CHAPTER-III
THE DAWN OF THE KHASI NOVEL:
SUFFERING AND THE ONE-DIMENSIONAL WOMEN CHARACTERS

3.0 The focus of this chapter is an analysis of the theme of suffering as depicted in the novels of B.C. Jyrwa and K.W. Nongrum. They may be considered to be the first real Khasi novelists because it is with their novels that the setting selected is that of Khasi towns and villages and the characters created represent Khasi men and women and all their novels also depict the Khasi way of life.

B.C. Jyrwa’s novels *U Khain bad Ka Ngen* (1973) and *U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai* (1974) are selected for analysis in this study since both these novels project very clearly the theme of woman’s suffering.

3.1 An analysis of B.C. Jyrwa’s selected novels:

3.1.1 B.C. Jyrwa’s *U Khain bad Ka Ngen* (1973) depicts the suffering faced by the main female character, Ngen.

The setting chosen for the novel is based on rural life where the novelist presents a vivid picture of village life. At times the novelist seems to be carried away by the sheer beauty of nature while narrating the life style of the rural people.

In many great works of literature, nature has an important part to play, at times it is seen to even destine the fate of human beings. Among Khasi novelists, nature possesses a soothing power, it sets a romantic atmosphere for young lovers, blending the beauty and exhilarating bliss of youth with the gentleness of its breeze, the gushing of its waterfalls and the sweetness of its scented wild flowers. B.C. Jyrwa in this particular novel uses nature not only as the appropriate setting for the events of the story. Nature to him in its four season reflect human moods and also the changing periods of human’s life.

Autumn is the most pleasant season of the year especially for the people of Khasi Hills. Nature in all its splendor is presented here in the glorious autumn season when the sun rays beamed on the fallen leaves and the myriad wild flowers reflected
the golden colours of the sun. It was on the market day of such a season that the two lovers first met.

The central theme of this novel is based on the suffering of a pair of lovers due to the painful parting of ways between them. The young couple, Khain and Ngen experienced ideal true love for each other but their love had an unhappy ending with the lovers nursing their broken hearts at having to go their separate ways because both sets of parents were against the relationship.

The novelist in this novel, brought about the famous theme of Sohlyngngem in the story. An eminent critics on the Khasi novel, H.W. Sten commented that:

"Ynda la pynkhlad ia ki da u nongthaw jong ki, ki nongpule ki iohi ba ka sur Sohlyngngem ka saiñ dur ha kato ka novel jong u."(1)

[When the lovers were separated at the end of the story by the novelist, the readers can clearly see the theme of the oral tale Sohlyngngem has deeply shaped this novel.]

H.W. Sten further noted that:

"Kam long kaba bakla ban ieit samla, kam long ruh kaba sniew ban kohnguh kmie kumba kohnguh u Khain bad ka Ngen, kam juh kham don koit ka iing Khasi kaba ioh pyrsa kurim da u khun riewspah kaba lah ban khat ia kata ka spah jong u namar wat lada u dei u khun marwei ruh".(2)

[It is not wrong to fall in love, and it is also not wrong to obey parents in the way that Khain and Ngen did. However, no family can take away the ancestral wealth of the son-in-law's parents even if he happens to be the only child.]

This was a valid statement made by H.W. Sten because it is the usual practice

2. Ibid., p.66-67
among Khasis for a man to leave his parents’ wealth and home behind him for he would go and stay with his wife after their marriage. However, as in the folktale of ‘Ka Sohlynngjem,’ B.C. Jyrwa purposely brings in wealth as an impossible barrier to a marriage between the lovers. Due to this barrier, Ngen had to suffer the loss of her beloved Khain and she was made to grieve for her loss all the days of her life.

The story starts with the way the lovers met each other for the first time. One fine morning just as Ngen was getting ready to go the market, a bee came buzzing over her, fleeting sometimes to the right ear and sometimes to the left:

“Katba ka dang kyrshut khongdongjat ha shakiar, kynsan kynsan uwei u ngap wanrah khubor u la put shawiang ha ki tyngdong shkor jong ka, teng teng sha kadiang teng teng sha kamon.”^^

[While she was scrubbing her feet, a bee came flying over her buzzing on her ear sometimes to the left and sometimes to the right.]

