. She was filled with dread and became extremely fearful because she could not hear Surendar Singh’s voice anymore:

“Ka Gulabpi ka la sngew dukha jingmut ban nym iohsngew ba u Suren um don hapoh kata ka iingtrep.” *(25)*

[Gulabpi was worried when she realized that Suren was not inside the hut.]

She was scared at the thought of Surendar Singh being dead. She also thought that Surendar Singh might have been burned alive:

“Haba la rong noh ia ka shabar ka krem, ka la iohi ia ka ding kaba heh hajan hangta bad ka la sngew sheptieng ba ki nonglute ki la wiang ding ia ka iingtrep.” *(26)*

[When she was taken out of the cave, she trembled with horror seeing the villains setting fire to the hut.]

Gulabpi became numb with fear while such terrifying thoughts raced through her mind. Furthermore, Pyrdip Kumar’s threat to torture and to kill Surendar Singh kept resounding in her mind. Gulabpi continued to remain determined in her refusal to marry him. But this only prolonged her agony.

When her suffering reached its peak, Gulabpi refused all food and drinks and she finally cried out:

“Jeh ia nga marwei.” *(27)*

[Leave me alone.]

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*(25)* Ibid., p.154  
*(26)* Ibid., p.165  
*(27)* Ibid., p.169
The only thought that took possession of her mind was the safety of Surendar Singh:

"Ka Gulabpi kam lah thiah lah dem tang shikhip mat ruh kata ka miet bad ka dem pyrkhat shaphang u Surendar Singh hapoh la ka blangket."^{28}

[The whole night Gaulabpi could not get a wink of sleep. All she could think of was Surendar Singh while she was lying under the cover of her blanket.]

What added to her misery was the feeling that she was to blame for the suffering of Surendar Singh:

"Ka dohnud jong ka sngewdiaw mynsiem eh ban pyrkhat ba u la shah shitom tang namarka jingiarap jong u ia ka."^{29}

[Her heart grew heavy when she thought how he had to suffer in order to help her.]

The image of a woman presented here was that of a 'pure woman' who willingly went through trials and tribulations in order to be united with a man of her choice. She had to struggle against all odds to protect her chastity and to achieve her heart's desire. Gulabpi exclaimed:

"Ngam nym kohnguh, katba dang sah mynsiem ha ka met briewjong nga."^{30}

[I will not yield, as long as I still have breath in my body.]

This refers to the chastity of Gulabpi and the way she was determined to vehemently resist Pyrdip Kumar's advances.

Finally, true love prevailed and Pyrdip Kumar’s plans and schemes were defeated. Gulabpi was firm in her determination not to marry him under any

28. Ibid., p.163
29. Ibid., p.165
30. Ibid. pg.220
circumstances whatsoever. All cajoling, threats and other means adopted by Pyrdip Kumar could not persuade Gulabpi to change her mind. Gulabpi's suffering was subsequently resolved by the intervention of Raj Bhadur's men, who with Surendar Singh's men, came to rescue the captives. Finally, the much-awaited re-union between Surendar Singh and Gulabpi took place. Surendar Singh was able to cry out in exultation.

"O; Gulabpi jong nga." 

[O; my Gulabpi .]

The statement expressed the deep love and commitment between Gulabpi and Surendar Singh. Love cannot be coerced by force or threat; neither can it be bought by fame or wealth. No bond on earth can enslave love, no iron chain, no prison, no obstacle whatsoever can stop it even for a moment. Gulabpi was ready to face any amount of suffering because of her love for Surendar Singh. In fact Gulabpi's suffering inflicted upon her by Pyrdip Kumar only deepened her concern and her love for Surendar Singh.


The second novel of the period taken for analysis in this study is S.Q. Sumer's *Ka Hima Ka Jingieit* (1966). In this novel the author presents a wide plethora of emotions, but the one that stands out in it is love mingled with the pain experienced by his main characters. The story was set against the backdrop of a war that brought intense suffering to the lovers. The novel is also an attempt to present a realistic picture of urban city life as the novelist perceives it. D. Shallam in the "Introduction" to the novel stated:

"The theme is appropriate and modern dealing with love, war, fight and conflict." 

