CHAPTER-IV


4.0 Introduction:

This chapter deals with the works of prominent Khasi novelists, namely those of L.H. Pde, W. Tiewsoh, D.T. Laloo, H.W. Sten, and K.K. Kharlukhi. Scholars and literary critics on the Khasi novel have pointed out that the works of these novelists are more comprehensive, more explicit in revealing a realistic picture of the Khasi way of life.\(^1\)

The women characters are no longer types as seen in the novels of B.C. Jyrwa and K.W. Nongrum. They do not fulfill only a single role, that of a love-lorn young maiden or a suffering mother. W. Tiewsoh, in particular, created multi-dimensional women characters with multi-faceted roles. These women are shown to have deeper feelings and aspirations and they have to struggle in their afflictions as daughters, lovers, wives, mothers and also as female members of the society. Therefore these women characters can be accepted as round characters.\(^2\)

It has to be noted here that two of L.H. Pde’s earliest novels were published in 1970 and 1972 respectively but his works published in the 1980’s are considered to be more substantial and are seen to reflect Khasi society during its transition from a traditional to a more modern one. The women characters in these novels are also multi-dimensional characters with multi-faceted roles. Therefore, the analysis of three of his novels is included in this chapter. Likewise, W. Tiewsoh published his first novel Ka Kam Kalbut in 1975, and this work stands out as one of the best in Khasi Literature. His creative genius and deep perception of women’s suffering find expression in his creation of a multi-dimensional female character, Ka Noli. Hence, the analyses of W. Tiewsoh’s novels are also presented in this chapter. The works of

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1. *U Mawmer Ka Khasi Literashor*, 2004, p.31
the other prominent novelists selected for analysis in this chapter are all published
during the period between 1980 to 1990.

4.1 An analysis of L.H. Pde’s selected novels.

L.H. Pde has made substantial contribution to Khasi literature through his

L.H. Pde can be termed a ‘realistic’ novelist particularly his later novels which
are made to reflect the present day Khasi society with all its problems and
complexities.

Pde has ushered in a new era in the field of the Khasi novel. Firstly, his
selection of the theme of suffering is projected alongside the sensual theme of love set
at times against the background of traditional Khasi culture where incidents and events
took place in rural areas of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Secondly, Pde uses the novel as the
mirror of modern Khasi society consciously attempting to expose without hesitation
what he sees or believes he sees or perceives in the changing social behavior of the
people. Of course, some critics are of the view that this is the main function of
literature whether it be poetry, drama or the novel. Literature is the art of imitation(3)
and the novelist as a creative artist creates his novels by imitating real life.(4) Thus the
novel is an art of imitation that reflects the truth of what is happening in real life. The
explicit portrayal of what is considered “real” life in society finds its pioneer in L.H.
Pde. R.S. Lyngdoh in his ‘Forward’ to the novel *U Raimon Bad Ka Dashisha*
appreciates Pde’s courageous stand in writing such novels even in the midst of much
opposition from certain sections of the society and that some people might think that
Pde’s novels “are vulgar”(5) in exposing certain social evils such as prostitution:

Ki jingthoh jong phi ki long kum ki iit khmih ki ban pynpeit
mat ia ki samla samhoi bad ia ki long kmie long kpa.(6)

6. Ibid., p.iii
[Your work serves to mirror the undesirable social trends and hence would warn youths and parents alike of such dangers.]

Through his novels Pde boldly expresses the changing face of Khasi society in the 1970’s and the 1980’s. In his novels Pde has also created characters representing different types of women having various roles and attributing them with individual flaws and weaknesses. In doing so, Pde has depicted women in their struggles and suffering. He also brings in the socio-economic, political and religious factors that shape modern Khasi society and also depicts the good as well as the bad influence of the way of life of people from other communities. The picture of such evil influence entering into the Khasi society whether in politics, trade or other spheres of social involvement is ironically symbolized by some characters in the novels. These characters not only symbolize changes toward what is evil but are channels through which detrimental changes in trade and commerce, politics and the very way of life are brought into Khasi society. Some of these characters are found in his later novels: Daiamon’s friend at Elora Hotel in *U Raimon Bad Ka Dashisha*, *(7)* Dr. Pradip Das in *Tang Ma Phi Khun Baieid* *(8)* and Kishan Rai in *U Mooiong*. *(9)*

4.1.1 In the novel *U Raimon Bad Ka Dashisha*, Dashisha was the only daughter of Jngen and Arbor was Jngen’s brother and *U Kñi* (maternal uncle) of Dashisha. Arbor had a wife Sibon and a daughter, Daiamon. The family life in Arbor’s house-hold was a one-sided affair. The hen-pecked Arbor was always dominated by his wife Sibon. Envious of Jngen’s property, she gave her husband no rest until he could wrest some of that property to her. Arbor was not respected as the head of the family for his wife was always in control of all family decision. Not contented with spoiling the relationship between Arbor and Jngen which was indirectly responsible for Jngen’s death, she incited Arbor to cause his orphaned niece, Dashisha to become insane so that she could steal all their clan property.

7. Ibid., p.9
While examining this facet of Dashisha’s suffering, it is important to briefly comment on the traditional basis of clan relationship which exists among Khasis. The clan relation is a close-knit chain that binds clan members such as the maternal aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces. (10)

U Kňi (11) (maternal uncle) traditionally maintains a close relationship with his own clan nephews and nieces and it is the bounden duty of U Kňi to love and to take care of the needs of each one of them.

From the very beginning the novelist has laid emphasis on the clan system of the Khasis particularly in matters relating to the ancestral property. Prominent writers such as H.O. Mawrie, (12) H. Lyngdoh (13) and Sweetymon Rynjah (14) pointed out that Khasi being a matrilineal society, the ancestral property is under the custodian of Ka Kmiec (mother) and is passed on to Ki Khun Kynthei (daughters). But U Kňi (maternal uncle) is responsible for their welfare by advising and guiding his clan members on the management of all clan property.

Arbor and Jngen were brother and sister of deceased but rich parents with many landed properties. As is the custom among Khasis, Jngen inherited all the clan property but Arbor as U Kňi helped in taking care of it and advised Jngen on the management of the property. However, this arrangement did not suit Arbor and his wife Sibon. In the novel, Sibon had full control over her husband Arbor, whom the author describes as U DŚi sam khmut (15) (literally, a bull led by a nose ring), meaning a hen-pecked husband. She manipulated over him to such an extent that he unfeelingly sold part of his sister’s land without her knowledge.

Though Jngen inherited all the clan property, yet she and her husband were hard-working people which made the family prosper in wealth and property. Jngen’s life was happy indeed with her only daughter even after the death of her husband. She

10. Sweetymon Rynjah, Tyngkai La Ki Symbai, 1995, p.22
11. H.O. Mawrie, Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, 1979, p.37
12. H. Lyngdoh, Ka Niam Khasi, 1990
13. op. cit. Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, 1979
14. op. cit. Tyngkai La Ki Symbai, 1995
15. op. cit., p.13
respected and trusted her brother Arbor to help with the management of her property.

Arbor and Sibon had one daughter Daiamon and two sons. The extravagant life of both Sibon and her spoiled sons reduced the family to ruin financially. Arbor had to repay the loan, which when the due date to pay arrived, they were not able to do so. Sibon incited Arbor to sell off part of Jngen’s property to help clear the debt. Like Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth, Sibon convinced Arbor to sell off his sister’s paddy field without Jngen’s knowledge. If Macbeth’s fall has been engineered by a woman, his wife’s greed was instrumental in bringing about Arbor’s destruction. In the end:

U Arbor u la sngew dei ban die tuh ia ka pynthor ka para jong u

[Arbor felt that it was right that he should sell off his sister’s paddy field without her knowledge.]

When Jngen came to know about her brother’s act, she went to his house where a very bitter argument ensued. Jngen was very upset and was absolutely shocked at the action of the couple, particularly her brother’s attempt to justify his action by blaming their dead mother in distributing the ancestral property.

“I mei im shim la ai ka bynta ba dei hok jong nga. kumta nga la shim noh”

[My mother did not give me my rightful share of the property and hence I took what is rightfully mine.]

It was undoubtedly just a lame excuse for his dastard action and this very act indicated Arbor’s real character. When Jngen protested against his action, he then sent his sister away from his house with a threat:

“Hep da antad ha ing jongno phi kren – khie leit noh, bad naduh mynta ka sngi ngan leh katba mon katba nga sngew bit!”

[Sister, mind in whose house you are when you speak such

16. Ibid., p15
17. Ibid., p.16
18. Ibid., p.17

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words. Go away, from now on I will do whatever I wish with the property.]

These words uttered by her own brother of the same flesh and blood hit her like a brick. In such a mental state, she went back home where on the way she met with a fatal car accident. She suffered severe head injury and did not survive very long. She died leaving Dashisha all alone in the world but she managed to warn her daughter against Arbor. Jngen’s last word to Dashisha were as follows:

“U dei - u - mama ... jong phi un sa shet ia ngi ... dei ma u ka daw ... sumar khun (19)
[It - is - your - uncle. He will ruin us ... he is the culprit ...
be careful.]

After Jngen’s death Arbor insisted that Dashisha should allow him to manage all her property but Dashisha refused to accept his advice and always tried to avoid him. Traditionally as her maternal uncle, it was his duty to protect the property of his niece. But he betrayed the trust that his niece reposed on him. Not content with his criminal act against his sister, he wanted to steal off all that was left from her orphaned daughter. With the death of her mother, Dashisha had to face hardship and danger for she had no other close relatives except Arbor her maternal uncle who had proved to be a deceitful man. Dashisha recalled the words of her mother:

“Dei ma-u ka daw ... sumar khun (20)
[He is the culprit ... be careful.]

Dashisha was left at the mercy of Arbor and Sibon. In order to save her property from their hands, she registered all her land in the District Court. On hearing this, Arbor and Sibon were enraged. They threatened her and asked her to hand over to them all the documents including the succession certificate. A bitter argument occurred and Arbor slapped and threatened her:

“U thap tyneh ar thap lai thap” (21)

19. Ibid., p.18
20. Ibid., p.18
21. Ibid., p.21
[He slapped her very hard in the face, two three times.]

Dashishha was all alone with no one to help by her. Blood rolled down from Dashisha’s mouth, and she was in deep grief and sorrow and terribly afraid of her uncle. In despair she cried out to her dead mother.

“Mei ! mei ! mei !”

[Mother! Mother! Mother!]

Unable to fight off their threat and greed any further and unable to check her anger any longer, she took hold of ‘ka wait’ (a large-bladed knife) and with tears in her eyes shouted angrily at them.

“Mih nagne, ngan mait bad kynthei bad shynrang ... mih mih kloi khun ka nongpyniap briew!”

[Get out of here, out or I’ll cut to pieces both man and woman, get out you murderers !]

The climax came at this point when Arbor and Sibon were chased away by Dashishha. Enmity grew between her and her uncle’s family. Encouraged by his wife, Arbor hired a sorcerer who invoked the power of evil spirits to turn Dashisha into a mad woman. To satisfy Sibon’s greed, he felt no guilt in trying to destroy Dashisha’s health and even her very life by causing her insanity through evil spells. As in the case of many relationship, greed is shown to be the cause of the serious rift between Dashisha and her uncle. During her periods of madness, Dashisha knew nothing about whatever she was doing.

Arbor and his wife Sibon believed in such evil super-natural power for getting what they wanted in life. The novelist calls such belief – superstition. He calls Arbor: U briew ba ngeit thala” [a superstitious person] and noted that Arbor’s wife too

22. Ibid., p.22
23. Ibid., p.22
24. J.S. Shangpliang ‘Love As A Theme In Khasi Novels’, 1989, p.67
25. op. cit. p.7
subscribed to such kind of belief.

This belief, manifested by their action, was inspired by their greedy and selfish motives. This couple believed that their future could be predicted through cards, sorcery and palmistry. They were frequent visitors to ‘Upper lewduh’ where there were some fortune-tellers. Arbor was often seen at these fortune-tellers’ stalls at Diengkain, Upper lewduh, carrying with him black fowls or white fowls and at times carrying doves for the purpose of sacrificing to the evil spirits to win favour from them.

Greed has no limit and is the mother of many evils. Any pang of Arbor’s guilty conscience was laid to rest by his wife’s soft and convincing words. A sorcerer was called to their residence and his requirements for the evil act against Dashisha were prepared in an altar in their bed room. The sorcerer dressed himself in his special attire before he performed his strange act of divination to cause harm to Dashisha.

If Macbeth and his wife ‘could sleep no more’ because they have murdered sleep, this evil act also brought Arbor and Sibon fear and nightmares:

Ka jingtieng bad jingsngew bymsuk bad ka jingiatip lem ka pynlong ia ki ban ym ioh thiah shuh. Ka jingsamthiah kam wan satia ha ki. (27)

[Fear and a guilty conscience caused them sleepless nights.
Sleep simply eluded them.]

Arbor realized too late the consequences of his evil act on himself and his wife, when the spell had already taken effect on Dashisha. The power of the evil spirits took hold of Dashisha and the morning that followed found her an entirely insane person. Her state of mental disorder was controlled by the power of the silver chain put around Dashisha’s neck by Arbor. The spell grew stronger each day. Few were the

27. op. cit., p.27-28
occasions when she was sane and aware of her condition. It was during one of those sane and conscious moments that Raimon first saw Dashisha and was moved to pity by her suffering. He became very protective towards her and gave her tea and snacks in the tea shop even when the owner of the shop tried to throw her out. The man warned Raimon not to help the mad girl:

"Nei, nei babu, pakli ko idhar cha mat khilaw."(28)

[No. no sir, tea is not served here for mad people.]

Despite her madness, Raimon could see and appreciate her beauty. Combined with her good qualities, she also possessed a good figure and a fair and beautiful face. (29) Her beauty attracted the attention of men even when she was in her insane state. It was her physical beauty that tempted the wicked taxi drivers to kidnap her.

It was in Barapani where her kidnappers took Dashisha that Raimon first saw her beauty and youth which made him to exclaim:

"Ka jingbhabriew jong ka; ka palat ia baroh!" (30)

[Her beauty excels that of any other woman.]

Raimon then chased away the kidnappers and fought with them in order to protect Dashisha from being molested. He was able to rescue her and he then took her home. Dashisha on her momentary sane condition was able to tell Raimon everything about her life and the way her uncle Arbor cheated her mother and how he and his wife caused her illness by casting an evil spell on her. After Raimon heard everything he promised to help her for Raimon had started to fall in love with her. Dashisha also fully reciprocated his feelings of love. Raimon could not sleep the night after he left Dashisha. He thought to himself:

28. Ibid., p.35
30. op. cit. p.45
“Katba nga nang pyrkhat ia ka, katta nga nang sngew ba nga ieid ia ka, hynrei ka jingbynnud ba khraw namar ngam shym la lah pynpaw eiei iaka.” (31)

[The more I thought about her, the more I love her, and I regret that I did not confess my feelings to her.]

Dashisha was also in love with Raimon. She confessed to him in her dream:

“Raimon nga ieid iaphi” (32)

[Raimon I love you.]

Insanity was no bar to true love. In a collection of songs by Rufimus, we came across these beautiful lines, which are applicable to Raimon’s feelings for Dashisha.

“Your wrinkles … are preferable to the juice of all youthful prime and your winter is warmer than another’s summer.” (33)

True love transcends outward appearance where even ‘wrinkles’ and ‘winter’ of human nature are in themselves sweet and wonderful.

Raimon’s appearance in her life changed the situation into Dashisha’s favour. His love and concern for Dashisha brought a ray of hope to her hopeless situation and helpless suffering. To help her recover from the evil spell and to bring her back to full sanity, he spared no effort to find a person able to drive away the evil spell from her life. At length he came across the right person “a Bhoi” (34) (a native of Ri Bhoi District) who was endowed by a super-natural force to drive away such evil spell.