This clearly refers to the traditional belief where a buzzing bee is believed to be a harbinger of good tidings to the person it encircles. Ngen, therefore, was already anticipating some pleasant experience that she might encounter on that particular day. True enough, she met Khain for the first time on that particular day and the couple fell in love with each other at first sight. Khain was a resident of Pyrda while Ngen was from Nonglwai. After their meeting, Khain could not concentrate on anything else for all his thoughts were on Ngen. His feelings for her were so overwhelming that he felt compelled to come to Nonglwai just to see her again:

“Hamar shiteng sngi ynda u la antat ba un ioh ruh ban wan phai kham shai sha la shnong u la mih na la shnong kynthuit la ka spong rusom. Ynda u la poi hapdeng shnong u la iohi ba ka iing jong ka Ngen ruh ka plie.”^^

3. B.C. Jyrwa, *U Khain Bad Ka Ngen*, p. 1
4. Ibid., p. 77
At around noon, the time he anticipated would enable him to return home before dark, he left his village with his silk turban on his head. When he reached the central part of the village, he saw that Ngen’s house was opened.

After making sure from Dit that Ngen was at home, Khaiñ went to visit her. With great joy and happiness the two found in each other to be what they had expected. During the visit, Ngen served him food for though she was poor she did not want to send him back home without offering him some refreshments:

U Khaiñ ruh u la dep ka bam ka dih, bad ba un leit phai noh sha la shuong. (5)

[Khaiñ had his meal and then went back to his village.]

Time passed very swiftly and there were many things still left unsaid between them. Therefore, they decided to meet again by the bank of the River Thapbalieh. In doing so, they planned to spend more time with each other and also to discuss their future plan together.

Their meeting clearly showed that it was not only Khaiñ who had given his love to Ngen. She also fully reciprocated his feeling for her and her heart was filled to the brim with happiness and joy. Khaiñ was constantly in her thought to the extent that when she was asked by her mother to boil some potatoes, all the potatoes got burnt because the love-struck Ngen was lost in thought of her beloved Khaiñ. These feelings were also reflected in her face:

Ka khmat jong ka ka phuh, ka dohnud jong ka ka dap miar da ka jingkmen haba ka dang ring dur maia ka ban sa jia. (6)

[Her face glowed, her heart was filled with happiness as she imagined what the future holds for her.]

Ngen came out of her reverie only when her mother called out to her afar. It

5. Ibid., p.81
6. Ibid., p.21

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was then that Ngen realized the potatoes were all burnt. By presenting this incident the novelist depicts Ngen's deep love and yearning for Khain.

In keeping with the traditional folktale of 'U Rynñiaw' and 'Ka Sohlyngngem,' Ngen came from a very poor family:

"Ka Ngen bapli, ka kup shiliang sem shiliang, tang ka lýngknot ruh ym don". (7)

[Ngen came from a very poor family, there was not even a stool for a visitor to sit on in her house.]

Ngen's parents had to work very hard in the field to earn their livelihood. However, the family had a lot of love for each other. Ngen was loved very dearly by her parents and she too loved and cared for them very deeply. Thus, though the family was very poor, they lived a happy and contented life.

The day arrived when the two lovers met by the bank of the River Thapbalieh where they again pledged their love for each other. They felt as if the very nature and its surroundings shared their happiness. Khain confided his feelings to his beloved Ngen:

"Nga tang shu poi ha iing ha kato ka miet, nga la kum pyrkhat bad haduh mynta ngam sngew lah shuh ban klet ia kaba nga la ioh ha kato ka taiew na ki kti basbun jong phi." (8)

[When I reached home that night, I kept thinking about you and till this very moment I simply cannot forget what I received from your generous hands last week]

Ngen also opened her heart to Khain:

Ka Ngen ka la sdang ban iathuh lem ia kaei ba ka sngew baroh shikatta shaphang jong u (9)

7. Ibid., p.6
8. Ibid., p.90
9. Ibid., p.90
[Ngen then started telling him about her feelings for him.]

But in the midst of that happy time Khaiñ suddenly had an awful premonition about what the future held for them. He expressed his fears to Ngen by referring to his perception of the sudden change of the benign nature into something fearful and terrifying:

"Baroh kiba nga iohi mynta hangne ki kylla rong lut, wat u tai u tiew jawieh bsein u ba buid bad uba don bih u kham pher ka dur jong u, kine ki sohngang ha syndah jong ngi ruh i kumba ki shngain bha mynta ka kynti lada ngi mad ia ki." (10)

[All that I see around me has paled in its colour, even the venom-filled flower looked different more ominous. These wild berries growing near us seem to tempt us to partake of their bitter taste.]