31. Ibid., p.232
However, the main focus of the novel is on the passionate romantic love of the heroine Rosabina for her lover and one which she constantly fought for to build a future. But events beyond her control brought much mental agony not only to her but to her father and to her husband as well.

Other important themes which are woven into the plot of the novel and which further complicated the heroine’s life are her devotion and love to her father and patriotism of the highest order for her country.

When the novel opens, the heroine Rosabina was shown leaving India for England in pursuit of higher studies. As she bade good-bye to her intensely patriotic father Budawan, Rosabina was reminded of her obligation to remember her Indian roots. Budawan said to his daughter:

"Khun, la phi don hangno hangno wat klet ban thep ka mynsiem ba kane ka dei ka ri umsnam ki Kmie ki Kpa jong phi ha kaba ia ka manbriew longbriew jong phi la wallam sha kane ka pyrthei." (34)

[My daughter wherever you are, don’t ever forget your beloved country, fought for and paid for by the blood of your forefathers. It is a place where we, your parents, have brought you up.]

Rosabina’s father was totally committed to India’s freedom struggle during the 1940’s when the Indian people resisted British rule in India and where the consolidation of British rule was accompanied by discontent and resentment among the people of the whole country. (35)

As the freedom struggle in India gained momentum, Budawan became one of the leaders amongst the freedom fighters who were imprisoned by the British. The

34. Ibid., p.1
noveiltist highlights Budawan’s patriotism as follows:

“U kpa jong ka u la shah pynshitom ha phatok.” (36)

[Her father was punished by imprisonment]

Even while he was in prison, he tried to infuse his patriotic zeal to his daughter through his letters. Rosabina replied back saying that she was fully aware of and totally committed to the cause of her country’s freedom. She wrote;

Ka long ka kamram jong nga ban da ban khang na
ka thombor lehbor une utai ia ka hok ba don bad ka,
ka hok ba la ai da ki shypriahti Blei.” (37)

[It is my duty to protect my country from oppression,
and to value highly the God-given right of our people]

Rosabina was constantly reminded by her father of the need to be loyal and to fight her country once she was back home from England. Budawan was driven by his desire to see his innocent, obedient, intelligent daughter famous one day. In his own words he wanted to see his daughter shine as “a crystal” in this dark world. He urged her:

“Long shisha u Mawlynnai ka burom ba ka pyrthei kan
dup ioh jingshai de kumjuh.” (38)

[Shine like a crystal in this dark world.]

He obviously expected great things from Rosabina and that was the reason of his deep disappointment when she failed to achieve the goals he set before her.

Rosabina’s life took a new turn when she met an American soldier by the name of Major General Power. He was described by the novelist as a man with a vision and
a mission in life:

"U long ruh u shipai, ba don kata ka jingiohi sha jngai,
ba beit ka jingmut jingpyrkhat bad skhem ka jingim." (39)

[He was a soldier, one with a vision, a man of integrity, determined and confident of what he wanted to achieve in his life.]

Major General was a distinguished soldier and one who had won many awards while in the Army. He was sent from America to England to train British soldiers in the art of warfare. Shortly after his arrival in England, General Power saw Rosabina and fell deeply in love with her.

All her resolutions took a back seat shortly after Rosabina met Power in England. After an initial hesitation to enter into a relationship with him because of his position and also because of their cultural differences, she later reciprocated his feelings for her. Though intelligent, Rosabina was totally inexperienced in the matter of the heart. She also did not think through of the consequences of entering into a relationship with Power. In fact, she acted impulsively when she agreed to go out with him. She was attracted to him and because of her nervousness, she kept bumping against him:

"Namar ki kjat buaid tieng la kumba lymbub
kai pynban ia ka met jong u." (40)

[Out of nervousness, her feet wobbled and she unconsciously kept bumping against his body.]

She accepted his offer to go out with him to Oxford Circus and Bournemouth just one day after she first met him. She started an affair with a man whose background she was yet to know, one that was no more than a stranger to her. Obsessed with her new found love, Rosabina neglected her studies and even stopped

39. Ibid., p.2
40. Ibid., p.6
communicating with her loved ones at home. Her whole life was centered on Power:

"Kam sngew myntoi shuh ban leit khreh kot;
ka la sngewbha ban pynyrwa ei ia ka por
bad kaba ia byrngia kai bad u." *(41)*

[She lost all interest in her studies; preferring to spend all of her time with him.]