Dashisha was finally delivered from her physical and mental suffering by Raimon’s help. Putting all her trust in him, she in due course emerged out of her dark world into a bright new world of hope where her love for Raimon reigned supreme in

31. Ibid., p.53
32. Ibid., p.53
34. op. cit., p.55
her heart. She recovered from her illness and regained complete sanity and later married Raimon. Her marriage did not immediately solve all her problems. Although Arbor died an unnatural and pitiful death, Sibon was still there to carry out her evil plan of destroying Dashisha. The poor girl had to struggle against three hired assassins engaged by Sibon to kill her. One of the villains later confessed that Sibon was behind their attack on Dashisha.

In the physical onslaught, Dashisha was badly injured and received a serious blow to her head. This injury was of a serious nature and could not be treated in Shillong. Doctors advised Raimon to take Dashisha to Dibrugarh Medical College for medical treatment. Raimon immediately took her to Dibrugarh to get necessary treatment for her.

Dashisha was then exposed to a new but more deadly danger. Daiamon, the daughter of Arbor and Sibon was studying for her M.B.B.S. in Dibrugarh Medical College. She could not complete her examinations in her final year of the course. Adding to this delay, she had to study two years more in order to complete a Master’s Degree in medicine. It was during this period that Dashisha was brought to the Hospital where Daiamon worked. Sibon’s evil intention was to use her daughter to kill Dashisha by poisoning her. Torn between her sense of duty and loyalty towards her mother and her oath to save life as a doctor, Daiamon was in a dilemma. She faced an internal painful struggle. Her mental conflict was almost her undoing but finally her sense of duty prevailed. From the depth of her heart she screamed:

"Em mei ngam treh ...
em ngam ngeit iaphi." (35)

[No mother no ... I will not obey you.]

Daiamon’s change of mind brought about a change of situation and Dashisha was kept safe. After that a close and intimate relationship developed between the two cousins. Dashisha recovered from her illness and came back to Shillong to live happily with Raimon.

35. op. cit. p.84
The author depicted the suffering of Dashisha at different stages of her life. Being an only child, her mother died leaving her in pain and in distress. Dashisha had to struggle against all kinds of dangers because she had no close relatives except Arbor, her maternal uncle who was a deceitful and dangerous man. Her suffering was caused by Arbor’s greed and his desire to possess all of her mother’s wealth and property.

4.1.2 L.H. Pde in another of his novels *Tang Ma Phi Khun Baieid* (1984) portrays the way of life of the people of Shillong city where traditional moral values are simply cast aside especially by the more well-off and educated section of society. Characters representing some of these were shown to be self-centered and selfish and who cared only for themselves. Moral values in families and in political life were replaced by greed and hypocrisy among many of the people in the city life of Shillong.

The urban setting chosen for this novel was concentrated mainly in some locations of Shillong. The main characters whether they were born and brought up in Shillong or whether they came from the interiors to settle in Shillong, adapted the life style of those considered to be trend-setters in the society. The setting was briefly shifted to the metropolis city of Calcutta where the main female character spent a short period of time to see the seamy side of life in that city.

The theme of suffering in this novel is interwoven with certain social issues of the 1980’s. People’s attitude towards life was very different from those of previous decades and a majority of them were shown to disregard important traditional values. Most of L.H. Pde’s characters in these novels are shown to be hypocritical and self-seeking. Balari deceived and finally murdered Melamon, Bianglang’s wife, because of her love for Bianglang, an act which later on led her to take own life.

The novel started straight away with an element of suspense. Melamon was dead and buried. Why and how did Melamon die? No one knew, not even her daughter, Wandashisha nor her husband, Bianglang. A sense of foreboding pervaded the novel, particular through the conversation between the main characters.

36. L. H. Pde, *Tang Ma Phi Khun Baieid*, p.1
The novelist deliberately focusses upon the three main characters of the novel, namely, Bianglang, Balari and Dr. Pradip Das Lyngdoh to provide a background of all that had happened before and after Melamon’s death.

Unlike other heroines Pde’s novel, Balari the heroine of *Tang Ma Phi Khun Baieid* was a highly educated woman and very skilful in the art of modern western dances. She was a very attractive woman with a good figure and one who knew how to dress well. She had a pretty face with thick well-shaped lips over her big teeth. The novelist described her nature as:

“Ka long ka samla ba kynthlap samla palat” *(37)*

[She is a great flirt]

Balari Myntri was shown to be a very close friend of Bianglang’s family since the time when Melamon was alive. The problem, however, was that Balari had always been madly in love with Bianglang. He also appeared to have a soft corner for Balari. But her passionate love for him changed her whole outlook and blinded her sense of what was right and what was wrong. It was this love that made her accept Pradip’s advice on how to get Bianglang to herself. With Pradip’s help, Balari poisoned Melamon, Bianglang’s wife, with the hope that Bianglang would turn to her after his wife’s death. This evil and wilful act of murdering an innocent woman would bring terrible repercussions on Balari.

Bianglang was a faithful husband and did not have any affair with any woman prior to his wife’s death. He became friendly with Balari only after Melamon died. One thing was very clear – Balari’s weak point in the whole state of affair was her guilty conscience which always acted as a stumbling block in her relationship with Bianglang and also with his young daughter Wandashisha. The author says:

“Ha syrtap jingiatip lem, ka Balari bad u Dr. Pradip
ki don ka jingpynrem. Ha ka mynsiem bad tip-thuh

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37. Ibid., p.5

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ka Wandashisha, kane ka jingduh kmie ka ktah jubor ia ka”. (38)

[Balari and Dr. Pradip also suffered from a guilty conscience. In her heart of hearts, Wandashisha’s loss of her mother at such a young age touched Balari very deeply.]

When Melamon was alive Bianglang was a mere school teacher, but as soon as his wife died his life took a new turn with a change of his profession.

Balari was always around Bianglang and after his wife died she became very close to him. At this stage, Bianglang’s feelings for Balari were that of a healthy normal young man toward a beautiful young woman, especially one who liked him and who cared for his daughter. He was also free to have the relationship since he had become a widower. He trusted Balari and allowed her to take charge of his house and to look after his beloved daughter Wandashisha. He never had any suspicion that Balari was in any way unworthy of his trust. Later on, Bianglang joined politics as a career and contested for the Legislative Assembly elections. During his tenure as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, he did not really give much thought to his love life and as his political pursuit kept him busy, he paid little attention to Balari.

Pradip displayed external signs of close friendship with Bianglang, but it was during Bianglang’s election that his true colour showed up when he canvassed for Bianglang’s opponent. Nevertheless, Bianglang came out successfully and was elected a member of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly on a regional party ticket. But Pradip a cunning character who understood well the personal ambition of a politician in Meghalaya duped Bianglang into accepting the bride of a ‘lakh grand for election expenses’ (39) to support a national party. Thus, we see Dr. Pradip Das with a double role in politics as he did in his relationship with Balari.

38. Ibid., p.3
39. Ibid., p.45

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Bianglang, after his political success was then free to divert his attention to Balari. On the night of his success in the election, Balari was waiting for him in his house. Elated with his triumph he was ready to celebrate his success in his own fashion with Balari. To prove her love for him, she also showed herself ready to comply with his wish to spend the night with him, though not with the enthusiasm and joy she had expected for such a moment.

Instead of joy and passion, Balari’s tears started overflowing from her eyes, something which upset Bianglang for he thought that she might be in love with someone else. She, however, assured that he was her true love but that her tears were because of something else:

“Em Bianglang, nga iam, nga tip ba kawai ka sngi, kine ki ummat kin kylla snam”.\(^{(40)}\)

[No Bianglang, I’m crying because I know that one day these tears will turn into blood.]

Balari’s conscience would not allow her to experience any happiness even when Bianglang repeatedly promised to marry her.

Interestingly, it could be seen in this novel that L.H. Pde uses visions to create an atmosphere of suspense and horror. Suspense, according to E.M. Forster, is the backbone of the novel,\(^{(41)}\) because it arouses in man his primeval curiosity, and keeps the reader awake.\(^{(42)}\)

The element of suspense is witnessed in Balari’s strange experience on that particular night. Of course her guilty conscience was also one of the causes that troubled her during that time. In such mental turmoil, she was filled with terror when she suddenly saw the dead Melamon stepping off her wedding photograph into the room.

The amorous love-making between the lovers was brought to an abrupt end.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.28
\(^{41}\) E. M. Forster op. cit. p.140
\(^{42}\) Ibid., p.160
This strange phenomenon frightened the life out of Balari. She desperately got up from the settee and hastily collected her clothes to cover herself before she collapsed and fainted, after gasping out a few words:

“Peit katei, wow ka Kong Mel – your wife.” (43)

[Look over there, it is Mel – your wife.]

In his intoxicated state Bianglang was not perturbed in any way for he saw nothing at all, when he looked up all he saw was the photograph of his wedding which was hung in a picture frame.

One could say that Balari’s guilty conscience was working overtime at this stage. She visualized things which were constantly preying her mind. Her conscience condemned her because of her guilt. Her imagination played tricks on her and created havoc with her emotions.

The ghastly apparition was seen by Balari as the revenge of the dead Melamon for the foul deed that Balari had committed against her and her family.

Balari’s troubles, however, were far from over. Pradip who had solid proof of her crime of murder played his card very carefully, waiting for the right opportunity to exploit her. Balari’s deed could never remain a secret for Pradip had her letter of confession to her crime in his custody. He could and did blackmail her. He manipulated her almost at will for he had Balari under his thumb. He intended to make her submit to his lustful desire by using her secret as a weapon. Balari had to play a double role in order to please Bianglang and at the same time to keep Pradip quiet. Pradip was not content with mere friendliness with Balari for he was driven with his obsession to possess her. In one instance, Pradip tried to put pressure on Balari to give in to his lustful desire. He said:

“I want you, I must have you.” (44)

43. op. cit. p.33
44. Ibid., p.89
Balari, on the hand, was deeply and passionately in love with Bianglang. She had even gone to the extent of murdering Melamón in order to get Bianglang to marry her. Therefore, Balari was not going to give up all her dreams by submitting tamely to Pradip. True to her character, Balari fought off against the blackmailer when he tried to force her to acquiesce to him.

She was firmly determined to achieve her goal – to save herself for the man she loved without giving in to someone she disliked intensely.

During her fight with Pradip, Bianglang appeared on the scene and saved Balari from the evil designs of Pradip. But Bianglang, after saving her, did not want to stay near her any longer but immediately left her in disgust. He said:

"Ngam ngeit kawei ruh ka ktien jong phi Balari." *(45)*

[I don’t believe a single word you said, Balari.]*

Balari was left a woman in despair. All her dreams of a life with Bianglang were shattered. She had murdered Melamón for nothing. Her mental agony and humiliation became more intense as she realized that Pradip would always attempt to blackmail her for the foul deed she had committed against an innocent woman. She also felt remorseful at depriving a young child of her mother. In the end, Balari saw no reason to carry on living. She ultimately ended her life by consuming the remaining poison with which she killed Melamón.

Balari wreaked her final vengeance on her tormentor by naming him an accessory to the murder she committed. He supplied her with the poison that killed Melamón. Her confession in the last note that she left before she committed suicide read as follows:

*I have risked my conscience and committed sin by poisoning Kong Melamón because I love Biang.* Dr. Pradip Das Lyngdoh

45. Ibid., p.92
gave the poison but wanted to exploit me and my body, which
I swear before God that I have kept it safe and sound." (46)

A guilty conscience and a cruel blackmailer finally pushed her to the edge. Her
mental and emotional suffering ultimately led her to an act of self-destruction. She
consumed the remaining portion of the poison which Pradip gave her to kill Melamon.
In her search for love, the motivating passion of her life, Balari took an act which led
to her intense, and ceaseless suffering and which finally led to her destruction. In a
way, Balari’s suffering was not undeserving. Her suffering was brought about by her
own “sin” as she herself cried out before ending her life.

4.1.3 In his novel U Mooiong (1987), L.H. Pde projects an important aspect of
human life, namely love, but one conditioned by materialistic aspirations. The novelist
in this novel projects certain social concerns which are actually burning issues in
contemporary Khasi society.

The incidents chosen for this novel are set in both urban and rural areas. Raplang was born of rural-based parents and later on moved to Shillong for higher
studies and for his job. Raplang’s parents, Sneng and Jngiar, hailed from Jongksha, but
in search of livelihood moved to Marathud and Bamkamar and finally settled at
Nongkhroh. Their financial hardship made them move from one place to another.
They had two daughters who tragically succumbed to death after contracting malaria.
Then a son was born to them whom they named Raplang. We did not know much of
the couple’s relationship as Sneng died quite shortly after Raplang was born.

While Raplang was studying in Shillong College, he met Kalpana his
classmate. She was a Bengali, the daughter of Dhaneswar Sarma who was a Brahmin
by caste. During the course of their study, Raplang was always friendly and helpful to
Kalpana which made her appreciate him greatly. She said:

“You are my light and my help when I have no one else to turn to.” (47)

46. Ibid., p.94
47. L. H. Pde, U Mooiong, p.13

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Kalpana fell in love with Raplang and he also reciprocated her feelings for him. He often calmed her fear and trepidation for their future together:

"Ban pynshngaiñ ia ka u ju kular bad tang ioh kam un shim noh ia ka shisyndon." (48)

(He would encourage her by promising to marry her as soon as he gets a job.)

Kalpana and Raplang finally decided to get married without her family’s knowledge and consent. It was very hard for Raplang to take that important decision in his life because he knew the problems of social adjustment would have to be overcome since they came from different communities, different backgrounds of traditions and beliefs. Both of them, however, believed that their love would prevail and they would overcome all obstacles that came their way. Raplang did not face any difficulty from his side of the family because his illiterate mother was ready to accept Kalpana as her daughter-in-law even before she met the girl. Kalpana, on the other hand, did not dare inform her parents of her marriage to Raplang, a Khasi man.

Because of his love for her, Raplang agreed to Kalpana’s wish to solemnize their marriage at Kamakhya, a Hindu temple:

"U Raplang wat la um long u Hindu, pynban u kohnguh ia ka jingkwah ka Kalpana." (49)

(Though Raplang was not a Hindu, he agreed to a Hindu wedding ceremony in accordance with Kalpana’a wish.)

The day of their marriage went off well. However, after the ‘Panda’ declared that they were legally married, Kalpana looked at Raplang and her tears rolled down her cheeks. Kalpana said:

48. Ibid., p.5
49. Ibid., p.6

81
Kalpana was a Hindu and a non-tribal. It was a very hard and tough decision that she had taken, belonging as she was to a Brahmin family. She later had to face many problems because her family was totally against the relationship. According to their custom, parents were in charge of finding a suitor and for arranging a marriage for their daughter. Therefore, after Kalpana married Raplang, they totally rejected and disowned her. Kalpana knew that there could never be reconciliation with her parents. So, after her marriage the relationship between Kalpana and her parents was forever broken. However, Kalpana died very shortly after she delivered her baby daughter.

With the sudden demise of Kalpana, Raplang’s mother took care of his daughter named Rupamai. Raplang loved his daughter very deeply and he tried to provide her the best that he could. Later on, Raplang’s mother, Jngiar had to leave her own hearth and home in the village and moved to Jowai for her grand-daughter’s education.

Raplang changed careers and started his own business after leaving his government job. While conducting his business at Khliehriat, Raplang met a very enterprising woman named Emhi. She was an owner of many big coal mines. Emhi was a middle-aged woman but because of her hard work, she appeared older than her age. Emhi had a daughter named Dianghun. Emhi, her husband Datne and their daughter Dianghun did not have a close family relationship. Dianghun’s father was an alcoholic who did not take much interest in bringing her up. Her mother was always busy with amassing wealth and was therefore occupied most of the time with her business. Understandably, Dianghun did not have a happy life even at an early age. In her teens, she became involved with a non-Khasi labourer and had a son by him. Later, the child’s father abandoned them after he had carried off a lot of the family’s

50. Ibid., p.7
money entrusted to him by his mother-in-law.

Poor Dianghun was taken advantage of by a non-Khasi man, named Ram Paresh Sah who, at the beginning, was just a labourer at Emhi’s coal mines. The novelist reveals Emhi’s shock when she realized what had happen to her daughter:

“Ka liat ka Dianghun ha une u dkhar kam lah sngewthuh shuh.
Ka Dianghun ka la armet.” (51)

[Dianghun fell into a trap set by this non-Khasi man, something which she could not understand. Before she knew it, Dianghun was already pregnant.]

