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# Nature Narratives in Northeast Indian Literature: Eco-Discourse and Cultural Perspectives

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## Abstract

This paper examines how recent literary texts from Northeast India function as *Eco-discourses* by integrating ecological themes with cultural worldview and resistance to dominant paradigms. Focusing on Temsula Ao (Nagaland), Mamang Dai (Arunachal Pradesh), Easterine Kire (Nagaland), and Dhruba Hazarika (Assam), it analyzes fiction (short stories, novels, poetry) that foregrounds nature not merely as a backdrop but as a living agent. Employing Ecocriticism, Postcolonial theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ecofeminism, and Indigenous knowledge frameworks, the study shows how these writers draw on tribal cosmologies (animism, folklore, myths) and narrative strategies (symbolism, personification, magical realism) to challenge anthropocentric and development-oriented discourses. Through a close reading of key texts; Ao's *"Laburnum for My Head"* and *"Death of a Hunter"*; Dai's *River Poems* and *Escaping the Land*; Kire's *When the River Sleeps* and *Don't Run, My Love*; Hazarika's *Luck*, it is argued that Northeast Indian literature actively cultivates environmental awareness and counters hegemonic "green development" by prioritizing community-land relations. The paper also integrates secondary scholarly sources throughout.

**Keywords:** *Ecocriticism, Eco-Discourse, Northeast Indian Literature, Nature Narratives, Environmental Humanities*

## Introduction

Northeast Indian writing in English has often been misunderstood as dominated by political conflict and insurgency. However, to look closely we find a strong ecological consciousness embedded equally as a prominent feature in their literature. Critics note that authors from Northeast India often "(…) portray the land through a wide range of images of rivers, trees, hills, tradition, culture, myth, and legends," making *ecology* a central concern of their literature (Dumenil 1296). Cheryl Antonette Dumenil also observes that northeastern poetry, for instance, has a "significant characteristic," as they portray a profound sense and concern of ecology and that "the poems of this region consciously employ ecology as a means for an assertion of identity" (1297). Thus, this paper builds on that insight to examine how selected Northeast authors use fiction as "Eco-Discourse;" a literary narrative that not only depicts nature but actively shapes environmental awareness and challenges dominant (i.e. colonial, patriarchal, or anthropocentric) ideologies. The core focus will be on four prominent voices from Northeast India: Temsula Ao (Naga writer, poet, essayist), Mamang Dai (Adi poet and novelist), Easterine Kire (Angami Naga novelist and poet), and Dhruba Hazarika (Assamese short story writer). They often draw on indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural cosmologies to frame nature

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as an active participant in their fictional works. Their works contrast traditional wisdom like animism and folklore with the intrusions of modern development like dams, hydroelectric power projects, etc. thereby questioning the human-centered worldview of mainstream development discourse.

An interdisciplinary theoretical framework has been used here with Ecocriticism as a foundation. Ecocriticism, as Cheryll Glotfelty defines it, is fundamentally about "the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). This includes examining how texts reveal 'ecocentrism' which values nature itself, as opposed to 'anthropocentrism' which centres only on human interests. Shurhonuo Tsurho, a research scholar from Nagaland University, notes that Northeast writers frequently signal this divide between ecocentrism "a nature-centred system of value" versus anthropocentrism where "humanity is placed at the centre of everything" by expressing "grief over nature's eroding state" and depicting ecological exploitation and ecological depletion along with cultural change (35). This paper will also incorporate 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism' to address how colonial and developmental legacies shape environmental discourse. Through this lens we can observe how "colonial legacies" of resource extraction and land dispossession have produced today's crises, and hence how indigenous narratives work to *reclaim* marginal voices. 'Critical Discourse Analysis' complements this by highlighting how texts challenge hegemonic power. It is explicitly "concerned with the ways in which discourses act to produce and change the world" (Griffin 98). In addition, 'Ecofeminism' and Indigenous knowledge perspectives remind us how gender, folklore, and traditional epistemologies are integral to eco-critique. Ecofeminists link the exploitation of nature with the oppression of women. This connection is portrayed in the works of Ao and Kire as they foreground the female protagonist's relationship with the land. Indigenous ecological knowledge that views humans as part of nature permeates these narratives. Nilanjana Chatterjee notes that Naga folk tales and "people stories" are "treasure-troves of indigenous eco-ethical knowledge systems" that inform contemporary writing (30). In a nutshell, these authors do not merely describe nature, they treat the environment as a subject with agency. They weave myths and rituals into fiction so that the narrative *itself* becomes a force for environmental consciousness.