Rosabina’s love towards Power was shown to be genuine and sincere. She forgot the whole world including her family after she fell in love with Power. Though in the beginning Rosabina was intimidated by Power’s attention, yet his insistence and persuasive power wore her resistance down and she became comfortable and ecstatically happy in his company. Had Rosabina been a little more aware of life or had there been someone to guide her, perhaps she would have been more careful.

However, it could be loneliness and the need for company that pushed her headlong into a relationship she was not ready for. This is a different kind of suffering, to go through the long days and nights in an alien land without her family, a situation where even older people with a stronger character may find it difficult to cope.

Rosabina trusted Power completely and so gave herself to him feeling that he was the only one she could trust:

"Phi long tang ma phi, ia uba nga lah ban shaniah." *(42)*

[You are the only one I can trust]

Rosabina’s own trusting nature allowed Power to capture her heart. He was totally enamored with her and during their sight-seeing trip, he asked her if he could call her Rosavelt:

"Rosabina! Sngewbha shah ba ngan khot ia phi ka Rosavelt." *(43)*

[Rosabina! Please let me call you Rosavelt]

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41. Ibid., p.8
42. Ibid., p.15
43. Ibid., p.17
Since this was the name of a famous and beautiful lady at that time, Rosabina responded without hesitation:

"Khot ia nga da kano kano ka kyrkeng ba phi sn gewbha." (44)

[Call me by any name that pleases you.]

Even though their love for each other appeared to reign supreme and able to transcend any barrier of nationality and religion, later on factors such as racial difference and allegiance towards one’s country cast a long shadow over this doomed relationship. Their first conflict arose when Power expressed his dislike of her Indian dress. This led to her agony over his rejection of what she felt was an integral part of her culture. Power could not hide his dislike of her traditional dress and he even told her to change it:

"Kata ka mynsiem ba pyrshah ban iohi ba ka don ha ka jingriam jong ka hi, kam shah ia u khlem da pynbor ba kan bujli da kiwei." (45)

[He could not bear to see her in her traditional dress and he could not help but forced her to change into other dresses.]

He wanted her to adopt the Western life-style including her dress. This further tormented her as she felt she had overstepped the moral code of conduct inculcated by her father since she was small. She was haunted by guilt and a feeling of betrayal toward her own family. It was at such a tumultuous frame of mind that she became pregnant and later gave birth to a baby boy.

The novelist’s projection of racial discrimination has also been the subject matter of many works of fiction. Commenting on Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s work Sucher remarks that “racism, hatred, devaluation and utilization of darker people by lighter ones, is always connected to obsessive cultural nations; fear of miscegenation, the

44. Ibid., p.17
45. Ibid., p.14
ostensible elevation of some women of the status of totemic untouchables, and the
degradation of others.\(^{(46)}\)

So, Rosabina had to suffer as a woman and at the same time as a colored
person in a society set with racial prejudices. What added to her woes when she gave
birth to a son was the way she was discharged from the hospital before her complete
recovery:

\[
\text{Tang hadien 10 sngi ba ka la don hapoh Hospital, } \\
\text{ki la phah ia ka ba kan mih noh, katba ha ka } \\
\text{jingshisha ka dang dei ban sah sa shitaiew.}^{(47)}
\]

[After 10 days she was discharged from the
Hospital, when she clearly needed to be
hospitalize for another week.]

She was fully aware that this happened because of the fact that she was not a
white person:

\[
\text{“Kata ka mynsiem isih dohiong jong ki, } \\
\text{kim lah ban buhrich.”}^{(48)}
\]

[They could not hide their dislike of
dark-skinned people]

This made Rosabina very apprehensive about her future with the man she
loved.