This incident reveals the vulnerability of young innocent girls like Dianghun at the hands of a cunning and opportunistic man like Ram Paresh Sah.

A few years after this, Raplang came into contact with Dianghun’s family because of his business. When Raplang met Dianghun for the first time, he did not know that she already had a child. Because of her youthful and innocent looks, he assumed that she was a young and innocent village girl. He felt attracted towards her and became friendly with her. When he knew the truth about her, he was very disappointed and avoided her. Later on, he learned that it was her simplicity and innocence together with lack of guidance from her parents that had spoiled Dianghun’s life. She also felt very depressed and hurt when he started avoiding her as she had already fallen in love with him. His first thought when he knew about her past was: “la dkut u ryndang blang” (52) [the sheep’s neck was severed].

expression, of course, means that Dianghun was already a spoiled woman.

. Dianghun’s charm and beauty captivated him once again and soon he fell in love with her. With Emhi’s and his mother’s blessing, Raplang married Dianghun. For a while, the two were very happy together. Later on, however, Dianghun had to face much sadness because of the intoxicating effects of the ‘black gold’ (coal) on

51. Ibid., p.59
52. Ibid., p.63

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Raplang’s life. His frequent visits to Shillong because of his business led him to become a member of a particular club. Members of this exclusive club led a very sophisticated life style. In the club, they imitated the western way of life such as drinking alcohol, gambling, etc. In trying to cultivate the so-called smart society in the club, Raplang was led astray for a while. The rustic village girl Dianghun simply did not know how to cope with her husband’s wilful ways.

Raplang seemed to crave for the so-called smart society of the club and he was ashamed of Dianghun’s rustic manners. He even said:

“Ka khynnah nongkyndong kam ju kwah ia kine baroh, kaba ma ka long ba ynda ki la bang, kan long kaba shyrkhei pat. Lada phi rah noh ia ka briew na khlaw, phi dei ban husiar pat ba ka khlaw ka sah bad ka mariang.⁵³

[A village girl will not be able to enjoy this kind of life style. It would spoil her badly if she were to experience it. If you take a woman from the forest, you should be careful that the forest is left behind her.]

Dianghun was neglected and made to suffer because of her husband’s shame of her rustic manners. He even regretted that she was not as smart or as sophisticated as his first wife Kalpana. Poor Dianghun, semi-literate with no knowledge of English had no means of learning ‘club’ manners. She was ignored and rebuffed by her husband. She felt very humiliated when she was made to learn how to speak a few words in English. Dianghun’s suffering was compounded by her loneliness during her pregnancy and during the delivery of her baby. This was the time when she most needed her husband but Raplang was always attracted to the bright city lights of Shillong and his young wife was always left to her own devices at Bapung. He even neglected the coal business which caused a lot of worry to Emhi. Dianghun tried to talk some sense to him but it was all in vain. She was even called “Ka bieit”⁵⁴ [you idiot] by her husband. Such words hurt Dianghun very deeply.

⁵³ Ibid., p.70
⁵⁴ Ibid., p.75
In her desperate attempt to bring her husband back to his senses, she took a drastic step of leaving her newly-born infant at Bapung and disappeared from home. It was a heart-breaking and painful course of action for any mother to take. The suffering of Dianghun at this juncture was terrible as her baby was still in need of its mother’s milk. Even so, she could not think of anything else to do but to simply cry out in pain. The novelist narrates that “ka pait ka dohnud” [she was heart-broken] at the way events had turned out in her life.

In this novel, Pde depicted the suffering of Dianghun at different stages of her life. Her parents, her mother in particular, became obsessed only with the coal business and the wealth that brought her that she forgot totally her responsibility of caring for her daughter. Due to her parents’ neglect, she was taken advantage of by an unscrupulous man and had to face the predicament of being an unwed mother at a very young age. Her suffering at the neglect and uncaring attitude of her husband almost destroyed her. Finally, her mother-in-law’s support helped her win back her husband’s love.

L.H. Pde, being a contemporary novelist, perhaps observed the actual life style of the society where almost all his heroines are objects of suffering. His women characters suffered immensely, some like Balari in Tang Ma Phi Khun Baieid for faults of her own making while others like Dianghun, in U Mooiong by the exploitation and neglect by the men in her life.

4.2 An analysis of W. Tiewsoh’s selected novels.

One of the most prominent novelists in Khasi literature is W. Tiewsoh. His novels selected for this study are Kam Kalbut (1975), Ka Jingkwah U Kpa (1978) and La Bakla (1987).

4.2.1 Tiewsoh’s novel Kam Kalbut has focussed very deeply on the suffering of a woman in her struggle for fulfillment in life.

As with many other Khasi novelists, W. Tiewsoh has also projected his view

55. Ibid., p.76
that part of a woman’s suffering was because of her quest for ideal romantic love. The term love, in its wider sense, wears a number of faces which as a rule, “has become the chief thematically subject of all dramas, of both tragedies and comedies of the classical and the romantic ages in Indian as well as in Western literature.” (56) Love certainly plays a key role in the theme of suffering in Tiewsoh’s novels.

The main female character of this novel, Noli, was the eldest child of a powerful village headman, Along. The novel starts when Noli reached a marriageable age and with the way her mother was concerned about the chances of finding the right husband for Noli, since no suitor ever approached the family for her hand in marriage. This, however, did not seem to bother her husband very much even when she made her concern very clear to him:

“Phi la dei ban sngewthuh ba ka Noli ka la dap arphew ar snem bad tang ka ksew ruh kam pat ju rung ha iing jong ngi.” (57)

[You should understand that Noli is already twenty two years of age and no suitor ever comes to our house.]

Noli was in the prime of her youth and possessed beauty and exquisite grace. She was a hard-working girl who also enjoyed taking part in all youthful activities in the village. The young woman had also never given her heart to anyone, that is, until she met Melkhan.

Though born in the same village, Noli and Melkhan did not grow up together as children because Mel’s father sent his son to study in Shillong. It was only at the funeral of his father that the couple met each other for the first time. Their first meeting sowed the seed of love in their hearts. As fate had it, they were destined to meet again in a strange situation. Nature was brought in to play a prominent role in the events that shaped the life of the main characters. Cyclonic thunderstorms coming from the direction of Mawlakhat (58) usually caused devastation to the budding fruits

56. Irwin Edman (ed.) The Philosophy of Schopenhauer, 1956, p.337
57. W. Tiewsoh, Kam Kalbut, p.59
in the orchards or 'bri' \(^{59}\) of War area and one such thunderstorm caught Noli and Mel unaware while they were returning home from their respective orchards. The sky was suddenly overcast and then heavy rain, a strong wind and roaring thunder began to set in. While crossing the turbulent Umsong river they found the currents were too strong for them. They had to work together to save themselves and each other from the peril of death. During the course of their struggle for life, Noli could feel the cold biting right to her bones. Mel saw that she was shivering with cold and fear:

“Ki khmat bad ki rymmiang shyntur jong ka ki lieh blaid blaid.” \(^{60}\)

[Her face and lips were deathly pale]

They knew they had to battle against the violent forces of nature in order to survive. Mel fought bravely but he knew that he needed Noli’s help to overcome the strong currents of the river. Like other women-folk of Ri-War, Noli was very skilful in cutting and slicing bamboo or in weaving cane work. It was because of these skill that she could help Melkhan to overcome the strong currents of the Umsong river. They used their ingenuity to cross the surging waters by using cane and bamboo as their lifeline. Noli as a conservative young woman did not want to take off wet clothes in front of Mel because of her modesty. However, as the wind blew harder and harder, she had to co-operate with Mel by taking off her outer wet clothes that were hindering their attempt to cross the raging river. She could not step on the slippery stones even with the bamboo to hold onto. Finally, she had to climb on Mel’s shoulder while he waded the river to reach safety. The author described:

“Ki Ibong ba tylli mlon ki paw namar ba ka shimi jong ka kam lah tap akor shuh ha ka jingshong ba thymmai.” \(^{61}\)

[Her firm trim thighs were exposed because her petticoat could not cover her fully anymore in such a posture.]

\(^{59}\) 'bri’, is a plantation on the hilly slopes where oranges, betlenut and other crops are grown by the people of Ri-War slopes of Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p.9

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p.22
Noli had complete faith in Mel's strong arms to save her. For Melkhan, the experience of being thrown together physically with Noli stirred feelings of love and passion for a girl, something which he had never experienced before. This was the start of a relationship which was the focus of the novel. However, it was a relationship that was doomed to tragedy.

Noli's father, Along, was the headman of the village and he ruled his family with an iron hand. A domineering husband and father, Along expected his wife and his children to bow down to his wishes at all times:

"U bat ia ka bor halor baroh bad u sngewbha ban iohi ba baroh ki pyndem, ha ki hukum jong u."  

[He imposed his authority upon all his family members and he always felt pleased when he saw every one of them bow down to his orders.]

His wife and children lived in constant fear of him, though at times his wife, Bilianda did point out his faults to him. She bitterly blamed him for her daughter's lack of suitors.

"Hooid, ha shnong dei tang ka khun u tymmen shnong kaba sah nalor ka jingbhabriew jong ka baroh."  

[Only the daughter of the headman is left with no suitors even though she is the most beautiful girl in the village.]

Noli possessed beauty and a good reputation, yet no suitor came to ask for her hand in marriage because of the arrogant Along. She had to suffer the humiliation of being the only young woman left unmarried after twenty two years of age in the village. Bilianda had a sneaking suspicion that Along had someone in mind for Noli, perhaps just to spite Melkhan:

62. Ibid., p.32  
63. Ibid., p.59
"U Along u lah ban don da uwei pat u mut iano – re – iano."\(^{(64)}\)

[Along may have already had someone in mind for Noli.]

Arranged marriage was not the usual practice among most Khasis. Usually, marriages arise out of mutual love between the couple concerned, though always with the approval of their families. W. Tiewsoh, through this novel, indicates that arranged marriages may have occurred in Shella-Mustoh region due to the influence of the neighbouring Bangla culture. Noli rebelled against such a practice and was appalled when her mother told her that the marriage between Noli’s parents was arranged by their respective families:

"Phi ruh phi shongkurim ia i pa khlem da mon seh?"\(^{(65)}\)

[Did you marry my father against your will?]

Noli and her sister Nel decided that they would never agree to such an alliance.

Marriage to a Khasi is considered to be sacred and binding \(^{(66)}\) and many authors have given their views on this subject. Some of them have pointed out that marriages in Ri War are usually arranged by the couple’s families. T. Rodborne states:

Ka rukom shongkha shongman hapdeng ki War ka la ju long kaba don burom, kaba da ia tip kur tip jait, ia tip kha ia tip man ... bunsien bunsien, haba la pynbeit ki kmie ki kpa, ka kynthei kam ju ong eiei shuh, ka shu pyndem beit ha ka mon jong ki. \(^{(67)}\)

[Marriage among the War people is a formal affair, approved by relatives from both the mother’s as well as the father’s side. Usually parents arranged their daughter’s marriage and rarely would a woman oppose to such an

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64. Ibid., p.63  
65. Ibid., p.63  
arrangement, as the wish of the parents is always respected.]

This, however, was not to be the case with Noli. She had fallen head over heels in love with Mel and he also fully reciprocated her feelings. Her father was totally opposed to this relationship because he intensely disliked Mel. Despite her father’s stern warning, Noli left home to go and live with Mel. Problems then arose because Noli’s family still adhered to and practiced the traditional Khasi religion while Mel was a Christian. Since the couple just moved in together and their relationship was not solemnized as a proper marriage in the church, Mel too had to face bitter consequences. He was excommunicated from the church and lost the prestigious job as a school teacher because the school belonged to the church. Suffering and poverty were then to be Noli’s constant companions. The couple found that they had no means of a proper livelihood. Furthermore, Mel was an orphan and Noli’s family had also cut off all relationship with her. Thus, they had no one to support and to provide for them in their time of need.

When Mel and Noli took upon themselves the decision of getting ‘married’, they violated the marriage customs of the church, thus, leading to a total alienation from other church members. The fact that they did so against the will of her parents meant that they would receive no help from her relatives either.

From the beginning Along did not want his daughter to marry Mel the school teacher and he even called him “Ka nonghikai pyut!” [A rotten teacher.]

Along was furious with Mel because he suspected that Mel worked against him in his political manoeuvres during the election of Wadar. In this election, Along got a bitter taste of opposition when the whole village went against him and his wishes and elected a person not supported by the headman. Along instigated Tirai’s representative to lodge a complaint against Mel to the authorities, stating that Mel was

68. op. cit., p. 76
69. ‘Wadar’ a local chief of Shella and Mustoh village in the Southern slopes of Khasi Hills. He holds office for a term only unlike that of a ‘Syiem’ or ‘Lyngdoh’ who remains in power for as long as they live and whose position is hereditary.
no longer a citizen of Mustoh and hence should not be allowed to take part in the
election. This almost resulted in chaos on the election day. What happened after that
exposed the vengeful spirit of Along for he could never ever forgive Mel and did all
he could to cause him hardship even after he became Along’s own son-in-law.

This vengeful spirit of Along was more clearly manifested in the suffering of
his daughter Noli. She was caught in a bitter confrontation between her father and
Melkhan. Since the time that Bilianda indicated that Mel fallen in love with Noli,
Along had nothing but harsh words against Mel. He said to his wife:

“U khun ka thok u kwah ban pynshongkurim ia ka Noli bad
ban pyrshah ia nga ha kane ka jingialeh. To, ngan peit kai ia u.” (70)

[Son of a cheat! He wants to marry Noli and at the same time to
oppose me in this election. We’ll see what will happen to him.]

Along’s hatred toward Mel grew as time passed by. Noli’s sensitive heart was
moved by her father’s anger and she acknowledged her fault in disobeying him. After
realising her fault, she humbled herself and sought her father’s forgiveness. She
visited her parents immediately after the birth of her first child. Noli’s appearance
filled her sister Nel with exceeding joy, but her enthusiasm was cut short by Along’s
thundering voice prohibiting the visitors from entering the premises. He bluntly told
them:

“Ngam kwah iohi khyllung.” (71)

[I do not want to see any child’]

When Mel asked him for forgiveness, he threatened the couple even further
and shouted at Mel to leave his property:

“Sngap jar ! khun ka buit-tuh phet, mih kloi nangne.
Uei uba phah ia phi ban pytngit pynsang ia kane ka
iing jong nga?” (72)

70. W. Tiewsoh, Kam Kalbut, p.80
71. Ibid., p.126
72. Ibid., p.126
[Shut up, you mischief-monger. Get out of here at once. Who asked you to come here to defile my house?]

Along took great pleasure in seeing his son-in-law's humiliation. His anger and vengeful spirit were vented not only on Noli and her husband but also on their innocent child.

Along's rejection of Noli and his grand child, his own flesh and blood, shows that not only was he stubborn but that he was also very vindictive. His pride and arrogance would not allow him to forgive easily once his ego was hurt. He further showed his anger by slamming the door at their face:

"U khang tdam ia ka jingkhang." \(^{(73)}\)

[He slammed the door forcefully in their face.]

In her state of helplessness, Noli then realized the need to seek help from her maternal uncle. She knew of his responsibility and his authority within the clan. She, therefore, decided to go to him and to seek his help and at the same time to tell him of her plight:

"Masan ... phi tip ba nga duk bad nga kyrduh bad ngi da shitom than. Namarkata nga wan ban kyrpad ia phi." \(^{(74)}\)

[Masan, you know that I'm going through a lot of hardship and my family is suffering from want. Therefore, I have come to ask for your help.]

It was then that Nai Singh realized the injustice done to Noli by her parents. Assuming his role as u Kñi, he advised Bilianda to allot to Noli a portion of the clan land adjacent to that of Melkhan, so that the young couple could overcome their difficulties. Bilianda went to meet them to give them the land as instructed by Nai Singh:

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., p.126
\(^{74}\) Ibid., p.111

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“Nga ai ha phi ia ka brisoh jong nga, kato kaba hajan ka bri u Mel. Phi dei ban sumar bha ia ka. Kan iarap ia phi ha ki jingeh kiba mynta. Ha kajuh ka por phi dei ban thung la ka jong.”