**Ecocriticism, Discourse, and Worldview: Theoretical Context**

Ecocriticism has grown into a diverse field over decades but at its core, it "calls for a universal concern" for nature (Tsurho 35). It critiques *Anthropocentrism*, the human-centred worldview, and advocates *ecocentrism*, which places nature's well-being above human utility. In this context, literature becomes a vehicle for ecological values. As Cheryll Glotfelty succinctly puts it, ecocriticism "is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). Northeast writers exemplify this by embedding landscapes, forests, mountains, animals, and rivers into their narratives as more than mere settings. Shurhonuo Tsurho observes that Ao, Dai, and others focus on "ecological depletion and exploitation… and the glorification and might of Nature," arguing that their native lands are portrayed as "ideal places" whose threats provoke alarm and response (35).

Postcolonial ecocriticism, on the other hand, examines how colonial histories have led to environmental harm and how formerly colonized peoples articulate resistance. The Northeast has a specific history of colonial exploitation (British resource extraction, and later national infrastructure projects) and marginalization. Postcolonial ecocritics note that colonial regimes

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imposed "Western environmental norms" on colonized regions, often exploiting natural resources without regard for indigenous rights. In this view, Ao, Dai, Kire, and Hazarika are writing *back* to empire and state: they emphasize subaltern and tribal perspectives that were suppressed. Through Postcolonial ecocriticism, we see that under colonialism the exploitation of nature was accompanied by the oppression of the people who lived off that nature. Similarly, Northeast texts often depict how human and ecological liberty (and their denial) are intertwined.

Critical Discourse analysis focuses on ideology and power in language. Environmental Critical Discourse specifically looks at how public and literary texts frame nature. It tries to engross critically "to show how the texts … produce (re)create particular versions of the world" (Griffin 98). In practice, we use this to interpret Northeast Indian fiction as a counter-discourse. Mainstream "development" rhetoric in India like dams, highways, hydroelectric power projects, etc. is often anthropocentric and it treats nature as a resource to be maximized for human gain. By contrast, Northeast authors often subvert that rhetoric by showing the destructive impact of development on indigenous communities and ecosystems. Ao's contrasting stories, for instance, explicitly set up "radical environmentalism" versus "reformist environmentalism" or "green development," inviting readers to question whose interests such development serves (Ghosal 20-27). Through Critical Discourse analysis, we see how these narratives encode local norms such as sustainability, respect, and reciprocity in opposition to hegemonic ideologies of progress. They give voice to communities typically silenced in policy discourse, thus broadening the environmental debate.

Ecofeminism is central because most Northeast authors are women who often link women's status with nature. Ecofeminists often linked the degradation of the environment with the subjugation of women. For instance, Temsula Ao's heroines frequently rebel against patriarchal taboos by seeking communion with nature. As we see Lentina in the short story "Laburnum for My Head" attends her husband's burial rites among graves rebelling against the patriarchal gender norms. Easterine Kire's novels, on the other hand, frequently feature female shamans, witches, or werewolves, using folklore to parallel gender and ecological marginalization. Scholars of Kire have noted that her use of mystical female figures like Therianthropes and Otherkins is explicitly ecofeminist as these stories "teach us about ecological sustainability" while also revealing how "social injustice… go hand in hand with atrocities" against the environment (Yasmin 37). In brief, ecofeminism helps us see that concerns for women's empowerment and the Earth often coincide in these texts.