Rosabinsa could not turn to her family for comfort and help because she had
neglected them for a long time. Her suffering worsened when Power had to respond to
a call of duty and went to the battle-front leaving her behind with her small son.
Utterly helpless and almost penniless, she was in a desperate situation. She started

\(^{46}\) Sucher Laurie, \textit{The Fiction Of Ruth Prawer: The Politics Of Passion}. 1989,
p.37
\(^{47}\) op. cit., p.22
\(^{48}\) Ibid., p.21

36
thinking of her father and her home once again:

"Ha ka khim khait, kam banse khlem da kynmaw ia ka jingkordor u Kpa jong ka ia uba ka la klet baroh shi katta." (49)

[In such a desperate situation, she was forced to remember her beloved father whom she had forgotten for so long.]

After Power left, Rosabina had no one to turn to. She could not afford even the basic necessities for herself and her child to survive. She cried to her son in despair:

"Khun! Phi la wan da ka jingtim. Da ei ngan bsa ia phi?" (50)

[My child you seem to have been born with a curse. How shall I feed you?]

Rosabina had no choice but to turn to her father for help:

"Ka la shim la u khulom bad thoh shithi biang sha u ba un phah pisa ia ka 10,000/- tyngka ba kan lah ban wan noh sha ri India." (51)

[She wrote to her father asking him to send Rs. 10,000/- for her fare back to India.]

Budawan immediately and without any question sent her the money. Though Rosabina had neglected him, yet he accepted her and clearly longed to welcome her back home. Rosabina never informed her father about her affair with Power, therefore she had to hide the fact that the boy whom she took along with her was her son. Upon arrival in India, she told her father:

"Une u khynnah um dei u khun jong nga." (52)

49. Ibid., p.22
50. Ibid., p.22
51. Ibid., p.22
52. Ibid., p.25
[This boy is not my son.]

However, Rosabina could not hide the truth from her son when he asked her about his father. She told him about Power and even showed him his father's photograph that she and Power had taken before he left her for the war:

"Ka la sei da i dur ba ki iashon shwa ba un leit shapoh thma." (53)

[She took out the photograph that they had taken before he left for the war.]

Some doubts had actually sprouted within Budawan when his daughter could not justify her long stay in England without completing her studies. He started to lose faith in her and he had an uneasy feeling about the real identity of the boy. It was not very long afterwards that his suspicion proved to be true. He overheard the conversation which Rosabina had with the child regarding his father and he saw the photograph of Power in her hand. Rosabina's dark secret was finally exposed. Her betrayal of her father's trust in her destroyed their relationship and he felt that he could no longer accept her as his daughter:

"la uba la leit on tep shisien, ym don dawai ne bor briew ba lah ban pynim pat ia u." (54)

[For him who has been buried deep in the grave, no medicine and no human power on earth can bring him back to life.]

Budawan's feeling of shock and disappointment were expressed through his words of sadness:

"Khun! Nga ieit ia phi, hynrei ynda phi la pyne pat katne ngam banse ban ong, Khublei." (55)

[My child! I love you but what you have done left me with no choice but to say, Good-bye.]

53. Ibid., p.27
54. Ibid., p.27
55. Ibid., p.27

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On hearing her father’s words, Rosabina could not believe her ears. Her whole world came crashing down and her heart broke into pieces. Her senses reeled and her pain knew no bound. She could not imagine a world without her father. She had thought that her father would always be there for her, but at that time, he appeared to have become a stranger. Where was the love and affection that had always sustained her? To whom could she turn now? Who would be her guide, her protector and her provider? The last flicker of hope in her life was snuffed out.

Meanwhile, the war was still raging furiously and the allies were in the winning position. But for General Power and his platoon, their luck ran out after four years. He was confronted by the women’s army of Japan in the battle-front and in that confrontation he was faced with a deadly situation where he had to shoot a woman soldier in order to survive. But at that moment Rosabina’s face flashed before him:

“Ka jingwan phalang ka dur ita i baieit jong u ha kata ka shipai
ka long kaba phylla haduh katta katta.” (56)

[He saw his beloved Rosabina’s face in his enemy’s face which was almost uncanny.]

He simply could not act, in fact at that moment he took out his beloved’s photograph.

“U sei ia i dur ka Rosavelt.” (57)

[He took out Rosavelt’s photograph.]