In keeping with such a gloomy feeling, the clouds started to gather and to cast a shadow over them. This seems to be a symbolic foreboding of the difficult and sorrowful times that lay ahead of the lovers.

When Khaiñ told his parents about Ngen, they expressed their deep unhappiness with his choice of a prospective bride because Ngen came from a very poor family. They felt that their wealth would be squandered if their son married a girl like Ngen. Khaiñ’s mother was almost brutal in her opposition to such an alliance. She said:

"Ka iing ki briew ka bym don ei ei ruh, phin leit poi kum ha kata ka iing te khun sa tang ba phin ia bamduh syndon ia ka spah nongkynti kaba ngi la seng iaka da la ka umsyep jong ka jingtrei shitom jong ngi." (11)

[That family is poverty-stricken. If you marry into such a family,

10. Ibid., p.94
11. Ibid., p.110
my son, all your inheritance for which we have toiled and laboured
with the sweat of our brow will simply disappear.]

As in the case of ‘Ka Sohlyngngem,’ Ngen’s parents were also very upset
when she told them about Khaiñ. They felt that since he came from a very rich family,
he would not treat their daughter properly and with respect. Although they were not as
strongly opposed to their relationship as Khaiñ’s parents, they tried to discourage her
from continuing with the relationship. Khaiñ’s parents immediately sent him to look
after their property in far away Ri War in order to prevent him from meeting Ngen
again.

Sadly, Khaiñ obeyed his parents’ instruction and left for Ri War without
sending word to Ngen that their relationship was over. It was only on a market day
that Ngen came to know what had transpired in Khaiñ’s family and she was shattered
not only by the news that their relationship was over but she was extremely hurt by his
silence and easy acquiescence to his parents’ wishes without considering her feelings.

Ngen then had to face further pain and humiliation when Rang unknowingly
 teased her about her imminent marriage to Khaiñ. He even thought that Khaiñ and
Ngen would get married before his own betrothal to Dit:

“Ialam shwa ma phi seh Kong Ngen, ngin sa ia bud lem ma
ngi nadien.” (12)

[After you had taken the lead in this matter, we will then
follow your footsteps.]

Here, Rang was of course referring to his own relationship with Dit which later
culminated in their betrothal and marriage.

Even though her heart was burning with pain, Ngen controlled her feelings and
managed to converse normally with Rang as if everything was fine with her. Khaiñ
was the first man that she had given her heart. Her hurt and pain was even more
difficult to bear because Khaiñ did not send any word about his decision to break off

12. Ibid., p. 124
his relationship with her. When she reached home, Ngen became still and pale as a stone, her head bowed in shame and she was speechless with grief. She understood the real meaning of Khaiñ’s words during their meeting at the bank of the River Thapbalieh and her face became even more gloomy. In such a state of despair and sorrow, Ngen chose to suffer in silence, something which she continued to do throughout her life:

Ngen’s suffering in the novel was almost exactly like that of ‘Ka Sohlyngngem’ in the folktale as depicted by writers such as Rabon Singh (13), P.G. Gatphoh (14) and Oscar M. Wahlang (15).

Sohlyngngem had to give up her relationship with her beloved Rynñiaw in order to obey her parents who felt that a rich man would ill-treat her in the end. At the same time the poor maiden simply could not get over her love for her lover, and this led her to groan in a heart-broken cry and to fly as a bird in the deep jungles throughout the rest of her life.

In the same way, B.C. Jyrwa shows the painful sacrifice Khaiñ and Ngen made in order to obey their parents. The novelist brought about wealth as a barrier that could not be transcended by the couple and one which ultimately led to the parting of ways between them, thus, bringing suffering particularly to the poor heart-broken Ngen.