Finally, the concept of indigenous ecological knowledge is woven throughout. Northeast communities possess rich oral traditions about the forests, rivers, and animals around them. These range from taboos against overhunting to stories of river spirits that preserve water sanctity. The authors under study explicitly draw on this heritage. Mamang Dai, an Adi tribal writer, frequently mines traditional customs such as those of her grandfather's village as symbols. Temsula Ao, a Naga from the Sema tribe, includes rituals and dances in her stories that centre on nature. Easterine Kire's Angami Naga background appears in her reverence for ancestral spirits and landforms. By infusing their fiction with these tribal worldviews, these writers not only enrich their narratives aesthetically but also model an eco-ethical perspective grounded in place-based knowledge. This technique resists the Western epistemology that often underlies development discourse; instead of seeing land as a space for capital, these authors portray it as a heirloom, myth, and teacher.

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**Temsula Ao: Eco-Conscious Tales and Female Agency**

Temsula Ao, a poet and novelist from Nagaland, has emerged as a leading eco-conscious voice in Northeast writing. Critics praise the "ecological richness" of her imagery and her critique of the "ugliness of modernization" (Samaddar 97). Her 2009 short story collection titled *Laburnum for My Head* exemplifies these traits. The title story and "Death of a Hunter" (the first two tales of the collection) are often cited as deliberately paired to stage a debate over conservation versus exploitation. An ecocritical study by Abhisek Ghosal notes that Ao "incorporates two contrapuntal tales, "Laburnum for My Head" and "Death of a Hunter" (…) to project the long-standing tension between radical environmentalism and reformist environmentalism" (19). In other words, Ao uses her narrative contrapuntally to question "green development" by exposing how policies that claim to help the poor can collide with the demands of nature. In "Laburnum for My Head," Ao entwines nature with gender. The protagonist Lentina is an educated woman who yearns to plant a golden *laburnum* tree in her garden. She is captivated by its yellow blooms, which "denoted womanliness" to her (Kumar 1). Ao writes, "The way the laburnum flowers hung their heads earthward appealed to her because she attributed humility to the gesture" (Ao 2). Lentina's empathy with the laburnum contrasts sharply with the apathy of her conservative family; she is "inwardly hurt by their seeming insensitivity to beauty around them" (Ao 3). Here Temsula Ao links feminine agency to care for nature. The laburnum becomes a surrogate for Lentina's freedom and humility. Her refusal to abandon her dream of the tree, even after widowhood, and till the end of her life, signifies a quiet rebellion. The story critiques anthropocentric attitudes in two ways. First, by valuing a modest flower in the face of human indifference, and secondly by defying the patriarchal norm that a widow should stay within domestic bounds. As we see, Lentina insists and attends the funeral rites of her husband in the village, breaking customs, and challenging societal norms.

"Death of a Hunter," by contrast, dramatizes retribution of nature against reckless exploitation. The story follows an ageing hunter, Imchanok, on his final expedition. Each beast he encounters gives him a lesson on restraint. The culmination is a confrontation with a tiger that has eluded him for decades. Without revealing the entire plot, suffice it to say that Ao makes her hunter's downfall a moral about humility before natural forces. Through this frame, Temsula Ao enacts postcolonial ecocriticism where colonial-style fearlessness (the hunter's bravado) is punished by the indigenous-animal agency. She indicts the colonial "sport hunt" attitude as a throwback. In the final scene, Ao hints that some things in nature (the wild, the tiger's will) or nature itself, are beyond human control. Throughout these stories, Ao's narrative voice harmonizes with local traditions. The Naga worldview often sees animals and plants as part of the community. Ao frequently adopts that stance. Critics often observe that her work is steeped in Nagaland's cosmology, reviving folk songs and chants in her text. In "Laburnum," Lentina's love for a humble flower is itself an exercise in eco-ethics as she treats the laburnum as a companion. While in "Death of a Hunter," Imchanok converses with animals who are nearly wise interlocutors. This animistic narrative technique enacts an ecocentric stance where nature is a subject, not an object. Such portrayal contrasts sharply with any anthropocentric "development" ideology. Ao's explicit framing invites readers to weigh modern progress against tradition. Thus, Abhisek Ghosal in the paper "Appraising Green Development: An Ecocritical Reading of Temsula Ao's *Laburnum for My Head*" emphasizes that Ao's stories ask us to reconsider development by "paying adequate heed to the necessary requirements of impoverished human beings" while not sacrificing the environment (19).