[I’ll give you my orchard which is adjacent to Mel’s orchard. Take care of it. It will help you during these times of hardship. Meanwhile, start planting your own orchard and take care of it properly.]

Even though Along had caused them great hardship and sadness, Noli and Mel bore no grudge against him. Noli did not in any way show disrespect to either of her parents despite her father’s harsh treatment towards her. Her mother’s kindness towards Noli did not lessen Along’s anger toward his daughter. In fact even after Noli was given her share the clan property by her mother, her father Along continued to hate Mel. He could not forget the incident of the ‘Wadar’ election.

His heart burned with revenge against Mel and he told his wife, Bilianda, that Melkhan was a fraud who married his daughter against his wishes and that he would have to pay for it. His hatred for Mel did not disappear even over the years. In fact his heart accumulated even more hatred and bitterness against the couple and even after Noli had her third child, he still could not forget the election nor forgive her. It was during this time that World War II erupted. With it, Along got the chance to punish Noli and her husband Mel even more cruelly. The British Army were advancing towards the hills to overcome their enemy. On account of this, people were needed to carry head-loads from Cherrapunjee to Sheila. Here Along enforced the law which stated that one person from each family should take part in carrying the loads needed by the British Army. Whoever failed to do so must pay a compensation of Rs. 50/- (Rupees fifty), which was a huge sum during those days.

When Mel’s turn came to perform that duty, he could not do so because he was very ill with malaria. The dreaded disease left him very weak and he was in no condition to walk, let alone carry any heavy load. Noli, seeing the condition of her

75. Ibid., p.119

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husband, went to her father’s house to plead with him to defer Mel’s duty until he had recovered from his illness. Along turned a deaf ear to his daughter’s plea. Instead he shouted and roared at her “Em, nga ong em” [No, I say no.] He further told her:

“U dei ban leit lane u dei ban siew kuna. Lait nangta ym don lad da kumwei pat..” (76)

[He should either report for duty or pay the fine. There is no other option.]

Noli failed to get her father to consider her plea. When her family’s turn to carry the head-load came, she had no alternative but to take her husband’s place. They were so poor that they could not pay the fine imposed by her father. Unfortunately, Noli herself had just delivered her third baby. She still needed to rest and to take care of herself after such a time. Moreover, she was probably malnourished due to lack of proper food. Noli knew that she had no strength to undertake such a difficult task but she had to force herself to do it. The cruelty of her father’s decision hardened her heart and she decided to take up the work of male porters, even though she well understood that she was not in a position to undertake such heavy work.

Noli’s attempt to obey the order of the heartless headman brought about her tragic death. As a loving mother she had a strong premonition that she would never come back to her children. So before she left the house she uttered these words to Mel:

“Sa pynpeit ia ki khun.” (77)

[Take care of the children]

Noli had this uncanny feeling that she would never see her loved ones again.

Nature too once again conspired to bring more suffering to Noli. On the day she left her village, it started raining and the sky was overcast with dark clouds. It was altogether a very unpleasant weather. There was also a strong and chilling wind.

76. Ibid., p.139
77. Ibid., p.140
blowing against her bones. By the time she reached Cherrapunjee she was shivering with fever from head to toe.

When Noli started back from Cherrapunjee with her head-load, the army sergeant had to help her because she was drained out of all strength. By the time she reached home her appearance was completely changed, her health was deteriorating rapidly with the fever severely high. Mel tried his best to nurse her, but it was all in vain. Noli could not swallow any morsel of food when Mel fed her. After a very short while she became unconscious and in her delirium she groaned and cried out in despair:

“Pa, sngewbha seh pa.”

[Father, please father]

Before Noli’s end came she kept asking for her father’s forgiveness. In her semi-conscious stage with tears rolling down her checks, she pitifully begged her father to forgive her:

“No, father. Forgive us. Forgive us.”

[No, father. Forgive us. Forgive us.]

Mel tried everything within his means to help her, but unfortunately he could not do anything to save her life. Noli did not survive her illness; she died tragically because of her father’s heartless action. On her death, Noli left behind her two daughters and a son under the care of her husband, Mel.

Noli was a multi-dimensional character who struggled against difficult odds. In her struggle she was not bound by any single characteristic. She did manifest certain weaknesses at times, yet in different situations, she showed a strong mind and a firm determination. She was sometimes seen as a pliant character, yet when occasions demanded, she showed her strength of character. She was, therefore, a good choice for a tragic character, as pointed out by E.M. Forster:

78. Ibid., p.143
79. Ibid., p.143
“It is only round character who are fit to perform tragically for any length of time and can move us to any feeling, except humour and appropriateness.” (80)

H.W. Sten, a prominent Khasi critic was also of the same view when he pointed out:

“Ki briew ka pyrthei novel ngi khot ‘round characters’ ha ka English, bad dei tang kum kine kiba lah ban long tyngshop shempap (tragic character) ha kano kano ka por. Ki dei ki briew ba don ka bor pyrkhat bad ka dohnud ban sngewsih ne sngewbha katba ka khana bad ki daw ki dawa.” (81)

[Inhabitants in the world of the novel are called round characters when they can take on the role of tragic characters. Such characters are intelligent and possess depth of feelings, whether ones of sadness or happiness, as events in the story demand.]

W. Tiewsoh, in the novel Kam Kalbut, has portrayed the suffering of a multi-faceted woman character in Noli. Along’s stubborn, arrogant nature, his irrational behaviour and harsh temper brought great pain and suffering to the female members of his family. It was not only his daughter Noli who suffered. His wife Bilianda also suffered though mostly in silence and in passive acceptance of his cruel treatment of their children.

There was an instant when Bilianda tried to talk to him about Noli’s desire to marry Mel. He uncaringly pushed her opinion aside and announced : “Nga dei u kpa”(82) [I am the father], thus, allowing nothing and nobody to question his authority.

Bilianda, the mother suffered much for she had little say on any decision concerning her children and she always lived in fear of her husband’s temper. Deep

80. E. M. Forster, Aspects of Novel, 1984, p.77
81. H.W. Sten, Shaphang Ka Novel, p.47-48
82. Ibid., p.59
inside she did not agree with him and disliked his attitude towards other people in the village. At times quarrel would arise between the couple for even though Bilianda was suppressed by Along, yet she finally spoke out and blamed him for her daughter’s decision to leave home. She charged him:

“Baroh shikatta phi pynlong ia nga ban sngap jar, ban kohnguh tang ia ki hukum jong phi bad ban pyndem hakhmat ka jingsarong jong phi. Mynta ba ki khun ki la sdang her krad nga dei ban kynnoh ia phi bad ka jingkwah burom jong phi. Mynta ba phi long tymmen shnong phi sngew ialade la kat U Blei.” (83)

[All along you have forced me to keep silent, to obey you and to be subservient to your pride. Now that the children have started to flee away, I have to blame you and your obsession for acclaim and honour. Now that you are a village headman, you feel you are God]

Bilianda had no authority in her own home and the act of running her house totally depended on her husband. She had to listen and to act according to his decision. His words were her commands even when it came to her own daughter’s happiness. Bilianda watched helplessly when Along was absolutely against Noli marrying Mel, even though Bilianda thought Mel was a good person and had good prospects for a bright future.

Initially, Bilianda was worried about the marriage prospect of her eldest daughter, especially when she knew that Noli was getting on in age. But in spite of her worries, she could do nothing at all as Along ruled the household with an iron hand. However, Bilianda redeemed herself at the end of the story when she could not tolerate his highhandedness anymore after the death of Noli. It was then that she asserted her authority as a mother. The words spoken by Bilianda was a pointer to this when she said:

83. Ibid., p.109
"Nga tip ba phi dei u briew uba sarong bad u bym don jingsngew na ka bynta kiwei." (84)

[I know that you are a proud man and you have no feelings for others.]

When Bilianda could not bear her suffering anymore, she finally rebelled against Along’s authority. She was bitter and remorseful at her inability to help and to protect her daughter, Noli.

In the novel Kam Kalbut, women's suffering as portrayed by the novelist was caused mainly by male domination over female members of the family. Along, a stubborn father and a proud and arrogant headman would not and could not tolerate any display of independence on the part of his wife or his children. This intolerance drove him to inflict pain and suffering to those closest to him. His vengeful spirit against Melkhan whom he blamed for his candidate’s loss in the election of ‘Wadar’ made him blind to his daughter’s hurt and pain. In the end, in the battle of the will between Mel and Along, Noli became the target and hence suffered a tragic life and a tragic death.

4.2.2 W. Tiewsoh published his Ka Jingkwah U Kpa in 1976. The suffering of women characters is one of the central themes in the novel.

In the beginning of the story, the novelist depicts the short-lived life of Nilima. Though she appeared very briefly in the novel, yet her role as a suffering eldest daughter was depicted by the novelist to highlight how traditions have a negative impact in the lives of the characters. The full name of this female character is ‘Nilima Acharjee’, but she was affectionately called Nillie. Her father, Sarat Acharjee, changed his name to Bharat Chandra after he became a Christian. The family resided at College Road, Silchar where Nilima, her four younger sisters and her mother stayed.

Nilima was a highly educated woman who held two M.A. degrees. She was a

84. Ibid., p.190
college teacher by profession. Her participation at the All India Women’s Social Conference at Bangalore shows that she was a woman with leadership quality and had a high standing in society.

Nilima, like the other women in her family, was intelligent, smart and polite. This was noted by Sonny the main character of the novel when he said:

“Phi dei i briew iba phylla bad phi la pynshitom sat ialade.”^85

[You are a very unusual woman and you have gone to such great trouble to help me.]

Sonny said these words when he saw how Nilima quickly and efficiently prepared tea and snacks for him. Sonny had a very good first impression of her:

“Ka dei ka samla kaba i hun.”^86

[She is a very gracious young lady.]

Her generous heart, her beautiful face and her steady character made Sonny fall in love with her.

Though Nilima’s family had converted into Chistianity, yet their cultural traditions are still adhered to very strictly. Nilima being the eldest amongst the four sister had to see to the needs of all her younger sisters and until such time that they became settled, she herself would not be able to get married. She tried to convince Sonny to understand her position when she rejected his proposal of marriage:

“Dei ka jingkwah i pa ba nga dei ban kohnguh ia ki jingbthah jong i. Kata ka dei ka kamram jong nga: wat la nga dei ban iaid lyngba ki rnga ding barhem, nga dei ban kohnguh ia i.”^87

[It is my father’s wish and I have to obey him. That is my duty. Even if I have to go through the fiery flame of life, I would still have to obey him.]

85. W. Tiewsoh, *Ka Jingkwah U Kpa*, p.15
86. Ibid., p.31
87. Ibid., p.29
Nilima in her youth was very charming and attractive and she had received many marriage proposals before Sonny came into her life. At first, her closeness to Sonny was entirely due to her father’s wish. It was her father who wanted her to take care of Sonny since he was the son of a very close friend of his.

Nilima submitted to her father’s will with love and respect. He on his part felt duty-bound to help Sonny and since his work-place was far away from home, he had to entrust Nilima to carry out his obligations to his friend.

In Silchar, the Puja festival was always celebrated in a grand manner. It was an occasion where all residents participated with great enthusiasm. It was on such an occasion that Nilima went to invite Sonny to a variety show. She did this in order to help Sonny enjoy the festive occasion. After the show, Sonny was very tired and Nilima offered him a glass of milk laced with intoxicants. Later on, before dinner she offered him a bottle of brandy:

“Sonny! hei Sonny! Phi la thiah ne, peit hangne, kane ka
dei ka jong phi.” (88)

[Sonny! hi Sonny! Are you asleep? Look, this is for you.]

Actually, the milk given by Nilima had already made Sonny intoxicated but he did not refuse the drink though he asked Nilima to join him.

Sonny in his drunkenness persuaded Nilima to sleep with him. She acceded to his request because he threatened to leave her house unless she did so:

“Phi dei ban thiah ha kane ka kamra lym kumta te nga la leit.” (89)

[You have to sleep with me in this room otherwise I will leave.]

Nilima, deeply in love with him, had to do the unthinkable and slept with him that night. Early in the morning she got up and bathed herself to wash away the act she

88. Ibid., p.23
89. Ibid., p.28
had committed with Sonny in the night. She confessed to Sonny, “Nga la dep sum ruh bad nga la sait ia ki kam bieit baroh” (90) [I have bathed and washed away all my foolish acts.]

Nilima knew she could not continue her affair with Sonny. He himself accepted her decision and wrote to her a few days later after the incident:

“Nga tip ba ka long kaba eh ia phi ban pdiang ia ka jingtyrwa jong nga. Namarkata, nga weng noh ia ka jingtyrwa jong nga baroh. Nga sngewsih ia ki jingleh bieit jong nga baroh bad nga kyrpad ba phin map bad phin klet.” (91)

[I know that it is impossible for you to accept my marriage proposal. That is why I have withdrawn my proposal. I am sorry for all my foolish acts and I beg you to forgive me and to forget all that has happened between us.]

Even though he accepted her decision, Sonny’s bruised ego made him take a drastic step when Nilima rejected his proposal. In a sort of rebound, he proposed to her younger sister Sandhya to marry him. Sandhya was shocked for she thought that Sormy was in love with her eldest sister.

When Nilima came to know of Sonny’s proposal to Sandhya, she was heartbroken and deeply pained because she was still in love with him. Yet she did not reveal her true feelings to her family but expressed her happiness that Sonny was to become the son-in-law of the family. She said as much to Sonny:

“Phin sa long u khlieh jong ka bad phin long ruh u lok bakordor ia ka iing jong ngi. Ngi donkam ia u rangbah briew ha iing bad ha phi ngi shem ia u mawkordor.” (92)

[You will be her husband and you will also be a very important

90. Ibid., p.3  
91. Ibid., p.33  
92. Ibid., p.44
member of our family. We need a man in our family and in you we have found a gem.]

Outwardly, Nilima seemed to be very happy with the situation, but as a fragile human being she could not eradicate her feelings for him. This was revealed when she confessed to him:

"Ia phi te nga thep barabor ha kut shadem." (93)

[You will always be deeply cherished in my heart.]

Nilima was deeply hurt by the turn of events and she felt as if an arrow was piercing and twisting in her heart as she thought of Sonny's marriage to her sister. She wept and bore the sorrow of her heart alone. Nilima had to face these hurdles because duty came first in her life. She accepted what fate and destiny had in store for her, no matter how much she had to suffer.

Nilima's self-discipline and self-denial enabled her to give her blessings to Sandhya and Sonny and she said:

"Ngan kyrkhu kyrdoh ia phi baroh arngut." (94)

[I give my blessings to both of you.]

Just two days after Nilima gave her blessings to Sandhya and Sonny, she left Silchar to attend the All India Women's Social Conference at Bangalore. News reached her family that the aeroplane on which Nilima travelled crashed before it reached its destination. Nilima came to a tragic end when she lost her life in the plane crash.

We see that Nilima's suffering was caused mainly by the social customs and traditions that bound her family. No matter what religion they professed to be, tradition still played an important part in their lives. Nilima had to discharge her heavy responsibility at the cost of her own happiness. She kept her love for Sonny deep in

93. Ibid., p.43
94. Ibid., p.44
her heart and carried the pain and suffering within herself. In conclusion, we can say that customs and traditions were the main cause of suffering to Nilima.

The novelist also depicts another important woman character in his novel, that is Sandhya. She too had to undergo many challenges and much suffering in her journey of life.

Sandhya was initially confused when Sonny proposed marriage to her:

"Phin shongkurim ia nga ynda phi la pass B.A.?" (95)

[Will you marry me after you complete your B.A.?

Sonny proposal puts Sandhya in great confusion for she thought that he loved her sister, Nilima. But Sandhya later accepted his proposal. However, even though Sonny had proposed marriage to Sandhya, his heart still belonged to Nilima and he could not forget her. At times his feelings for Nilima made him ill-treat Sandhya. This made her cry out to him in distress:

"Phi pynher syrngiew ia nga – nga tieng ia phi." (96)

[I am afraid of you for you scare me.]