3.1.2 B.C. Jyrwa’s other novel, U Kyrdoh Mawlynnai (1974) focuses on certain social problems pertaining to family life and ones which lead to much suffering particularly in the lives of his female character. The setting chosen by the novelist is an urban one since the major events took place in the localities in and around Shillong. He introduced the rural setting briefly when the main character’s biological mother settled in Ri Bhoi after leaving her new-born son in the hospital. The setting is then reverted back to Shillong where the story is focused on the re-union of Bhakupar with his mother.

13. Rabon Singh, *Ka Kitab Jingphawar*
14. P.G. Gatphoh, *Sawdong Ka Lyngwiar Dpei*
15. Oscar M. Wahlang, *Ka Jutang Ka Sur Pangnud U Khasi*
Pain and suffering are deeply interwoven with the central theme of this novel, which is the mother’s love for her abandoned son. The major cause of the woman’s suffering in this novel can be attributed to the effects of alcoholism, one which always causes poverty in any family. In the novel, B.C. Jyrwa introduced the central character whom he did not give any name but was simply called Bhakupar’s mother. She was abandoned by her husband immediately after she had given birth to her baby boy in the hospital. Her irresponsible husband tried to hide the fact that he was the father of the baby to the authorities in the hospital. In a drunken state he failed to feel any pang of conscience at this cruel act which caused so much agony and hardship to his wife. The novelist thus portrays the evil effects of alcohol not only on the individual concerned but also on the family as a whole. After abandoning his wife and child while they were in the hospital, he went home and sold off whatever few possessions the couple possessed in order to indulge in his passion for alcohol. So when the poor woman went home to try to find anything she could sell in order to pay the hospital bill, she found that even that option was taken away from her by her drunken husband:

\[
\text{Ka la leit sha ing ban khura ia ka synduk ioh shu snap mar ne jain ban leit bynda malu mala hynrei ynda ka poi hangta ka la shem pynban ba ki synduk buh jain baroh ki la thylli bad baroh ki jingdon jingem jong ka kim don shuh.}^{(16)}
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[She went home to rummage inside her box to find any article or item of clothing she could pawn, anything she could sell but she found that all the boxes were empty, all her clothes and belongings had disappeared.]

The young mother then found herself in an unbearable situation. She deeply loved her baby and wanted to take him home with her from the hospital. But she was forced to abandon him because she had no means to pay the hospital bill and she had no one to turn to. Her husband’s family members decided not to help her and they even questioned whether he was really the father of her child. In projecting the heroine’s suffering in such a way, B.C. Jyrwa emphasized what the eminent Khasi

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sociologist T. Nongbri (17) highlights as the usual dilemma a woman faces in society. She is of the view that apart from the universal disadvantage of being female, a woman in a society also suffers from problems related to her economic and social backwardness. Thus, financial dependence and poverty are some of the main causes of suffering of women in a society.

In this novel the heroine of the story is not only abandoned by her husband but she was further humiliated by the rejection of her husband’s family. Through this incident, B.C. Jyrwa projects the fate of women in a changing society where the ties of marriage were not properly enforced, thus leaving them with no choice but to take decisions which are bound to traumatise them in the future. In this case it loosens the responsibility of a man, as the woman’s husband. He told the hospital authorities without any qualms that his wife was mostly left on her own:

“Nga leit hi tang namar ba nga hap ban leit bylla sha Nongpoh kumba arbnai eiei te ngam shym ioh jingtip kham kloi shaphang ba i la dap bnai.” (18)

[I had to leave her since I have to work at Nongpoh for about two months. Therefore I did not know she was already due to deliver the baby.]

In his reply to the doctors, he unwittingly brought out the real state of affair in his family. One of the hospital attendants observed that the woman’s husband was already drunk:

“U kurim jong ka u la kham palat.” (19)

[Her husband was obviously drunk.]

While his wife was in the labour room, he left the hospital with his friend to find a place selling alcohol, leaving his brother behind in the hospital. He actually

17. T. Nongbri, *Development, Ethnicity and Gender. [Select Essays on Tribes in India]*, 2003, p.198
18. op. cit., p.1
19. Ibid., p.1
never returned back to see either his wife or his baby.