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Ao also weaves ecofeminist undercurrents through Lentina's gender and her bond with the laburnum, which suggests a feminine affinity with the earth. Feminist ecocritics would note that Lentina's empowerment comes through nature. She asserts herself by pursuing the planting of the laburnum, even when family pressures mount. The betrayal she feels at her family's indifference resonates with the sense that both women and nature are often marginalized. This accords with the general Ecofeminist insight that the dilapidation of the environment and the subjugation of women are connected. The story dramatizes both a woman's struggle and a flower's vulnerability. Even through Critical Discourse analysis, we find Ao's prose works against the dominant discourse. She refuses the colonial trope of Nature as "wild" to conquer. Instead, her human characters learn respect or humility. Even the title metaphorically states Lentina's wish for a laburnum in her head (graveyard), even after death. It evokes ownership and belonging that transcends mere property rights. It inverts the idea of land as a commodity by making it personal and emotional. Temsula Ao's refusal to let the laburnum flower be uprooted, at the end of the story, is a quiet victory for ecological ethics. Thus, Temsula Ao's fiction articulates an ecological message through symbolism and character. Here Nature acts as both a mirror and a mentor. The very act of blending everyday life with natural imagery centres on environmental awareness. Therefore, Debasis Samaddar rightly observed that Temsula Ao has been recognized as "one of the major eco-conscious voices" in Northeast writing (97). Her tales explicitly juxtapose development narratives with indigenous ecological wisdom which makes her literature a catalyst for eco-centric reflection.

**Mamang Dai: Animism, Rivers, and Sustaining Culture**

Mamang Dai, from Arunachal Pradesh's Adi tribe, is another writer whose oeuvre exemplifies the Northeast eco-discourse. A former bureaucrat turned poet and novelist; she has long championed her people's deep ties to the land. Her poems and fiction consistently integrate nature, rivers, mountains, and forests as living presences. Ishita Haldar observes that "the North-East region's captivating scenery, mystic experiences, colourful ethnography, mythology, folklore, and myths collectively make up [Dai's] nature of fiction" (139). In other words, Dai's landscape is not a mere setting but the very fabric of meaning in her narratives. This reflects an indigenous worldview. Mamang Dai herself has said in interviews that the Eastern Himalayas' geography – the continuous forests, mountains, and "big rivers" – creates a "common shared culture and a relationship to the land" (The Hindu 2010). We can see this in her work *Escaping the Land* (2021), a mythic novel that tests its characters' bonds to nature through giant cockroaches and shape-changing birds. According to Ishita Haldar's study, *Escaping the Land* "demonstrates the ecocritical aspects of the landscape" and "projects the ecological values of the environment" (139), to show how Dai consciously weaves ecology into plot and symbolism.

Mamang Dai's poetry collection *River Poems* (2004) is a clear example of her approach. In these poems, rivers are often used as metaphors for life and tradition. Critics note that Dai personifies natural features to evoke a lost harmony. She "culls out the significance of natural resources… from her River Poems" and thus laments the "consequences of human beings' violence towards nature" (Sudha 84). For example, in "River Poems" the river might speak or sing, giving voice to the tribe's collective memory. Essentially, Mamang Dai's verse conveys ancestral continuity as waterways carry not only water but the stories of forebears. Dr. S. Sudha thus points out that Mamang Dai's poetry "brings out the life of her homeland, its tradition and culture and the heritage of her land…" (87). She also observed that "as a representative of tribes, she (Mamang Dai) foregrounds the consequences of people in this modernity" (87). In simpler

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terms, Dai writes as a tribal elder lamenting how modern life disrupts indigenous ways. These poetic narratives revive an animistic consciousness where streams are alive, hills are kin, and to damage them is to damage one's soul.