Sandhya’s fear of Sonny became almost unbearable and she shivered with apprehension whenever she spoke to him. The author states:

"Ka jingkyndeh mynsiem ka jur than ha ka khynnah kaba shida." (97)

[Her heart would race uncontrollably with fear, the poor innocent girl.]

Sandhya was much younger than Sonny in age for she was barely twenty years old when he proposed marriage to her. She was very uncomfortable with the relationship because Sonny did not show any sign that he truly loved her. The author himself states:

95. Ibid., p.35
96. Ibid., p.52
97. Ibid., p.53
“Ka la dei ban tieng ia u, namar kito ki rukom leh eh bad bym khein briew ia ka.” (98)

[She had reason to fear him because he was harsh and did not bother about hurting her feelings.]

Sandhya was shattered when she received the news that her beloved sister had perished in a plane crash for she knew that she had lost her beloved sister and mentor, Nilima. Her grief was heightened by Sonny’s uncaring attitude towards her.

Sonny was then transferred to work in Bangladesh (Shilot), a place far away from Silchar and she missed him very much. While he was in Bangladesh, Sonny met with a terrible accident and he was taken to Gauhati Medical College for treatment. Sandhya received a letter from her father informing her of the bad news about Sonny:

“Sandhya baieit kaba nga kwah ban pyntip kam dei satia kaba sngewtynnad. Nga kwah ban pyntip ba u Sonny u la mynsaw ha Shilot. Ki kit ia u da ka helicopter bad u don mynta ha Gauhati Medical College Hospital. Ngi wan peit mynhynne bad ngi shem ba ki sop spain ia u. U dang tlot bad kim shah ban iakren palat. Ki ong ba ka kti bad ka kjat kamon ki la kheiň. Nga artatien lada dang lah mo ban pynkoit pat.”(99)

[Dear Sandhya, what I have to tell you is not pleasant. I have some bad news about Sonny. He met with a serious accident at Sylhet and he was taken by helicopter to Gauhati. He is now under treatment at Gauhati Medical College. We visited him today and found him very weak and he was bandaged all over. The doctors did not allow us to speak with him for long. They said his right hand and leg were fractured. I doubt if he could even fully recover from his injuries.]

98. Ibid., p.52 & 53
99. Ibid., p. 106 & 107

104
Sandhya could not believe the news though she knew that it was true. Her pain and hurt knew no bounds and tears rolled down her cheeks. As a carefree young girl who was engrossed only in taking care of her looks and in looking forward to her marriage, she now felt her whole world shaken and she said these words to her mother:

“Nga la long lypa ka thei iaplok shuwa ban shong kurim.” (100)

[I am already a widow before I am married.]

Sandhya’s mind was greatly troubled. She felt sorrowful and greatly worried as she wondered whether Sonny would even survive the accident.

The mishap which happened to Sonny became even an even bigger obstacle for Sandhya. Earlier, she had received many proposals for marriage but she refused them all. Even when she was far away from Sonny, she never encouraged other men to try to have a relationship with her.

As time passed by, Sonny was able to walk with crutches. Sandhya was always by his side but Sonny appeared to dislike her company. He even told her to go away. This grieved Sandhya very deeply, especially when he told her:

“Em, ngam treh leit bad phi.” (101)

[No, I do not want to go with you.]

She became a woman with a broken heart. Sonny’s constant rejection of her love and care made her very depressed. She had to bear his harsh and bitter words, uttered due to his frustration and his fear of facing life as a disabled man:

“Balei phi thlia bad pynjynjar kai ia nga? Nga la iathuh ia phi bunsien ba nga dei u dkoh.” (102)

[Why do you bother with me? I have told you many times that I am handicapped.]

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100. Ibid., p.107
101. Ibid., p.132
102. Ibid., p.133

105
But Sandhya persevered to care for him and even though he acted in such a manner, she kept reminding him of their vow of betrothal:

"Phi la klet imat ba nga dei ka jong phi bad ba phi la iateh bad nga." (103)

[It seems you have forgotten that I am yours and that we are betrothed.]

Her perseverance finally bore good results. Sonny fully recovered both physically and emotionally. As his body became stronger, his mind also became more stable. In the end, he turned to Sandhya for love and comfort.

When we look at the portrayal of women’s suffering in this novel we can surmise that their sacrifice for the sake of the family appear to be the main reason behind their suffering. The society in which they lived also played an important part in bringing about much of their adversity. The wish to carry out the father’s wish as reflected in the title of the novel itself was a very important factor of Nilima’s suffering.

4.2.3 Another major literary contribution of W. Tiewsoh was his novel *La Bakla* published in 1987. This novel portrays the different life style and traditions that Khasis practiced in different regions of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Various social themes were interwoven to carry forth the main plot and the sub-plots in this novel. The novelist is seen to have selected certain social issues that were of concern to him during his life time. There was therefore a conscious effort on his part to portray a realistic picture of Khasi society as he sees it, particularly that of Shillong city where certain social evils were manifested through characters and situations in the novel.

In doing so the novelist chose both urban and rural setting for this novel – some episodes took place in rural areas of Shella, though most incidents took place in Shillong city and a few in Gauhati. The use of specific locations as part of the setting provides a more realistic picture to events portrayed in the novel.

103. Ibid., p.134
W. Tiewsoh in this novel has also brought in the theme of ideal romantic love set against corrupt human nature and this is shown to bring immense suffering to his women characters and even brought total destruction to their lives.

The plot of the novel revolves around the central character, Shondra, a village girl from Shella who came to study in Shillong. She was an innocent and simple girl, a devout Christian who attended church services regularly. This is seen in her own statement during a conversation with her aunt:

“Phi la tip hi meiko ba nga te ngam ju pep jingiaseng, ha ki jingiaseng bah lei nga da sngewtynnad ban poi namar naduh dang step ki jingkren bad jingiathuh khana barabor ki dei kiba sngewtynnad bad ba kordor.” (104)

[You know aunty that I never miss church services, particularly special church services. I always made it a point to arrive in time since the sermons in such services are inspiring and precious to me.]

Shondra attended a Presbytery meeting at Mawlai Phudmawri and met for the first time, Lambor who hailed from Mawlai Nongkwar. It was here that Lambor first saw Shondra and fell deeply in love with her. That night he could not sleep and could not concentrate on anything at all. For as Valency said:

Love is a desire that comes from the heart through the abundance of great delight; and the eyes first of all engendered love, and the heart gives it its nourishment.” (105)

The eyes therefore are the gateways through which delight of beauty finds its way to the heart, causing it to stir with throbbing passion and a yearning desire to possess the person so loved.

104. W. Tiewsoh, La Bakla, p.6
Lambor’s love for Shondra made him unable to resist the desire to meet her again. He requested his friend Raplang to accompany him in his visit to Shondra’s house. Lambor confesses to Raplang about his feelings for Shondra. He said:

“Ngam nang shong nang thiah. Haba nga kiew lei lei ha kamra, ki khmat tang sha Jaiaw hi ki phai. Ban pule kot lei lei kam rung ha ka khlieh.”

[I cannot eat nor can I sleep. When I go up to my room, my eyes automatically turned to the direction of Jaiaw, and I just could not concentrate on my studies.]

Later on in the novel, Lambor even went all the way to Shella to see and meet Shondra when she went home after she finished her examinations.

Lambor was the eldest son of Prophulo and Nirda. He was a hard-working and sincere student who aimed to make good in life. Prophulo, like Shondra, was originally from Shella. He was a non-Christian and very keen to uphold the traditional Khasi religion.

The love between Lambor and Shondra grew stronger by the day. When Lambor brought Shondra to meet his parents, he was pained to find that his father strongly opposed to their relationship because of Ka Sang attached to their clans since the ancestors of both Arti clan and Nidan clan had sworn an oath never to have any relationship between them. The statement made by Lambor’s father to his son was that:

“Ki Arti bad ki Nidan ki la ia smai ha ki por mynbarim bajah ba kim bit ban ia kiew ia hiar ha ka iap ka im, ka shitom ne jingpiap lane ha kino kino ki jingjia bad kim bit ba ia poikha poiman pateng.”

106. op. cit. p. 30 & 31
108. W. Tiewsoh, La Bakla, p.100

108
The Arti and Nidan clans had made a vow in ancient times never to associate with each other whether in life or in death, in pain and sorrow, or in any event at all and a marriage between their members is forbidden for all generations to come.

Shondra belonged to the Arti clan whereas, Prophulo, Lambor’s father belonged to the Nidan clan. After thinking over what his father said, Lambor chose to be with Shondra rather than to stay with his parents. When Lambor told his decision to his beloved Shondra, she felt very happy and was glad of his plan to continue with their relationship. Lambor said to Shondra:

“Nga la dep kut jingmut naduh mynhynnin ba ngan ym lah ban iehnoh ia phi. Long katba long, jia katba jia, ngan ym iehnoh satia ia phi. Nga ieit ia phi bad ngan iai ieit ruh tang ia phi junom.” (109)

Yesterday, I decided that I would always be with you. Whatever happens in the future I will never leave you. I love you and I will always love you.

When his father tried to separate them, Lambor refused to listen to him.

However, fate and destiny and Prophulo’s vengeful heart cast a dark shadow over Shondra’s life. One day a lady by the name of Brinola came over to Shondra’s house and pretended to bring a message from Lambor. She asked Shondra to come with her in order to meet him. She convinced Shondra to follow her by her smooth talk:

“I ong shim da ka taksi bad wan da ka taksi khnang ban kloi bad i ialade i lah nang leit ap ha Myrten. Te kumta nga shim da ka taksi bad nga wan her bak bak shane. Katai ka taksi nga pynap ha surok.” (110)

109. Ibid., p.109
110. Ibid., p.122
[He told me to hire a cab and to return by the same cab so as not to waste time. He himself is waiting at ‘Myrten’. So I hired a cab hurriedly and came here. That is the cab over there waiting for us to go to him.]

Trusting Lambor implicitly, it never struck Shondra’s mind to question his bidding. She left the house and bade good bye to her cousin Mina. This was her biggest error of judgment. She fell into a trap and was kidnapped by Brinola and her gang. Later on, Shondra realized the plight she was in. She tried to escape the evil Brinola but to no avail. She had fallen with the hands of Brinola, a hardened woman who enticed young girls into the flesh trade. Shondra was also physically tortured by another of Brinola’s associate for not complying to their bidding:

“U thap sbak sbak ia ki ngap.” (111)

[He slapped her cheeks very hard]

Understanding her helplessness and becoming weak by the moment she screamed and cried for help but it was all in vain.

While Shondra was in the brothel at Bhutan she suffered immensely. She was continually harassed and ill treated by the Madam and her henchmen. Shondra could not take any food for several days and nights. She was offered some food by the girls, but she refused steadfastly,

“Ngam kwah bam bad ngam thngan.” (112)

[I do not want any food and I am not hungry.]

Shondra was determined that come what may she would not take any food prepared by filthy hands in a dirty place. When the Madam understood that Shondra would not bow down to her rules, she was very angry and handed Shondra to be punished by one of her henchmen, she said to him:

111. Ibid., p.125
112. Ibid., p.140
“Dada, Dada kane ka briew kam kohnguh ia ka jingpyniaid kane ka iing, namarkata kam dei shuh hapoh jong nga, shim ia ka, ka dei hapoh ka kti jong phi.” (113)

[Dada, Dada! This woman does not obey the rules of the house, therefore she’s no longer under my supervision. Take her under your control.]

The moment Shondra became under the control of Dada, her life became a nightmare. She was beaten mercilessly with a whip until she cried out:

“Wow, la iap, wow la iap.” (114)
[Oh, I’m going to die, oh, I’m going to die.]

Crying for mercy but receiving none, Shondra fought to retain her purity. She was determined not to allow her body to be spoiled. For that she had to endure such agony and pain that her body was covered with cuts, welts and wounds. In the midst of such traumatic experiences she realized the full impact of her suffering:

“Ka pyrkhat ba kam pat ju shah sympat kumne hano hano ruh.” (115)
[She thought to herself that she had never been beaten so badly by anyone.]

Having plunged into deep despair, Shondra felt that heaven and earth had no help for her and she thought to die was the only solution for her.

Fortunately, Shondra was rescued from her predicament. After that she returned to Shillong. The moment she reached home she tried to contact her beloved Lambor but received no reply. To add insult to injury, Lambor’s father, Prophulo taunted her on her tainted reputation, having returned from a brothel. Her woes further continued when she lost her job as a school teacher. After the trauma of her abduction,

113. Ibid., p.145
114. Ibid., p.146
115. Ibid., p.147
Shondra had to face an even more painful experience for not only did she lose her job but her friends also avoided her. Prophulo hated her and continued to verbally abuse and to threaten her if she tried to contact or to have any relationship with his son.

One day Prophulo came to her place and ordered her to discontinue her relationship with Lambor at once. Shondra tried to explain to him about her innocence but Prophulo would not listen. He insisted:

"Phi mut ban pynjyrsich sa ia ka iiing jong nga bad ia u khun jong nga de? Phim iap noh balei? Da kum ma phi phin im khlem raïñ kat ha kane ka pyrthei."

[You intend to bring shame to my family and especially to my son? Why don't you die?
A person like you should not remain alive in this world.]

Shondra was totally heart-broken at hearing this. She felt that she had lost everything and every one. She had been very courageous at the hands of her tormentors in the brothel. She valued her honour and chastity as a woman and she was ready to sacrifice her life for the ideals she cherished so much. But she was not prepared for the humiliation and rejection she faced in society when she came back from that horrible place. The majority of the people in the society questioned her innocence and except for a few people, most of her acquaintances shunned her company. Even Lambor initially failed her because he thought that Shondra had willingly gone to join the brothel to earn easy money. But he had a change of heart when he learned from Shondra of what had actually transpired:

"Nga shah na ka bynta jong phi."

[I suffered because of you.]

116. Ibid., p.164
117. Ibid., 166

112
It was Lambor's lack of trust and his failure to support her that led her to her ultimate despair. With such feelings of hopelessness, Shondra decided to kill herself rather than to carry on living without hope and dignity. She committed suicide by jumping into the cold waters of Nanpolok. Before she did so, she wrote a final letter to Lambor and her last words to him were:

"Khublei ah jingim bad khublei ah jingphohsniew." (118)

[Good bye oh life and good bye oh dreams]

After receiving her letter, Lambor realized that Shondra was innocent and was willing to bear humiliation and physical torture for his sake. He decided to investigate the matter further from the police and the hospital to prove that Shondra was a virtuous woman and that she suffered because she kept her virtue. Her letter told Lambor of her decision to commit suicide, as she could no longer bear the harassment and the hatred of his father. This, and the news of her death pushed Lambor beyond the limits of his endurance. He then decided that life had no meaning without her and he also ended his life in the same way. Shondra suffered because of the evil of flesh trade and those willing to gain from such a heinous crime like Brinola and her associates. This was one of the causes of Shondra's suffering. She knew that people around her speculated and gossiped about her life in the brothel even though hers was an untainted and a pure life. A woman who held her principles very highly she did not want her name to be tagged with such a stigma in the society she lived in. The final straw, however, was Prophulo's harsh treatment after her release from a house of ill-fame in Bhutan. Shondra was a character whose life was shaped by an unkind fate. She was a tragic character driven by circumstances beyond her control.

As we examine this novel of W. Tiewsoh, we discover that the theme of suffering of the woman character also reflects the social evils that are taking roots in the society known for its basic tenet of 'tip-briew tip-blei'(literally, know man know God) which indicates a God-fearing society.

118. Ibid., p. 166
Another outstanding feature running parallel with the theme of suffering in this novel was the role of the father as the head of the family. When an unreasonable and vindictive father was given a place of total authority, the suffering of his family members became unavoidable. The author had incorporated in all three of his novels an aspect of male domination in households where a woman was compelled to bow down to the wishes of a man in authority. Does this view presented by the author apply to the status of women in Khasi society? As is generally known, a Khasi woman as a wife and a mother has a distinct status in her family and she need not always be subservient to her husband's will. This is because Khasi society is a matrilineal society where women have more freedom and liberty in making their choice in life than their counterparts in other communities in the country.