He just could not shoot his enemy who was a female. This resulted in his being injured by the enemy bullet:

“Kyndit kyndit la wan u kuli suloi ha kjat kadiang bad
kyllon iapler ha shen.” (58)

[Suddenly a bullet hit his left leg and he collapsed and

56. Ibid., p.28
57. Ibid., p.29
58. Ibid., p.29
he fell down unconscious.]

After General Power was wounded in the war, he left the army and went back to search for his beloved Rosabina. Though limping badly, he tried his level best to find her. At last he met a woman who took pity on him:

“Khadduh la wan kawei ka briew, kaba isynei ia ka jinglong sangsotjong u.” (59)

[At last a lady came and had compassion on his pitiable state.]

The lady enquired properly about his problem and she found out that he was searching for Rosabina who was her class-mate in college. It was from this woman that Power came to know that Rosabina had left England for Calcutta:

“Ka la iathuh ia u ba ka la don mynta ha India ha ka nongbah Calcutta.” (60)

[She told him that Rosabina was back in India and was residing in the city of Calcutta.]

Then and there, General Power decided to go to India to meet her. When he reached Calcutta, he accidentally received help and shelter from Rosabina, his beloved. Surprisingly, they did not recognize each other anymore. She fed him and took care of him and in deep gratitude Power said:

“Kong namar, ka jinglehbha bad jingsbun jong phi baroh ha kine ki sngi ba nga la don bad phi, ia ka ba ngam lah shuh ban siew kylliang.” (61)

[Madam, for your kindness and hospitality toward me during the last few days, I will never be able to repay.]
Interestingly enough, as pointed out by H.W. Sten, it was strange that not only was Rosabina unable to recognize his face, she even failed to recognize the voice of her own beloved.\(^\text{(62)}\)

Rosabina was absolutely ignorant that she was taking care of her beloved Power. She never dreamed that she would ever meet him again and did not recognize him at all. It was almost in the last pages of the novel that Power said these revealing words:

"Rah ia kine ki khubor sha i baieit jong nga i Rosavelt, kyrteng baieit ki briew, ne, Rosabina ba iai im." \(^\text{(63)}\)

[Please take this message to my beloved Rosavelt, a name so loved by many, eternal Rosabina.]

Shocked and excited at what she had heard, Rosabina screamed with joy and disbelief. When she pushed back his unkempt hair from his forehead, she saw at once that it was indeed her beloved Power. Rosabina called out to her son John Power to come and meet his father.

John Power came running in haste and accidentally pushed his father to the ground and Power was fatally injured in that accident:

"Ha ka jingkmen bym tip briew shuh, u la kum lymbub ia la u kpa." \(^\text{(64)}\)

[Overwhelmed with joy, he accidentally knocked his father to the ground.]

Sadly, although Power met Rosabina again at long last, they did not experience the joy of re-union for long. It was only in his dying moments that he realized he was in the arms of his beloved Rosabina:
"U la kdup ia ki baroh ar bad shwa ba un ioh ka jingdoh ba bthat ia ka mynsiem." (65)

[He embraced them both and with a final kiss departed from this world.]

Throughout much of her adult life Rosabina faced pain, loneliness and suffering. She tried somehow to overcome her heartache and painful disappointments. However, her last and final separation from her beloved Power completely broke her. She knew that what she had lost she would never recover again.

Rosabina was very weak emotionally and she was always guided by her emotions. She did not conform to the life of a traditional Indian woman when she made up her mind to commit herself to a man without her father’s knowledge and approval. She appeared to be impetuous and impulsive in her decisions. Though shy and innocent, she had no qualms in entering into a relationship with a man she knew nothing about. The circumstances were always against their relationship. Much of her suffering was a result of her reckless decision though part of it was also because Power could not give her the protection and support she needed, particular after the birth of her child. Though Rosabina loved her father yet she deceived him and she even denied to her father that she already had a son. Rosabina was thus caught in a web of deception. In a state of loneliness and the need for company she rushed headlong into a relationship with Power. On the other hand, circumstances compelled her to hide the truth from her beloved father. Rosabina’s short-comings and reckless decision combined with the fact that she had no one to guide her ultimately resulted in her intense suffering.

65. Ibid., p.33