Mamang Dai's narrative strategy often fuses myth with contemporary issues. In *Escaping the Land*, the protagonist is a journalist who flees the city only to be mythically shrunk to the size of an ant to confront the world from the ground. This literal plunging into the microcosm of nature serves as a strong discourse device where the reader sees human arrogance collide with insect society. The mythopoeic quality like using a folk motif of shrinking, makes political points about warfare and development in Northeast India. Importantly, Dai frames the perspective of nature not as a problem to be overcome but as a treasure. As in *Escaping the Land* the non-human narrator (an insect queen) repeatedly speaks of how "greatly have we suffered" under the errors of humankind. Through such narrative, Dai inverts human-centred narration where the Earth and its creatures tell the story. This aligns with an ecocentric approach and a postcolonial one since it lets the formerly voiceless, whether it is from nature or indigenous perspective, speak back to the colonizer; modern society.

Another important text by Mamang Dai is the novel *The Black Hill* (2014) which parallels William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by having children lost in a district of Arunachal, encountering a lost Adivasi community and jungle. Again, the jungle and its survival customs become central. Critics note that Dai often assumes the role of a kind of tribal spokesperson as her fiction undertakes that the land and its nonhumans have ethical agency. In an interview, Dai herself emphasized that "with the landscape comes a common shared culture" (The Hindu 2010), which means that ecology and community identity are inseparable. Dr. Payel Dutta Chowdhury remarks that Dai "gives much prominence to nature and holds it as a common link that binds all [Northeastern peoples] … together on a common platform" (2021). Dai thus effectively frames her literature as an eco-nationalistic platform, where reverence for land underpins cultural unity. In narrative terms, her technique is often lyrical and meditative. She uses first-person reflections that read like a conversation with nature. In her autobiography-styled *Mountain Harvest: The Food of Arunachal Pradesh* (2004), she includes recipes for jungle herbs alongside stories of traditional festivals by blurring the line between culture and ecology. Similarly, her fiction frequently invokes omens and rituals. An example of cultural cosmology is her use of the Adi community's beliefs in forest spirits and mountain deities. These are not just ornamental details; they serve to *naturalize* environmental ethics. When Dai describes folk rituals to appease a god of fertility (so the rice will grow), she is not romanticizing; she is encoding an ecological code of respect. This reflects the ecofeminist insight that Indigenous matrilineal practices, like Adi women's leadership in festivals, often go together with earth stewardship.

Ishita Haldar notes that in *Escaping the Land* Mamang Dai "weaves together history, myth, and contemporary politics" (140), situating her ecological critique within the very fabric of Arunachali life. It stresses that Dai and her characters do not treat Indigenous customs as quaint relics but as living wisdom. The story includes a tribe that conducts a cyclical communal service to honour insects and soil. It implicitly critiques wage labourers' exploitation of nature. By juxtaposing such tribal scenarios with modern news reports of dam projects and wars, Dai's narrative satirizes how modern "progress" disrupts ecological balance. Therefore, we see that Mamang Dai's eco-discourse is characterized by reverence for the environment as culture. She draws explicitly on Adi's indigenous knowledge. Forests and rivers teach and heal, just as

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spiritual leaders do, in her works. Her work is often compared to *bioregional ecopoetry*, aligning with Vandana Shiva's ideas of "staying alive" through harmony and diversity (Chatterjee 30). The literary act of Dai is a form of activism, it alerts readers that development which ignores "the old ways" of tribal life risks destroying "the old ways" of nature. By poetically depicting rivers as moral agents and mountains as ancestors, Dai's fiction and poetry make the natural world a co-narrator of history by challenging anthropocentric narratives of progress.