But the novelist hailing from Ri War region has given his own perception of a society in which women are made to suffer because of male domination and male ego. He also chooses to portray the vulnerability of women against the evil of the flesh trade and other social evils that are prevalent in modern Khasi society.


Donbok T. Laloo was another prominent Khasi writer who has contributed greatly to different branches of Khasi literature. His research on Khasi cultural beliefs and practices in particular were of great value in enriching Khasi language and literature. He has distinguished himself in his work of fiction through his novels and his collection of folktales. D.T. Laloo's *Ka Lasubon* has been selected for analysis in this study. This novel has earned the novelist two literary awards – The Annual Apphira Literary Award and the prestigious Meghalaya Government State Literary Award.\(^{(119)}\)

This novel deals with the mythical evil spirit *U Thlen* which pervades Khasi society by its fearful demand of human sacrifice and death. The novel depicts the ongoing struggle between traditional beliefs and the modern way of life in the present Khasi society. Against the background of such a struggle D.T. Laloo has creatively

\(^{(119)}\) Dakamon Mawroh, "Khasi Women As Depicted By Major Novelists And Dramatists, 1939-1989", 1990, p.40
portrayed the image of a suffering woman. Lasubon the main woman character, and other women characters such as Pherlibon and Lasubon’s mother were made to face horrible and dreadful experiences because of their encounter with U Thlen.

According to Khasi traditional belief, U Thlen was a kind of evil spirit or demon that some people kept and worshipped in order to gain wealth and prosperity. In this novel, the eerie and oppressive presence of U Thlen casts a gloomy atmosphere over the lives and activities of all the main characters. The act of propitiation to this evil spirit ultimately brought suffering to those connected with it. Before discussing the details of the novel let us first discuss the Khasi belief on U Thlen. Many writers and prominent thinkers have given their views on this destructive demon. G. Costa writes:

"U thlen hi u dei uwei napdeng ki kynja ksuid ba la khein hapdeng u khun Khasi kum uba lah ban ai phew ai spah da kaba kohnguh ia ka jingpan bad jingdawa jong u."

[‘U Thlen’ is considered by Khasis as an evil spirit believed to produce or generate wealth to those who obey and acquiesce to his demands.]

Similarly, H.O Mawrie also writes:

Uba shyrkhei tam na baroh ki phan ki kyrpad u dei u Thlen uba long ka jingtriem.

[The most ferocious of all evil spirits is ‘U Thlen’.]

D. T. Laloo in one of his treatises on the Khasi cultural aspect of Ka Ksaw Ka Kpong U Hynniew-Trep describes this demon as:

U Thlen u kylla long u Dusmon ia u laiphew jingthaw shikhrum ka bneng shityllup ka pyrthei.

120. G. Costa, Ka Riti Jong Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem, Bynta II, 1999, p.150
121. H.O. Mawrie, Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, 1979, p.23
122. D.T. Laloo, Ka Ksaw Ka Kpong U Hynniew-Trep, 1984, p.1
[“U Thlen’ became an enemy of all living creatures in the world.]

Thus, according to Khasi traditional belief U Thlen cult was practiced to amass wealth by sacrificing human lives. Those who rear ‘U Thlen’ always hire killers known as U Nongshohnoh. These dreaded killers would drink a special liquor called Ka Kiad Tam Sneng to give them a hallucinating effect, where people appear as helpless butterflies for the Nongshohnoh to murder. Stories abound that some families who reared U Thlen became rich overnight.

In this novel, Laloo shows how U Thlen brought fear, danger and death to the characters by its destructive, violent and evil disposition.

Lasubon, the main woman character in this novel came from a family who kept U Thlen. Though she belonged to such a family, she herself did not know anything about it. Only her mother knew about this and she always kept it a secret from her own daughter even until the time when Lasubon was grown up and ready to get married. Lasubon first met Rymphang when he was preparing for his Matric Examinations. The second time that they met was at a wedding at Lummawbah. After their second meeting, the couple fell in love with each other.

Rymphang came from a family who still practiced the Khasi traditional religion while Lasubon was a Christian. Yet, this did not stand in the way of their love.

Rymphang initially did not know anything about the presence of U Thlen in Lasubon’s family. Lasubon herself got the shock of her life when she learnt of this appalling information from the conversation that she heard between her mother and Prem. They were talking about the murder of Pherlibon and how they offered her blood to U Thlen. She heard Prem say to her mother:

“Mano ba shimti ia ka snam ba nga la pjiar ha tyndong japung?
Ym dei ma phi?” (123)

123. D.T. Laloo, Ka Lasubon, p.155
[Who received the blood that I had drained from her into the bamboo container? Was it not you?]

Lasubon trembled from head to toe with fearful panic and horror when she further heard Prem saying:

"Lada ka Lasubon kan shimti ia nga kum u tnga jong ka, ka niam ka rukom kan biang lut, ngin im suk im saiñ, ka spah ka hajar kan roi, ki khun ki kti kin roi, lait nangta, phi la duh jait namar kynthei briew phi ym lah pynbiang ia u Pa u Ñi jong phi."

[If Lasubon takes me as her husband, rights and rituals can be arranged for very smoothly. A happy life can be ensured with an increase in wealth and prosperity. Many children too will be born. Otherwise your clan will become extinct for a woman like yourself will not be able to appease this evil spirit.]

Lasubon was horrified to know that her mother was the keeper of U Thlen:

Napoh ba sngap siar, ka Lasubon ka kylla dur haba ka iohsngew ia ka jingiakren hapdeng u Prem bad ka kmie jong ka. Mynta ka sngewthuh shai ba ka kmie jong ka la dei shisha ka nongri thlen.

[Lasubon’s face changed when she overheard the conversation between Prem and her mother. Now she understood very clearly that her mother was a keeper of ‘U Thlen’.]

After Prem left her house Lasubon was filled with such dread that she started crying hopelessly. She, however, did not want her mother to know about her knowledge of the truth, so she simply told her that she was not feeling well. Lasubon’s

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124. Ibid., p.156
125. Ibid., p. 157
suffering was something that she never imagined could happen to her. This can be understood when the novelist states:

Ha kata ka sngi ka Lasubon ka sngewkhia baroh shirynieng.
Ka bam ka dih ruh kam bang satia hynrei kam pynpaw hano hano ruh; ka ap tang ban poi noh ka Wednesday khnang ba kan lah ban ia kynduh ia u Rymphang bad ban phla lut ha u baroh kat kiba ka tip; khnang ban pynsting ka jingmut jingpyrkhat. \(^{(126)}\)

[On that day, Lasubon felt the weight of heaviness pressing her down. She did not have any appetite for food but did not reveal her feelings to anyone. She just waited anxiously for Wednesday to come so that she could meet Rymphang and reveal to him all that had happened. She knew that that it will lighten the awful burden she was carrying.]

We see here that Lasubon was suffering deeply, mentally and psychologically, after hearing the truth about her mother and U Thlen.

Initially Lasubon was in a fix not knowing what she should do. She had already given herself to Rymphang in secret and now Prem wants her to be his wife. What would her friend Sunita say if she knew about it? All these thoughts kept torturing her. Because of the emotional and mental conflict within her, Lasubon suffered physically too. Most of the time she remained in bed and her health started to deteriorate and she could not even go to work regularly.

Turning back to the point on how U Thlen played an important role in causing Lasubon’s agony and misery, the reader is told of a time when she felt uneasy and helpless living in fear to the extent that she did not want to remain indoor in her own house. During such days, before she met Rymphang, she often requested her mother to move to some other house but her mother was unwilling to leave the house they were staying.

\(^{(126)}\) Ibid., p.172 & 173
About a year ago, she later told Rymphang, she often dreamt of snakes and serpents. She confided to him:

“Ha kawei ka taeiw lei lei, nga da iohi rngai ia u bseiŋ ba u wan jliah ia ki pohjat jong nga bad kaba phylla ka long ba ki pohjat jong nga ki rhem bad tyrha sah haduh ba nga da lynñiar kliang … Nangta sa khie i mei bad i sa wan rung ha ka kamra pdeng i duwai bad sa jah ka jingtyrha.” (127)

[Once, as if in a hallucination, I saw a snake licking my feet and to my surprise, my feet were burning as if they were on fire and I screamed aloud … Then my mother got up and went inside the middle room of the house and there she prayed for me. After that, the burning sensation on my feet disappeared.]

The novelist uses this episode to reflect on the traditional belief which, as H.O. Mawrie pointed out, U Thien sucked the life out of the keeper's family member if they fail to appease him with human sacrifice. Mawrie states:

“Une u dawa beit ia ka snam na kito kiba ri ba dub ia u bad kine ki dei ban pynbiang ia ka bad lada kim lah u trei kylla ia ki nyngkong da kaba pynlehraiŋ ia ki ha khmat ka pyrthei bad hadien kata da kaba shim ia ka jingim jong ki hi.” (128)

[This evil spirit demands human sacrifice. If those who rear him fail to meet his demands, first he shames them by appearing in different forms before people and after that, if they continue to fail to feed him with human sacrifice he turns on them and destroys any member in the family by killing them.]

Lasubon was therefore, slowly being destroyed by this evil spirit. She tried to find solace and comfort in the love of Rymphang but did not really understand the

127. Ibid., p.144
128. H.O. Mawrie, op. cit. p.123
danger she was in. Rymphang who still practiced traditional Khasi religion was immediately suspicious of the true state of affairs in Lasubon’s family. He was already aware of the significance of the closed and dark room in the middle of the house. When Lasubon recounted to him the incident where she saw the snake licking the soles of her feet, he understood at once that Lasubon’s mother was the keeper of U Thlen and that Lasubon would be the demon’s victim.

Rymphang loved Lasubon very dearly and he wanted to confess to his parents about his relationship with her. One Friday morning he took the opportunity to speak to his parents:

Dei ha kane ka step ba u Rymphang u phla ha ki ba u don jingmut ban leit sah noh ha iing ka Lasubon.  

[On this particular morning Rymphang told his parents that he had decided to go and stay at Lasubon’s house.]

Rymphang’s mother was not happy with the relationship marriage as she knew that Lasubon belonged to a family who kept U Thlen:

“Ka da kren shai kan ym suk lano lano ruh bad kan ym kyntiew iing satia ia ka.”

[She clearly showed her dislike of Lasubon and said that she would never accept her and would never allow her to set foot in her house.]

Rymphang’s father, on the other hand, gently advised his son to avoid Lasubon at all costs. But Rymphang did not listen to either of them, instead he took a decision to leave his home and to go and stay with Lasubon.

Meanwhile Lasubon’s suffering intensified because of her fearful dreams and nightmares. For a while she was given a glimmer of hope that with Rymphang’s help, she would be set free from the bondage of U Thlen. But circumstances did not allow
her to experience that deliverance. Instead she faced more horror and a worse shock when Prem came over to their house while Rymphang was away in his mission to free her from U Thlen. Prem came to their house to take revenge on Lasubon’s mother because the latter had tried to poison him. He locked Lasubon inside her bedroom and fought furiously with Lasubon’s mother. During the fight, Lasubon’s mother threw a log of burning wood at him out of the kitchen’s window. It accidentally fell on a place where Prem had sprayed petroleum and the whole house caught on fire. From the bedroom, Lasubon could hear the noise in the kitchen but she was helpless to do anything. With all her might she cried for help but no one could hear them because their house was quite isolated. Still Lasubon screamed:

“Mei ... Mei ... Rymphang ... Wow ... Rap ...” (131)

[Mother ... Mother ... Rymphang ... oh ... Help ...]

Her cries for help were all in vain. The fire kept on burning and the flames of the smoke overwhelmed Lasubon. As the smoke entered her lungs, she fell down on the ground unconscious and she eventually died. Lasubon suffered throughout her life and finally lost her life because of U Thlen that her mother made a part of their lives.

Lasubon’s mother also did not escape a life of pain and suffering. Her suffering as a mother started when Lasubon was licked by U Thlen while she was sleeping. She knew that her daughter would be the main target of U Thlen if she could not satisfy him by offering human life.

She was already in a quandary because her hired Nongshohnoh, Prem, was making unreasonable demands on her. He became the main obstacle in her life. He knew the dreadful secret of the family since the time when Lasubon’s father was alive. He threatened and blackmailed Lasubon’s mother every now and then. He wanted to marry Lasubon and he gave her this ultimatum:

“Phan khroh ia ka Lasubon ba kan pdiang ia nga, lym kumta pha la tip hi ia nga.” (132)

131. Ibid., p.211
132. Ibid., p.157
[You must convince Lasubon to accept me as her husband; otherwise you will see what I will do to you.]

Lasubon’s mother was greatly distressed at the fate that awaited her daughter. She knew that Lasubon was in love with Rymphang and she did not want Prem as her son-in-law for he already had two wives in the past. On the other hand the secret that she had been hiding from her daughter about U Thlen left her in Prem’s mercy. With whom could she discuss her problem? No one was there for her except Prem who knew her secret and who was bent on torturing her.

Prem threatened Lasubon’s mother that he would expose her secret to Rymphang who, he felt, would no longer wish to marry Lasubon once he knew about U Thlen. Prem shouted to Lasubon’s mother angrily:

“Pha tharai u Rymphang un treh ia ka khun jong pha lada nga iathuh ba pha dei ka nongri thlen? "^{133}"

[Do you think Rymphang would still want to marry your daughter if I tell him that you are a keeper of ‘U Thlen’?]

Lasubon’s mother was tormented by Prem’s threat for she deeply loved her daughter. She could not give up U Thlen so she tried to kill off Prem by poisoning him. Unfortunately, Prem survived the poison and came in a fury to her house for revenge. This led to an incident in which she suffered a horrific death by burning when the whole house caught fire. Before that she had to go through a terrible experience of being throttled by Prem in the kitchen. She could not fight against him as he forced poison down her throat to pay her back for trying to kill him. The novelist explains this episode as follows:

U khñiot ia ka haduh ba u ioh ban pyndih lut ia ka bih bad u pasngoh ia ka khlieh jong ka ha lyntang haduh ba kan da iapler jar. {^{134}}

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133. Ibid., p.157
134. Ibid., p.210
[He throttled her till he could force the poison down her
throat and then he banged her head on the floor till she
lost consciousness.]

It was terrible to think how much pain and horror Lasubon’s mother suffered, all because of U Thlen and her lust for wealth.

D.T. Laloo portrays another minor woman character in his novel, Pherlibon, who also went through much suffering in her life till her death that was indirectly caused by the evil Thlen. Pherlibon, actually had a crush on Rymphang, her younger brother’s friend and classmate since the time he was in high school. Unfortunately for her, Rymphang did not reciprocate her feelings. This somewhat upset her and in desperation she turned to Prem and eloped with him, leaving a letter at home so that her family members would be able to trace her whereabouts. She went along with Prem to Beadon’s falls, a deserted place far away from her home. She gave herself to Prem on that day, and then both of them drank poison in a pact to kill themselves. When Rymphang and her brother Juban found her, she could utter only these few words:

“La phon u Prem ... La phon u Prem.”

[Prem has deceived me ... Prem has deceived me.]

Pherlibon at this stage was in great pain because the poison that she had consumed affected her whole body. She was very weak and fragile at that moment and could not utter coherent sentences to tell them what had actually happened to her. Nevertheless, Rymphang understood that she had drunk some poison so he thrust his fingers into her mouth causing her to vomit. After she had regained consciousness, she started repeating again what she had said:

“Wow la shet u Prem ... Shano i mei ...”

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135. Ibid., p.59
136. Ibid., p.61
[Oh Prem has betrayed me ... where is my mother ... ?]  

Besides the physical pain caused by the poison, Pherlibon was broken-hearted when she found that her lover had betrayed her.