The vicious effect of alcohol on a family has been highlighted by many social thinkers, one of whom was K. Shanpru. He expressed the view that:

“Ka kiad ka long ka nongpynjot ym tang ia ka ing ne ia u briew shimet, hynrei ka pynjynjar bad pynsakma ia ka jingim jong ka kynthei bad ki khun.”  (20)

[Alcohol destroys not just the individual himself, but wreaks havoc on his family; it makes a woman and her children social vagabonds.]

The poor woman’s agony worsened as she went begging from relatives and friends but without any success. When her husband’s family refused to give any help and sent her away, she then had to take the heart-wrenching decision of abandoning her child in the hospital. Her heart was torn into pieces at having had to do this. Her only hope was that her son might be adopted by a rich and caring family and that hope was the only thing that kept her going. She got the idea of leaving her son behind in the hospital when she overheard the nurses talking about an abandoned non-Khasi baby girl who was adopted by a rich family. The nurse said:

“U Doktor u la ai noh sha uwei hi u dkhar u bym don khun, ka la kynmaw sa ka jingiathuh ka kong Heh shaphang ita i khun dkhar.”  (21)

[She recollected the story told by the nurse about how the Doctor gave the abandoned child to a non-tribal man who does not have any children.]

21. op. cit, p.11
Even though the young mother's action may seem reprehensible and cruel, a closer analysis of her mental turmoil reveals that she was in a desperate situation with no alternative to do anything else. After leaving her son in the hospital the poor mother never had any peace within herself. Not many people knew about her pain and hurt for she kept the dark secret buried deep inside her heart. She took the decision to abandon her child out of total despair and in utter hopelessness.

The idea of adoption among Khasis has been discussed by many eminent writers, G. Costa, P. Kharakor and Sweetymon Rynjah in particular stated that in the past only a child belonging to a woman’s clan can be adopted by any family, that also preferably a child closely related to the woman. This adopted child is known as **Ka Rap-īng** (one who helps or supports a family). This was the usual practice in the past because only a child who belonged to the clan can be accepted by the family as the future custodian of the family’s or clan’s property.

There are, however, other prominent social thinkers such as L. Syiemlieh who are of the view that, **Ka ting-khun** (adoption) has always been practiced in the past when a couple could not have children of their own. They can adopt a child who may or may not belong to the woman’s clan, they may even adopt a child born of non-Khasi parents. Therefore, the idea of adoption among Khasis is not a strange or unusual one.

Where this novel is concerned, the abandoned child was very lucky because he was adopted by a rich, childless and kind-hearted couple, Bah Sbun and Kong Hajar. Nevertheless, for the poor helpless young mother even the knowledge that her son was adopted by a good family did not lessen the pain of her loss:

**Ka shadem jong ka ka peh kyndeh kumba kan bthei, haduh**

**ba ka la pynthut sa ia ka bam ka dih bad ka thiah ka dem.**

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22. G. Costa, *Ka Riti Ki Laiphew Syiem Bynta I*, 1936
25. An interview by the scholar with Mrs.L.Syiemlieh, 97 years old, a prominent social worker.
Her palpitating heart continued to thump as though it was going to burst and she was so emotionally and mentally disturbed that she could neither eat nor sleep.

Many times she was almost driven to madness at what she had done. She had to resist the urge to go and bring him back. When she heard about his christening, it seems as if the knife in her heart was twisted once again. Inspite of the advice given by her friend not to do so, she could not resist the urge to go and see her beloved child on that important day. Fortunately, she did get a glimpse of him while his adopted family were taking him to the church:

I kmie iba ieng kham nadien jong kita kiwei pat ila peit ieit ryngkat bad ka jingsngew kynduh ka myniem ban iohi ia la u khun kum ha kata ka khyllipmat, bad mar kumta hi ki ummat ki la bthei kynsan na ki tlong ummat kiba khleh bad ki ummat kmen. (27)

[His mother who was standing a little behind the crowd looked at him with a deep feeling of love mixed with pangs of remorse in her heart to see her own son in such an occasion. Suddenly she burst into tears, tears of pain and of happiness.]