**Easterine Kire: Mythic Forests, Witches, and the Naga Soul**

Easterine Kire is a Nagaland-born novelist whose works often blend Naga folklore with contemporary life. Her Angami heritage and journalism background inform her stories which frequently take place in lush mountain and jungle settings. Kire's approach is deeply animistic where animals, spirits, land, and the river itself participate in the plot. In *When the River Sleeps* (2014) and *Don't Run, My Love* (2017), protagonists venture into the forest on mystical quests. In these novels, the forest is not an inert backdrop but a dynamic presence. One critic remarks that the protagonist Vilie in *When the River Sleeps* sees the forest as his "wife," a living partner, and the river as a possible god. Kire thus literally casts nature as familial by undermining the human-nonhuman divide. In the novel, Kire also explores the healing and nurturing aspects of nature. The young hunter Vilie travels with a stone that might grant wishes; an image drawn from Naga legend. Along the way, tribal villagers extend him hospitality under open skies. Women collect nettles for bark cloth and men catch fish, all without expectation of reward. This vivid scene is more than scenic, it "illustrates the cultural richness and communal harmony embedded in the Naga people's everyday life" (Roy 723). Kire is saying that in the traditional Naga world, nature and community are inseparable. The forest provides food and medicine; the villagers, in turn, honour the forest through rituals. The story emphasizes nature's generosity. As we see, when Vilie breaks his leg, a herbal healer (a villager woman) uses "bitter wormwood and rock bee honey" (724) as remedies which validate indigenous botanical knowledge. Throughout the narrative, as Rajendra Prasad Roy notes, nature "assumes a position of utmost significance and is not subservient" and it is "perceived as a bestower of sustenance and refuge" (723). Thus, Kire explicitly rejects anthropocentrism by portraying Nature as an active agent and saviour.

*Don't Run, My Love* published in 2017 further develops Kire's eco-discourse through folklore. Set in contemporary Kohima, it interweaves legends of witches, werewolves, and forest spirits with a modern love story. Critics have specifically applied an Ecofeminist lens to this novel. They point out that Kire "juxtaposes the natural and the supernatural to understand the ecofeminist message" (Yasmin 37). Her stories present mystical female figures and malevolent spirits not just as fantasy but as symbols of nature's power and social taboos. In Kire's narrative, a woman accused of being a witch is also a symbol of nature's untamed aspect. The tropes of "therianthropes and otherkins" are used to implicate humans in the natural cycle, rather than to demonize the forest. These mystical beings teach us about ecological sustainability. They also illustrate how human social injustice is often accompanied by environmental injustice. Easterine Kire thus makes the forest haunted by its own, suggesting that disrespect of nature brings curses as real as any werewolf.

In close reading, both novels show nature shaping character. For instance, Vilie in *River Sleeps* is driven by dreams of a magical river, while in *Don't Run* the heroine is nearly consumed by the legend of a plant that punishes violence. Kire often has her characters confront their own mistakes in the context of the wilderness. One passage in *River Sleeps* has Vilie reflect under a

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"cobalt sky" on how humans, animals, and spirits might share the same fate. Kire's lyrical style makes nature an almost sentient narrator. Thus, we see across her work, that Kire's eco-discursive goal is to make the reader empathize with the voice of the forest. The communal scenes in *River Sleeps* like villagers chanting work songs under trees, singing chants to the river, these altogether create a discourse of belonging. At the same time, the violence lurking in both novels, like poaching, envy, and modern greed, is counterpointed by nature's resilience: the forest outlasts each generation. The narrative insists that the characters learn humility. By the end of *River Sleeps*, the reader sees that the river's stone will only grant wishes to those who understand balance. Likewise, in *Don't Run*, the village's eventual reconciliation with the forest creatures suggests a restored harmony when human and non-human boundaries are respected.