Years later, Rymphang met Juban at a tea shop. Out of politeness, Rymphang enquired Juban about his sister Pherlibon. With a good deal of hesitation, Juban told Rymphang about Pherlibon's unhappy life. He said:

"Ngam tip ia ka jingshem jynjar i Thei ka dei na ka daw ba i tam sneng ia i mei i pa ne balei. Teng teng i ju wan sha iing bad i ju iam." \(^{137}\)

[I do not know why my sister was so unhappy. Could it be because she had disobeyed our Parents? Whenever she came home, she would always cry.]

Juban, then told Rymphang about the tragic end of Pherlibon when he said:

"Ha u snem 1973 u kynum Prem u wan wad ia i sha iing jong ngi, u ong i jah na iing, Kumta ngi ia wad ia i ar sngi lynter bad ha ka sngi kaba lai ngi sa lap ia ka met iap jong i." \(^{138}\)

[In 1973 my brother in law Prem came looking for her telling us that she had disappeared from home. After searching for two days we found her dead body on the third day.]

With a heavy heart, Juban told him that at first they all thought that it was a murder case but the police could not find the culprit. Later on, Pherlibon's parents suspected her husband to be the murderer. They also suspected the involvement of

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137. Ibid., p.97  
138. Ibid., p.98
Lasubon’s father in this matter. He told him about the suffering and the torture Pherlibon must have faced before she died:

“Ym don dak ei ei ruh em lait tang ka dak syngit na pdot bad ki thliew khmut jong i ki mong lang snam khyndiat i kumba la sam da ei da ei.” (139)

[There was no mark at all on her body except a bruise on her throat which suggested that something was used to strangle her. Her nostrils were punctured and stained with blood. They appeared to have been pierced by something sharp.]

Poor Pherlibon suffered great physical pain before she died. Even when she was alive she suffered physical abuse at the hands of her husband Prem. She died, a victim of sacrifice to U Thlen through the inhuman act of Prem and Lasubon’s parents.

D.T. Laloo in this novel, has been able to portray the suffering of his women characters physically, mentally and psychologically. Ultimately, all three characters died a tragic death because of evil and greed, of the lust for easy and ill-gotten wealth, and all because of by the obnoxious creature U Thlen.


A prominent Khasi novelist in the later part of the twentieth century was H.W. Sten. His novel Ka Samla Nongkyndong (1981) is taken for analysis here. This was a transcreated work from the Book of Ruth of the Old Testament in the Holy Bible. The story of Ruth a Moabite was simple and short which consists of only 14 (fourteen) chapters and 85 (eighty five) verses. (140)

One of the means authors have used in enriching Khasi Literature in the past is by transcreating stories that are already in existence. As a transcreator, H.W. Sten in

139. Ibid., p.100
140. Spirit Filled Life Bible, 1991, p.388
his novel *Ka Samla Nongkyndong* tried to maintain the highlights of the story as they are presented in the Bible. He emphasizes this point when he said:

"U nongsaindu thymmai u la dei ban pyndap pynbiang ia kaba u iohi ba la shu ai ksai ha ka jingiathuh–khana ba la don lypa." (141)

[A transcreator has to enlarge what has already been created and to elaborate what the original story depicts.]

The setting chosen by the novelist are locations in Moab and Israel as has been depicted in the Bible. All the incidents in his novel took place in Moab and in Bethlehem-Judah. The novel has 17 (seventeen) chapters in all. H.W. Sten, in this novel has focused deeply on the theme of suffering which resulted from the death of loved ones in a family. Naomi and Ruth are the predominant women characters in this novel.

The story starts with Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chillion leaving their country and settling in Moab after a famine struck Bethlehem–Judah. The Bible says:

Te ha kita ki sngi mynba ki nongbishar ki dang bishar, la don ka nemsniew ha kata ka ri. Bad uwei u briew uba na Bethlehem–Judah u la leit shong sha ka ri Moab, ma u, bad ka tnga jong u, bad ki khun shynrang jong u arngut." (142)

[Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.]

142. Ka Kitab Ka Ruth, Lynnong 1:1, *Ka Baibl Khasi*
Naomi tasted much bitter suffering and grief when her husband Elimelech died in a foreign land. Her daughter-in-law Ruth was greatly concerned on seeing Naomi’s looks, she observed:

“Nga iohi ba ka jingkhuslai ka la pynnag ia ki khmat jong phi, bad ka la pynieng ia ki reng ngab jong phi.” (143)

[I can see that anxiety has darkened your eyes and deepened the grooves in your cheek bones.]

Naomi, as a widow, bore a heavy pain in her heart, but she professed that her spirit was strong for the sake of her sons:

“Ban klet te ka eh shisha, hynrei ban pyniaw mynsiem te nga lah.” (144)

[To forget is no doubt very hard but I can still strive to be strong.]

The scars of Naomi’s pain and sorrow could never be erased after she lost her beloved husband.

Nevertheless, Mahlon’s marriage to Ruth was a comfort to Naomi as Ruth was a very caring young woman who shared both the sorrow and happiness of the family. She was also a great help in the house. The author states:

“Ka ihun, bad ka la sdang phyrnai ka khmat ruh. Ka iing jong ki ka iphuh iphieng biang da ka jingminot bad jingtipsngi ki khun baroh arngut.” (145)

[Naomi was happy with Ruth and her face started

143. Ibid, Lynnong 1:3, Ka Baibl Khasi.
144. H.W. Sten, Ka Samla Nongkyndong, p.7
145. Ibid, p.7
The dark cloud of grief and sorrow started moving away from Naomi. As a mother she was concerned with the well-being of her sons. Chillion had also reached the age considered right for marriage. Mahlon expressed his mother’s wish to his brother as follows:

“Ka dei me hep, to leh noh hi kumta, da pyrkhat keiñ haba i mei la kwah pyrsa.” (146)

[It is time brother for you to get married. You have to consider this especially since it is what mother wishes.]

Once again the house of Naomi started humming with life because of her two daughters-in-law, who were loving and obedient to her. But Naomi’s joy did not last long. Her anxiety returned when Mahlon fell sick and his health started deteriorating day by day. Her guilt in matters relating to her son’s illness can be understood by the words she spoke to herself:

“Imat dei namar ba nga leh khuslai eh ba leit long kumne sa ia u khun jong nga! U la ngiah ia nga imat, hynrei um kren, bad mynta ka jingsnegew ka la trei kam kylla ia u khun jong nga bapli.” (147)

[Perhaps it was my sorrow that has affected my son this way! I think he is fed up with me, but he does not say a word. Now this has brought my poor son’s health down.]

Through these words we can see that as a loving mother, Naomi could not help but feel guilty about the reason of her beloved son’s ill health.

146. Ibid., p.7
147. Ibid., p.11
As the novel progresses, the novelist shows that Mahlon’s health further deteriorated and he started having hallucinations about his father. This struck great fear in his mother’s heart:

“I pa te? I khot ia nga man ka miet, i dang khot ia nga sha iing!” (148)

[It’s my father! He keeps calling me every night, he is calling me home!]

Such words became unbearable for Naomi as she watched her son struggling for life. When he eventually passed away, she had to accept the harsh reality of the loss of her beloved first-born child:

“U moina um don shuh” (149)

[He is no more.]

Naomi once again had to taste the bitter and heart-breaking loss and tears rolled helplessly down her aged cheeks. She felt that her grief was beyond what she could bear.

Her younger son, Chillion tried to shoulder the heavy responsibility left by his father and his elder brother. But after a while Chillion too fell sick and his health worsened day by day and tragically within three months and a week after Mahlon’s death, Chillion also died.

Nomi’s cup of grief and suffering brimmed over and she cried out in despair:

“Nga long ka Marah mynta, namar ba u Trai u ieng pyrshah ia nga. Nga la duh la u tngia! Nga la duh ruh ia la ki khun ba nga la kha bad pynsan!” (150)

[I am Marah now, God has stood against me. I lost my...
husband! and now I have lost my children whom I have
brought into this world and whom I nurtured in love.]

In spite of her grief and bitterness, Naomi was concerned about the welfare of
her daughters-in-law. She wanted them to remarry so that they would bear children to
look and care for them:

"Ngam kwah ba phin sah lyngki haduh ban da tymmen.
Nga kwah ba phin shong kurim noh, ba phin don la u
nongsumar." (151)

[I do not want you to remain single till you grow old.
I want you to get married and have somebody to care
for you.]

Naomi’s despair and bitterness did not make her lose faith in her Creator. She
still believed that she would one day meet with him when it is time for her to leave her
earthly home. Thus Naomi exclaimed:

"Khie ialeit noh sha la iing sha la ki kmie ki kpa. Ma nga,
ka Marah, ngan iaid wir kum ka Hagar bad ngan iakynduh
ia u Jehovah mar khat mat haba u sngew dei ban lap ia
nga. Khie ialeit noh, wat pynsepei ialade bad nga!" (152)

[Go back to your father and mother. I Marah will wander
the earth like Hagar until such time that I meet Jehovah
whenever He feels it is time to call me. Go away and do
not waste your time with me.]

Naomi’s bitterness was caused by her grief and her sorrow at the tragic loss of
her sons. She could no longer accept her name ‘Naomi’ which means “pleasant,
delightful, lovely.” (153) She wanted to be called ‘Marah’ which means “The bitterness

151. Ibid., p.36
152. Ibid., p.48
153. Ibid., p.44
of her plight”. Along with her husband Elimelech and her two sons, Mahlon and Chillion she fled Bethlehem-Judah to Moab in order to escape from a famine, but in Moab she faced greater agony when all the members of her family died one after another, leaving her in despair. Living through such a dark and gloomy time, she felt that her name should be changed. The tragic events which followed one after another brought intense pain and suffering to Naomi.

The novelist also depicted Ruth, another woman character, who suffered because of the early loss of her husband. The story relates that Ruth, a Moabite girl married Mahlon, a Jew. There was some opposition to their marriage since Ruth was a Moabite and not a Jew. In spite of that, Ruth found happiness and love in Mahlon. He also reciprocated her feelings for him and before leaving her house, he expressed his hope for their future together:

"Kane ka jingia poikha jong ngi ka long tang ka jingsdang jong kiei kiei ki ban jia." (155)

[This marriage of ours is just the beginning of better things to come.]

Ruth was full of joy and happiness at Mahlon’s promise and with confidence she decided that she would follow her beloved Mahlon wherever he decided to take her. As with most happy couples, their dreams did come true for a short while. However, things took a turn for the worse when her husband fell sick. He tried to comfort Ruth in her distress even when he was in a critical condition. He said:

"Ruth baieit jong nga ! phin ym shah shitom shibun eh. Phin sa lah ban kyrsahn ialade, la kumno kumno tat haduh ba uwei pat u brieve un iohi ia ka dor bad jinglong ba bha jong phi." (156)

154. Ibid., p.48 & 49
155. op. cit., p.388
156. Ibid., p.389
[My darling Ruth! You will not have to suffer for long. You will be able to support yourself until such time you meet another man who would appreciate your integrity and your noble character.]

Mahlon’s words were too hard for Ruth to bear for she did love him very dearly. She sensed that she might lose her husband and with deep sadness, she mournfully asked him:

“Phin iehnoh ia kane ba samla ba phi la jied kynsai.”

[Are you going to leave the bride whom you have chosen?]

Ruth spoke these words to will her husband to fight for his life. But Mahlon already flitting in and out of consciousness replied:

“I pa te? I khot ia nga man ka miet, i dang khot ia nga sha iing!”

[My father! He keeps calling me every night, he is calling me home!]

Ruth, a young wife simply could not accept Mahlon’s words for they were too much for her to bear. As she watched her beloved husband in his sick bed, she could feel the palpitation of her heart because of her fear at what would eventually happen. A cold wind blew over her and dark cloud overshadowed her life and she could not think nor hope of anything any more.

It was not long that Mahlon passed away, leaving his mother, brother and his young wife Ruth behind. A tender and lovable young woman, far away from her parents, her grief was too much for her and in great despair she cried out:

157. op. cit., p.26
158. Ibid., p.26
"MAHLON ! Mahlon ! Phi la ieh ia nga mo Mahlon ?" (159)

[MAHLON ! Mahlon ! How could you leave me Mahlon ?]

After Mahlon’s death, Ruth was filled with deep trepidations about her future. She was faced with a very difficult decision – whether to go back to her own people and remarry or to stay back with Naomi, her beloved mother-in-law. She thought long and hard on her future course of action:

"Kumno ngan leh mynta ?" (160)

[What shall I do now ?]

Amidst great bitterness and grief, with questions cropping up in her mind whether to return back to her family or not, Ruth was advised by her mother-in-law to try to find happiness somewhere else again:

"Khun, kan bha ia phi ban leit phai noh sha la u kpa. Phi dang don ki sngi ban kha khun. Balei phin shah kjap ha ka khuslai bad ha ki bniat banep ki jingpyrkhat kum nga. Ynda la kut kane ka tai ew ngan leit aiti ia phi sha la u kpa." (161)

[My daughter, it will be better for you to return back to your father. You are still young and you can still start a family. Why should you waste your life in sorrow and grief like me? I will take you back to your father at the end of this week.]

When Ruth heard Naomi’s word she was struck with even more sorrow and grief because she had grown to love her mother-in-law very deeply. A woman with strength of character and one with principles, Ruth decided what would be the next course of action in her life:

159. Ibid., p.34
160. Ibid., p.35
161. Ibid., p.35
“Kat shaba phin leit, nga ruh ngan leit; kat shaba phin poi, nga ruh; kat haba phin sah, hangta nga ruh ngan sah. Ki kher ki mer jong phi, kin long ki jong nga ruh; bad U Blei jong phi un long u jong nga ruh.” (162)

[Wherever you go, I will also go; wherever you wander, so will I too. Wherever you choose to settle down, I will be there with you. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.]

Ruth, a strong-willed and faithful woman, refused to let her trials press her down. She decided to take matters into her own hands and to start living again:

“La nga shimet te nga la rai ban law noh ia kine ki jaiñ baiong. La i kum ki tyngab khlem thapniang harud duriaw Galilee. Ngan trei ngan ktah noh.” (163)

[Personally I have decided to take off these black clothes. We look like featherless crows crowding around the sea of Galilee. From now onwards I will start working.]

Ruth realized the need to do something for it was difficult for Naomi to survive in Maob. She expressed these thoughts to her sister-in-law, Orpah:

“Ym don nongkamai bam shuh! kan long ka basangot ban im ia ngi hangne.” (164)

[We do not have any breadwinner in our family! It will be tragic for us to continue to live here.]

With such crushing worries, she repeatedly voiced her anxiety to Orpah:

162. Ibid., p.70
163. Ibid., p.37
164. Ibid., p.40
“Nga la kulmar jingmut mynta. Yn ialeh noh kumno kumno ruh ngam sngew nang shuh.” (165)

[I am confused now, I simply do not know what we should do.]

It was always said that suffering brings out the best or the worst in human beings. Though having been widowed at such a tender age, yet Ruth emerged as a noble, caring and loving young woman who put others before her own happiness. This can be clearly seen when she became deeply concerned about the state of mind of her mother-in-law. She confided to Orpah:

“Khlem pep ka jingmong ka dohnud i kiaw ka la long lai shah ia ki jingmong jong ngi. Lada ngi ieh ia i marwei ha iing, in ym lah ban shah ia ka jingblaw. Im don paralok shuh ban iakit lem ia ka jingkhia ka shadem.” (166)

[Surely, the pain in my mother-in-law’s heart is three times more than ours. If we leave her alone at home, she will not be able to bear her loneliness. She does not have any friend to share the burdens of her sorrow.]

When Naomi decided to send her daughters-in-law back to their respective families, Ruth was not willing to obey her. She knew that Naomi wanted them to start a new life but she knew that she would rather continue to live with her mother-in-law. Putting her grief aside she tried to console and encourage Naomi:

“Lada phi ai lad ba ka jingpyrkhat khuslai ba kan kjap ia phi, kan leh shisha kumta. Para kynthei, ngi don kajuh ka jingsngew: ngi hap ha kajuh ka apot. Hynrei lada phi ngeit ba la leh ia kiei kiei da u Jehovah, balei ngin

165. Ibid., p.40
166. Ibid., p.40
ym kloi ban pdiang ia kata? Shisha, ym ju lah ban klet ia kaba la mad."

[If you allow worry and anxiety to destroy you, they will certainly do so. As women, we feel the same and we share the same fate. But if we believe that this is the will of Jehovah, should we not accept it as our lot in life? Of course we can never forget what we have been through.]