Her estranged husband subsequently died due to excessive alcohol consumption and she later remarried a carpenter and had two daughters with him. They then moved to Ri-Bholi District and settled there. After a few years she was able to rebuild her life once again. But no matter where she went, she was always haunted by her terrible secret. Her love for her son never left her and she always carried a hope that one day she would see him again.

The novelist did not give any name to this woman character. Since her son was christened Bhakupar by his adopted parents, she was simply known as Bhakupar’s mother.

27. Ibid., p.34
Meanwhile, the infant Bhakupar continued to grow up in the warmth of a loving and supportive family. His every need was attended to with love and affection by the childless couple. His relationship with his adopted parents was very warm, close and loving. The couples were able to give Bhakupar a good education:

"U la samla lud bha bad u la don ha kata ka por sha Dibrugarh Medical College ban pynbiat ialade ha ka lain Doctor". (28)

[He grew up into a fine young man and then went to Dibrugarh Medical College to study medicine.]

Bhakupar, a hard working and intelligent student, passed his MBBS and became qualified as a doctor. After the completion of his studies, Bhakupar was appointed at Doctor Robert Hospital, now known as the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Hospital.

It was when Bhakupar was working as a doctor in that hospital that his biological mother fell ill and was brought to the very hospital where he worked. She was brought to the hospital with the help of U Syiem Raid (local chief) all the way from Umlaper. As explained by the Syiem, Bhakupar’s mother had fallen sick for quite a while but as she did not have any close relatives to help her, he had to take the responsibility of bringing her to the hospital:

“I pang suh, bad i da kham shitom shisha ha kine ki sngi, namar bym don briew te nga la shu wan ia synran pynshngain lem ia kine ki khun jong i.” (29)

[She had been ailing for a while and her illness took a more serious turn during the last few days. As there was no one to help them, I came along with her children to help and support them in any way that I can.]

28. Ibid., p. 47
29. Ibid., p.118
Bhakupar's mother was brought to the very hospital where she had once abandoned her child. The poor woman could not help but remember the harrowing experience she had faced in that place in the past. She kept the painful secret within her heart even as she was struggling in the midst of her sickness. Later on, as they were waiting for the doctors and the nurses to attend to her one of the attendants, an aged woman, saw Bhakupar’s mother and recognized her. At once she went to the Senior Doctor and pleaded with him to admit Bhakupar’s mother to the hospital as she seemed to be very ill. When Bhakupar’s mother was hospitalized, her medical treatment was given by none other than her own son. It was at this juncture that the ties between the biological mother and her son started to knot. The pain in the mother’s heart was finally healed when she was reunited with her son. The novelist appears to put a very strong emphasis on the strength of blood ties because there was so much joy in the reunion. The attention and care given by Bhakupar did her much more good than any other medicine prescribed for her especially when he addressed her as “Mei” [Mother]. She could finally forgive herself and all the guilt that had tormented her all those years melted away from her heart. As stated by the novelist:

Mar kumta hi u la kynrup ia i bad u la doh la dait ryngkat
ki ummat sngewsynei ia la i Kmie katba i Kong Hajar bad
i Bah Sbun pat ki la shu ianiad la ki ngap kiba la jaw ummat
kmen ban iohi ia kaba kum kata ka khyllipmat. (31)

[At that instant Bhakupar caught his mother to himself, hugged her and kissed her. He was filled with compassion towards his poor mother, while Kong Hajar and Bah Sbun stood nearby wiping away their own tears of joy in witnessing such a moving moment.]

In this novel, the poor woman was made to suffer because of her husband’s drinking habit. He appeared to have lost all moral consciousness and conscience when he abandoned her and her baby in the hospital. This led the poor woman to such a

30. Ibid., p.130
31. Ibid., p.148
stage of turmoil that she had to abandon her newly born son. Pain and suffering in the woman’s life was caused by the lack of responsibility from her drunken husband, lack of family support and of course, poverty.

3.2 An analysis of K.W. Nongrum’s selected novels:

A contemporary of B.C. Jyrwa is Kitbor W. Nongrum, a novelist who has also made important contribution to Khasi Literature. His two novels taken for analysis in this study are: Ka Pung Ka Jingieit (1973) and U Shanbor Bad U Wadbor (1976).