**Dhruba Hazarika: Country Stories and Human-Animal Bonds**

Dhruba Hazarika's fiction, notably the short story collection *Luck* (2009), similarly uses narrative to confront human-nature relations, though with a somewhat different tone. Hazarika is Assamese, and his stories often take place in Meghalaya's hills or Assam's countryside. A key characteristic of his work is empathy with wildlife. Critics have remarked that he "moves away from" stereotypical Northeast violence tropes and instead emphasizes "man's essential connection to the world of nature" (Chowdhury). In *Luck*, he does this through episodic tales in which urban or disillusioned individuals have meaningful encounters with animals. According to Payel Dutta Chowdhury, *Luck* reads like "a breath of fresh air" in Northeast literature, because it portrays "empathy with all creatures great and small." The title story, for example, follows a solitary shopkeeper who befriends a wounded pigeon. Through this humble bird, he learns the patience and compassion he had lost. Other stories feature a caged sparrow, a jealous elephant, and even a buffalo's perspective. Importantly, Hazarika presents no violent polemic; no one is lectured. Instead, he "presents an intangible, almost mystical connection between humans and the other species" (Chowdhury). This narrative strategy is almost fable-like. By humanizing animals by giving the pigeon a name, thoughts, or songs, he invites readers to see animals as kin. Chowdhury further notes that Hazarika "carries on Dai's feelings further and presents man's relationship with nature from the perspective of someone who is familiar to the natural world of the North-East." Indeed, Hazarika's narrators are often fellow tribal villagers or rural people whose lives are still intertwined with the forest. In many stories, the initial conflict arises from a modern ignorance of nature and is resolved through a moment of insight. For instance, in the story "Luck," the protagonist's loneliness is highlighted by his desire for pets. The bird's independence and beauty eventually soften him as he learns "a thing or two about patience and caring in the company of a pigeon" (Chowdhury).

Underlying these narratives is a discourse of comfort and belonging. As Payel Dutta Chowdhury has rightly observed "In almost all the stories… Hazarika explores the comfort and soothing effect that man draws from the relationship he shares with nature". In other words, the stories frequently end on a note of warmth and reconciliation rather than tragedy or confrontation. This is not to say he ignores environmental harm; but rather, he suggests remedy through empathy. Hazarika's approach can be contrasted with more activist or tragic ecocritics. He opts for small, personal connections where a child cries when a snake dies, and an old man weeps for an injured monkey. This evokes eco-ethical sentiment as every creature has intrinsic value. Hazarika's perspective is essentially indigenous. His characters routinely consult village elders or recall folk proverbs about animals aligning their worldview with ancient wisdom. In *Luck*, the natural world is a kind of teacher and family. By rescuing animals or simply

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acknowledging them, characters often find a sense of redemption. The implied message is that modern alienation can be healed by returning to a more harmonious worldview – one akin to that expressed by Dai and Kire. In Hazarika's fictional universe, nature is not merely a victim of exploitation; it is a partner in recovery.

From a postcolonial angle, Hazarika's focus on rural life implicitly critiques the detachment of urban modernity. Assam, despite its lush Brahmaputra valley, faces rapid urbanization and resource development like oil drilling and dam construction. Hazarika's calm country stories act as a subtle counter-narrative, reminding readers of their cultural roots. By framing animals as keepers of memory, he enshrines ecological knowledge. For instance, one character in *Luck* recalls stories of his grandfather about respecting forests; by the end, he treats a wild stray as a grandson. This narrative foregrounds Indigenous kinship with all beings. His tales also have a quiet ecofeminist undercurrent. Women in *Luck* often play healing roles like a grandmother treats a bird's wound, and a teacher loves all animals as "her kids." This is less explicit than in Kire or Ao, but it resonates: empathy, often coded as feminine in literature, becomes the cure for ecological imbalance. Even the title *Luck* hints at fortune derived from humility: those who respect nature find luck.