Ruth, the Moabite, had accepted her husband’s religion and she therefore accepted the will of Jehovah God the Creator in her life.

Ruth no doubt was heart-broken and grieved. She had followed her husband and left her parents behind, but there she was – a young widow who had lost her beloved husband after a very short time. But her self-sacrificing love and concern for Naomi made her reach out to Naomi whom she felt had suffered an even greater loss than her own. She said to Naomi:

"Ka por kan pynkhiah ia ki jingmong dohnud jong ngi baroh; ka suin bneng kan sa phyrnai biang."(168)

[Time will heal our wounds; a bright shining sky will dawn again.]

Though worries continued to oppress her, she did not allow them to spoil her life. She strongly believed that the wounds of her heart would one day disappear if she continued to accept anything that came her way according to God’s will.

As in the Bible, Naomi went back to her country and found it famine-free and prosperous once again. Ruth, as she had decided firmly, followed her mother-in-law to Bethlehem. Not long after she was in Bethlehem, Ruth went to glean the left-over wheat during harvest time in the field of a rich man named Boaz. This kind and godly

167. Ibid., p.37
168. Ibid., p.49
man asked his servants about the young woman for she was strange to him and learnt that her name was Ruth and that she was a Moabite woman. Ruth later met Boaz and requested him to allow her to glean and gather after the reapers. Boaz not only allowed her to do so but promised Ruth that she would be protected from rude remarks or any harmful action towards her. His kindness and gracious generosity was a balm to her aching heart, particularly after she had faced so much suffering and hardship.

Later Boaz invited Ruth to share his meal. He also directed his young men to allow Ruth to garner far more than she could have otherwise done so. In this way, Ruth was able to provide food for her beloved mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi was then grateful to God, recognizing the fact that He is responsible for such blessings and provisions. What was particularly highlighted in the novel was Ruth’s complete submission and obedience to Naomi’s advice.

There is no doubt that Ruth suffered immensely at the early loss of her husband, Mahlon. Yet, her faithfulness and loyalty towards her mother-in-law and her faith in God led her to find happiness once again in the later part of her life. In fact Ruth’s and Naomi’s lives did not end in suffering but they were able to experience happiness and prosperity once again. When Naomi learnt that Boaz was Elimelech’s kinsman, she encouraged Ruth to get close to him. In doing so she opened the way for Boaz to redeem his dead kinsman’s widow, Ruth.

At the end of the novel, Ruth remarried again to Boaz and had a son named Obed. Obed became the father of Jesse and Jesse was the father of David, the greatest king of Israel. As depicted in the Bible, David ruled over the undivided kingdom of Israel and was said to be a man after God’s own heart. He led a life of exceptional valour and exemplary courage and was able to defeat Goliath and other enemies of Israel.

Later on, in the New Testament of the Bible, it is recorded that Jesus Christ the Messiah was born in the house of Joseph the carpenter, whose lineage could be traced back to Ruth and Boaz.
On analysing the text of *Ka Samla Nongkyndong* which was a story transcreated from the Bible, it is found that H.W. Sten uses death as a tool that brought so much bitterness and suffering to his women characters.

### 4.5 An analysis of K. K. Kharlukhi's *Ka Melody* (1989)

Khraw Kupar Kharlukhi was one of the abler novelists who has made an important contribution in the field of Khasi novel. In his novel *Ka Melody* (1989), Kharlukhi’s main character, Melody was made to suffer physically because a relative wrongly administered medicine in her eyes which caused her permanent blindness. That experience itself was such a horrific and traumatic one that this woman had to undergo before encountering other painful experiences in her life. Already physically challenged, Melody faced certain prejudices directed against handicapped people in a society where many appreciated only the superficial and materialistic comforts of life.

Melody, an only child in the family lost her eye-sight during her teens. Her mother died during her childhood and her father an I.A.S. officer worked at New Delhi leaving Melody under the loving care of her maternal aunt. Though Melody’s father did not stay with her, yet he loved and cared for her. Before his remarriage, her father visited her regularly:

“U ju wan peit wan jngoh ia la ka khun ar ne lai sien shisnem.” (169)

[He used to visit her twice or thrice in a year.]

His visits gradually became less frequent after his marriage to another woman. Yet his love and affection were seen by the way he sent garments, gifts and money and also his letters to his daughter and to her aunt’s husband (Pasan). During her childhood, Melody’s life was full of joy, laughter, gaiety and happiness. After passing her Pre-University Examinations, her life changed when she suddenly became blind.

The story of the novel begins with the journey of Melody along with her relatives to Damsite and it was also on this fine day that Kitlang, a young man from...  

169. K. K. Kharlukhi, *Ka Melody*, p.29

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Jaiaw took his nieces and nephews for a drive to Damsite. Kitlang first saw Melody at ‘Ryndang Briew’. Later on, they met each other on the bank of the reservoir.

Melody was a very pretty and charming girl. Kitlang compared her beauty to that of a fairy. He draws her beauty in graphic details and sum it up as follows:

Nga iohi ia ka dur khmat kaba jemnud bad bai lui-lui. 
Ki ngab jong ka kiba lumphuin, ki rymmiang shyntur kiba saw syng-yiang bad ryum bha bad ka tmoh kaba wan dur bha kynjwoin. U shniuh jong ka pat u lam kdoor bad u phuh phum-phum kum thuia. Ka sniehdoh jong ka, ka shai bad plih la kumba julai da ki kti kiba pnah bha. Ka deng ki iitkhmat kiba ioni klain-klain bad kiba kah ia ki briew khmat jong ka. *(170)*

[I see an innocent and gentle face with glowing cheeks, soft rosy lips and a well-shaped chin. Her thick hair is curly and falls softly on her shoulders. Her complexion is fair and clear as if it has been moulded by an expert masseuse. She wears dark sun-glasses which hide her eyes.]

Melody’s beauty struck little Mimi, Kitlang’s niece very deeply and she expressed this to her grandmother.

"leit ... leit, ngi iakynduh ia kawei ka paralok i maduh kaba bhabriew bha." *(171)*

[Grandma ... Grandma, we met Maduh’s friend, a lady who is extremely beautiful.]

Melody lived in a modern society, yet her life was different from those around her for she lived in an isolated world of her own. Despite her handicap, she

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170. Ibid., p.6
171. Ibid., p.23
was represented as an ideal woman able to retain the good in life in contrast to that which was evil.

Firstly, Melody deeply appreciated nature. Though she could no longer see with her physical eyes, yet she enjoyed the beauty of nature and its surroundings. She could easily locate and identify the sweetness of the herbs, ferns and creepers growing in ‘Khwan’ through her extra sensory perception. Kitlang was surprised at her extraordinary ability, when she said:

“Kit, ki don ki tiew tyrkhang hajan hangne lada ngam bakla. Sngewbha seh pynkheit lem shi kham.” (172)

[Kit, there are some ferns near here if I’m not mistaken. Please pluck some of them for me.]

She even pointed her fingers to an exact place where these ferns grew which she then offered to his nieces and nephews. Like so many who were physically challenged, her perception of human nature and human values was very strong and well-defined. She expresses her sorrow at people’s negative attitudes towards life and relationship. She said to Kitlang:


[There are so many nowadays who are full of sorrow and anxiety. They are busy with this materialistic world – they get intoxicated with wealth and power.]

172. Ibid., p.17
173. Ibid., p.6
They are full of envy and jealousy. When they wake up in the morning they cannot sing nor whistle because of their filthy thoughts. They feel offended easily and are suspicious of everyone. They have no love for their fellowmen and trust no friends.

Thus, Melody was a very thoughtful and perceptive woman, discerning very clearly the true value of life.

Melody was also depicted as a very intelligent and sensitive woman. Kitlang was shocked to find that she was more intelligent and in many ways more capable than any normal person. Melody was also a good conversationalist. Bravely accepting her own fate and destiny, she said to Kitlang:

"Phim dei ban khuslai na ka bynta jong nga naduh ba nga dang khie samla ka rta nga la im hapdeng ka jingdum bad mynta nga la myllen bad ka. Kam long shuh u mawjynthut ia nga. Nga bit nga biang ka jingim bad nga suk kynjai ka mynsiem. Hooid ngam lah shuh ban shim bynta ha ka jingsuk jingkmen samla, ha ki jingialehkai ne jingsngewbha kumba long lem ma phi baroh."^{174}

[You need not worry about me. I have lived in total darkness since I was young that I am used to it. It is no longer a problem for me. I am quite happy and contented with my lot in life, though, of course, I can no longer take part in youthful enjoyment like sports and other entertainments in the way other young people did.]

Though living in a lonely world deprived of recreation and enjoyments like other young people, she was at peace with herself and with her life. She said:

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174. Ibid., p.12
"Nga hab ban len noh shibun kiei kiei hynrei ha kane ka por, nga nud ban ong ba ka jingsuk ka shlei ha nga kumba long ha phi ne wat kham palat ruh." \(^{(175)}\)

[I have had to lose many things but I am bold to say that peace fills my heart as it does in you or may be even much more than it does in you.]

Kitlang’s first meeting with such a beautiful, captivating woman made him fall in love with her at first sight. He offered her his friendship, something which touched her immensely but which made her apprehensive. She warned him against this as she felt that she would be just a burden to him:

"Kumno phi u rangkynsai phin la ban ialong lok bad ka briew kaba kum ma nga. Ngam don eiei ban tyrwa bad ngan long pynban ka jingkit ia phi." \(^{(176)}\)

[How could a young man like you befriend a woman like me? I have nothing to offer you in return and I will be just a burden to you.]

Understanding her own position in life whose dark world was vastly different from that of other human-beings, she tried to dissuade Kitlang from befriending her.

Though Kitlang knew that she was blind, yet he could not suppress his love for her. He decided that he would be loyal and faithful to her come what may and promised her that he would never leave her. With full confidence he said to her:

"Kheiñ ba nga dei u paralok jong phi la ha ka sngewbha ne ha ka shipa naduh kane ka khyllipmat." \(^{(177)}\)

[Count me as your friend whether in times of joy or sorrow from this moment onwards.]

175. Ibid., p.12
176. Ibid., p.13
177. Ibid., p.14
As days passed by Kitlang felt very close to Melody, but he had to face some obstacles when he told his family about her. Melody, being a handicapped woman, was not acceptable as his prospective bride to Kitlang’s relatives. His mother was very harsh in showing her dislike of Melody:

“To ialeh katba me sngewbit shato. Ban ieit eh ia kaba matlah te, ym ong phi. Kumno men ia seng ia ka iing ka sem? Me pyrkhat kumno kan long ia ki khun ki kti lashai hadien habud. Mano ban ri ban sumar ia ki khamtam lei lei haba ia pang ia shitom? Watju iakren lamwir shane ba nga sngew khñing pynban.” (178)

[Do whatever you feel like. To love a blind woman is unthinkable. How will you start a family? What would happen to your children in days to come? Who will take care of them when they fall sick? Do not speak like a mad man for I do not want to listen to such rubbish.]

Prejudice against a handicapped woman was not only expressed by Kitlang’s mother but it came from his maternal uncle and even his own sister who showed her dislike of Melody:

“Kumno phi poi ia ieit bad ka briew kaba matlah.” (179)

[How did you fall in love with a blind woman?]

But these words did not quench his love nor his desire to marry Melody.

Melody despite her blindness was ready to fight for survival like normal people. In brief, Melody utilized her talent to the full – she planted flowers in the garden, she knew how to knit and she even contributes these to handicapped children who lived in a Home ran by missionary sisters. In fact her efforts became the sole inspiration and encouragement to these poor handicapped children. Besides these

178. Ibid., p.58
179. Ibid., p.58
achievements she also kept her house neat and clean and could even cook. These achievements amazed Kitlang and made him love her even more. He found her prettier and more beautiful by the day. One fine evening when he went to meet her he saw that she was busy knitting in the verandah of her place. Her beautiful and well-shaped figure filled Kitlang with compassion, love and pride.

Melody thought that Kitlang’s proposal of friendship was a result of pity for her blindness and she therefore begged him not to misunderstand her refusal to be his friend by saying:

“Nga tieng ioh phi sngewthuh bakla. Ngam shym khrong ne pan ia ka jinglong lok na phi ioh phi ong kumta.” (180)

[I am worried lest you misunderstand me. I am not begging for your friendship lest you should think so.]

Kitlang refused to give her up. Instead he was determined to help her. He tried to find out ways and means to cure her blindness. He wrote a letter to Karlan’s youngest aunt who was a nurse at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences at Delhi explaining to her about Melody’s condition. Within a very short period, Melody’s uncle received a letter from Melody’s father who approved of Kitlang’s relationship with his daughter. Not long after that Melody’s father died leaving behind a will that his eyes should be donated to his daughter. Mr. Dring, Melody’s uncle requested Kitlang to accompany Melody to Delhi for her treatment and Kitlang readily accepted the offer. But fate and destiny prevented Melody from fulfilling the last will bestowed on her by her father.

As the preparation was going on for her trip to Delhi for treatment, Melody’s heart was full of joy because of what this meant to her beloved Kitlang. She realized her own position as a blind woman and she did not want Kitlang whom she deeply loved with all her heart to suffer for her sake.

180. Ibid., p.13
Before leaving for Delhi, Kitlang and Melody went out for a drive and met Kiki, a frustrated woman desperately in love with Kitlang. Finding the two sitting together and knowing that Kitlang was in love with Melody, Kiki took out a knife and tried to kill him. Melody in trying to save Kitlang from being killed by Kiki, put herself in front of him where the knife was plunged into her heart and she was killed. Thus ended the life of an amazing woman who had suffered so much pain and sorrow.

Another woman character depicted by Kharlukhi in this novel was Kiki. She came from a rich family and was Kitlang's neighbour. Their friendship began from their childhood days and continued till their teens. However, Kitlang had no special feelings for her apart from friendship but Kiki's feelings for Kitlang were much more than just friendship. She was attracted to him and wanted to have a deeper relationship with him. Kitlang confessed to his maternal uncle:

"Ka Kiki ka dei tang ka paralok bad ka marjan". (181)

[Kiki is only a friend and a neighbour.]

Kiki suffered intensely when Kitlang, a man whom she loved, showed no interest in having her as a girlfriend. She simply could not bear Kitlang's love for Melody.

By nature Kiki was an obsessive woman and could not accept defeat from anyone. She tried her best to spoil Kitlang's relationship with Melody by setting a trap for him. When Kiki met with a minor car accident, she was slightly injured. She said to Kitlang:

"Nga sngew shitom te!" (182)

[I do not feel well.]

Kitlang did not show much interest in her complaint. Kiki was greatly distressed when Kitlang rejected her love for him. She threatened to take revenge on Kitlang for his rejection of her love:

181. Ibid., p.55
182. Ibid., p.51
“Kynmaw bha Kit, ngan ym klet ia kane. Mynno mynno ngam pat ju shah niewbei kum ha kane mynta. Kan sa poi ka por ba ngan sa ioh ia ka kput. Kynmaw Kit! kynmaw bha ia phi bad ia kato ka Melody jong phi.” (183)

[Mind you Kit, I will never forget this. I have never been so humiliated in my life. A time will come when I shall get my revenge. Be careful Kit! Both you and your Melody.]

Kiki’s threats revealed her desperation, her jealousy and her possessive nature. This resulted in her frustration and in a drunken state she took a knife and tried to kill Kitlang. Instead Melody died in his place. In horror at what she had done and already unsteady on her feet, she felt into the Umiam River and was drowned. Kitlang described Kiki as a mad woman.

The suffering of Melody and Kiki were not the same. Melody suffered because of someone’s carelessness, when she was made to become blind. She died a tragic death defending the man she loved from a deranged woman. Kiki, on the other hand, suffered due to her jealousy and her uncontrolled passion for Kitlang.

183. Ibid., p.75