3.2.1 In his novel Ka Pung Ka Jingieit (1973), Kitbor W. Nongrum chooses both the rural and urban setting for his story. He seems to be more at ease in describing the life of the rural people where his technique of representation is rather simplistic and idealistic than portraying characters who are born and brought up in Shillong city.

The focus of this novel is on idealistic love that is shared by lovers who are also the main characters of his novel. Firstly, this is seen in the relationship between Phrangsngi’s parents who were farmers in a small village. Unfortunately, they both had a very short life and with their untimely death left behind two young children. The older son Phrangsngi finished his high school and passed his matriculation but he had to discontinue his studies as he had to support both himself and his younger brother Donsngi. These were the two main male characters in the novel. Another important character in this novel is Darihun, a girl born and brought up in the rural areas but who studied in Shillong for a while. Donsngi met her while they were studying in the same College and he promptly fell in love with her. He made a proposal of marriage to her but he was rejected.

Darihun also lost her mother at a very early age. Her father remarried again but there was always love and closeness between them. Her father loved her dearly and sent her to Shillong for college education in order to give her a good start in life.

The chance meeting between Phrangsngi and Darihun happened when Phrangsngi went to Shillong to visit his brother Donsngi. He met Darihun in a city bus and instantly fell head over heels in love with her. On her part, Darihun was also attracted towards him. Initially they did not get a chance to know each other further
since Phrangsngi lived and worked in his village. It was only when Darihun got a job as a school teacher in a village nearby Phrangsngi’s village that they were able to start their friendship and later became very close to each other.

Phrangsngi and Darihun continued to be deeply in love with each other and they promised to be true to each other. Darihun continued her profession as a school teacher while Phrangsngi was happy in his occupation as a farmer. In the course of time Phrangsngi made a formal marriage proposal to Darihun through a letter. He made his intentions very clear, expressing his total commitment to her if she accepts his proposal. In his letter to her he wrote:

Lada phi mon ne em shisha ban pdiang kum u baieit jong phi ia nga. Jingieit jong nga kan neh baroh shirta, ym kum jingieit ba tang shipor. (32)

[Whether you accept me as your beloved or not, my love for you will remain true forever.]

Darihun gladly accepted Phrangsngi’s proposal since she also fully reciprocated his feelings. In her reply to his letter she wrote that she had considered his proposal and she was willing to accept it. Both Darihun and Phrangsngi were very happy as they found their true and selfless love for each other. Phrangsngi confessed:

“Ka jingieit nylla bad ba shisha ha ka dohnud basngur jong phi nga phylliew.” (33)

[To your gentle and loving heart, I give my love pure and true.]

In return, Darihun expressed her overwhelming love for him:

Katno ka mynsiem jong nga ka hun haba mynta ha phi nga wan ban riehtngen, to ai ruh ba ka jingmut jingpyrkhat jong phi kan shongneh tang ha nga haduh ki sngi bakut. (34)

32. Nongrum, *Ka Pung Ka Jingieit*, p.22
33. Ibid., p. 28
34. Ibid., p. 29

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[My heart is full of joy knowing I can rest in the shadow of your love. Only let your heart always be true to me till the end.]

Unfortunately, dark clouds appeared to cast a shadow over the couple when Darihun’s family came to know of their relationship. Her father did not approve of her decision to marry Phransngi. He was disappointed with her choice of a suitor because he thought that Phransngi was just a mere farmer while she was an educated woman. He advised her to reconsider her decision:

\[\text{Pyrkhat ma phi ka briew kaba don ha ka kyrdan, katba ma u pat u nongrep.}\]^{35}

[You have to think very carefully, you are an educated woman while he is just a mere farmer.]

Understanding her father’s love and concern for her, torn between loyalty and obedience to her father and the deep love she felt for Phransngi, Darihun was in emotional agony and mental turmoil:

\[\text{Miet la bad sngi ka dem pyrkhat kumno kan rai ialade, ka bam ka dih ruh tang ban lait im.}\]^{36}

[Day and night she kept thinking about her future course of action that she could hardly eat or drink.]