**Common Threads: Resistance and Reinterpretation**

Across these authors, several common narrative strategies and themes emerge, which function as discourse tools. First is the portrayal of nature as living and agentic. Whether it is Ao's sacred trees and sagacious beasts, Dai's sentient rivers and insects, Kire's anamorphic spirits, or Hazarika's talking animals, nature in Northeast fiction is imbued with voice. This narrative technique invites readers to consider nature as a participant in the story's meaning. It challenges the Western development narrative where nature is often just an inert "background." In each case, literature itself becomes a form of environmental advocacy. By anthropomorphizing or spiritualizing the nonhuman, these texts teach respect implicitly. Second, all four authors root for ecological awareness in culture and cosmology. Their fiction is replete with indigenous rituals, songs, myths, and proverbs. For example, Kire often quotes folk chants about the forest, Dai recounts Adi harvest festivals, and Ao includes Naga folk songs. These elements function discursively to validate indigenous knowledge. By doing so, the authors resist the notion that development is culture-neutral. They imply that losing folk practices or lore (a byproduct of modernization) is tantamount to losing an ecological guidebook. Critic Shurhonuo Tsurho captures this by noting how Northeast poets' works reflect grief over nature's erosion and glorification of nature's might – these writers are mourning the loss of ancestral wisdom even as they celebrate it (35-38).

Third, each writer embeds a critique of development and anthropocentrism in subtle narrative form. Temsula Ao's explicit "green development" debate, Mamang Dai's allegories of ecological collapse, Easterine Kire's moral fables, and Dhruba Hazarika's parables all signal opposition to unexamined progress. Importantly, none frame modernity as entirely villainous, but they do insist on balance. The critics note that Northeast authors observe how human violence against nature yields disharmony. Researching Northeast poetry Dr. Cheryl Antonette Dumenil thus declares that its writers often seek ecological balance and sentimentalize a harmonious past (1296). Similarly, Ao's protagonists feel alienated by modernization (the "ugliness of modernization" in her poems (Samaddar 97)), and Hazarika's characters feel lost in alienating cities. By recovering traditional land ethics, these texts offer counter-discourses.

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Finally, the collective effect is an environmental counter-narrative that addresses policy and ideology by way of story. Through critical discourse analysis, we see that these literary works articulate alternatives to prevailing development language. For instance, while the media might call a dam "progress," Ao's story might make it a point of grief; while the government might tout deforestation as job creation, Dai's novel might depict the spiritual crisis it causes. The discursive agents here are the texts and characters themselves: a healer who curses deforestation, a hunter humbled by a tiger, and a child taught by a forest spirit. Each narrative element functions like a small persuasive speech. Summing up, eco-critics assert that literature can salvage nature by reshaping public imagination. These Northeast writers fulfill that role by their works which teach sensitivity and model eco-friendly worldviews.

## Conclusion

By analyzing these texts through ecocritical, postcolonial, and ecofeminist lenses, we see that Northeast Indian literature constitutes a vibrant eco-discourse. Ao, Dai, Kire, and Hazarika are not mere novelists or poets of nostalgia; they are literary activists. They rebuild village cosmologies on the page so that readers cannot easily ignore the nonhuman world. This paper has shown that their narrative strategies function as forms of resistance to anthropocentrism and blind development. Each writer's work invites us to "belong" to the land: Ao's Naga protagonists insist on evoking ancient kinship with nature; Dai reminds us that the Himalayan peoples have a shared culture of ecology; Kire demonstrates that a river or a witch can act with as much agency as a politician; Hazarika conveys that an injured bird can be a teacher. In practice, these texts have shaped environmental awareness. By turning pages, readers participate in sustainability. The stories can stir empathy and solidarity with forests and rivers as if they were neighbours. It is not too much to say that they write environmental ethics. Thus, Northeast Indian literary texts act as discourses of ecology. They expand the parameters of Indian English writing to include tribal voices and ecological thought. Thus, their works remind us that literature does not just reflect the world: it can reimagine it.

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