Darihun’s father was adamant that she should break off their relationship and that she should stop thinking about Phransngi. Darihun, however, never ceased thinking about her beloved. After her father and stepmother continued to pressurize her to break off the relationship, Darihun finally wrote to Phransngi requesting him to accept her decision to break off with him because her family did not approved of their relationship. She was heart-broken and in total despair over her decision. She felt she could not live without Phransngi. In her heart of hearts she yearned for him and she longed to get back to work so that she could get a chance to meet him again.

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35. Ibid., p. 34
36. Ibid., p. 34
As days passed, Darihun became increasingly unhappy with her decision. Fortunately, Darihun’s suffering was short-lived. In the end her father, because of his tender love for her, could not bear to see his daughter suffer from a broken heart. Thus, he willingly gave his approval and his blessing to her and her beloved Phrangsnghi.

3.2.2 In the novel *U Shanbor bad U Wadbor* (1976) Kitbor W. Nongrum presents an idealistic picture of the Khasi way of life in the rural areas even though towards the end of the novel, some of his characters did migrate to Shillong city. Nongrum tries to portray a stark contrast between rural life and urban life. The novelist depicts the lifestyle of the rural villages as peaceful, serene and full of community activities which forge a strong bond among villagers. City life, on the other hand, is shown to be full of social vices and moral depravation.

The story of the novel is based mainly on the relationship between two pairs of lovers: that between Shanbor and Rupamon and between Wadbor and Wanpli. In this novel there is a very limited focus on the theme of suffering.

Shanbor and Wadbor were the sons of Donbok and Aitilin. Shanbor was a friend of Pynshai, Rupamon’s maternal uncle and through this friendship the relationship between Shanbor and Rupamon was brought about. Though initially Donbok and Aitilin wanted their eldest son to marry Wanpli yet they did not force their wishes on him. Finally, Shanbor and Rupamon had a happy married life.

The other couple in the novel, Wadbor and Wanpli lived a simple life in their village. Wanpli’s father showed his dislike of Wadbor as he wanted his daughter to marry his elder brother Shanbor, yet the couple could not stop loving each other. Wanpli’s father tried his best to separate her from Wadbor because he did not approve of their relationship. On one particular occasion, Wanpli turned to Wadbor and with tears in her eyes said:

*Nga sngewsih bad jaw ki ummat namar ngam tip kaei kan jia ia ngi hadien.*

37. K.W. Nongrum, *U Shanbor bad U Wadbor*, p.70

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[I'm very sad and worried because I do not know what the future holds for us.]

She further confessed that she did not want to be apart from him and that all thoughts were on him all the time. Though her father, Teilang, was a little stern and unhappy when Wanpli fall in love with Wadbor, yet in the end he bowed down to her wishes and allowed her to marry a man of her choice.

The suffering of women characters in Nongrum's novels is caused by matters of the heart when a woman had to face difficulties in her relationship with the man she loved. In both the novels, Nongrum presents an ideal romantic love between the lovers but one where hurdles were placed in the path of true love by the girl’s family. The girl’s father initially disapproved of the love affair between his daughter and the man of her choice, not so much because the suitor was disagreeable or unsuitable but because of his concern that his daughter should have the best in her life. In the end, the lovers prevailed and any suffering was removed and both novels have a happy ending. Nongrum’s novels are simplistic, his characters are mainly one-dimensional and the theme of suffering is also not as intense as that portrayed by later novelists.

The analysis of the theme of suffering women in the novels of B.C. Jyrwa and K.W. Nongrum reflects the importance of family relationship.

As indicated by the title of this chapter, the women characters of both Jyrwa’s and Nongrum’s novels are mainly one-dimensional. But the depiction of the theme of suffering by the two novelists is vastly different. While Nongrum’s women characters suffer in their quest for love yet their suffering was lighter and did not last long. Jyrwa’s woman character, on the other hand, suffered intensely whether as a mother or as a lover and her suffering left a lasting scar in her life.

Nevertheless, both novelists have made valuable contribution to the field of Khasi Literature when they choose Khasi men and women as their characters, Khasi villages and town for their setting and a depiction of the suffering of their one-dimensional women characters in Khasi novels.