

Affirming the Crisis of Identity in Zou Literature: A Deliberate Call for Ostentatious Concentration

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Abstract

Zou Literature is a significant medium that reflects Zou quirks through innovative mode. It helps in investigating grounded oral structure of the past shocking experiences of the Zos. After the alarming events of the community getting safely canvassed in history, it is now not accessible to the present. Zou literature additionally accentuates how academic discussions of Zou columnists from Northeast India turns out to be a strong depiction of tribal disputes since they attempt to get the empathy of the people through truisms. With Zou literature to discuss, each with specially striking characters concerning food, language, culture, the whole of Northeast has not been withstanding an unequivocal aid to the Zos. Considering this bet of dismissal, the literature has, all through the extended length, saw improvement of affiliations testing the effect and reliability of other states of India. Every written work of the Zos is comprehensively aimed at disclosing the plights of the Zos and calls for attention, as it analyses concerns related to causes and implications of identity crisis afflicting this indigenous people.

Keywords: Zou literature, Identity crisis, Indigenous Tribal Literature, Northeast

Introduction

Literature blends, the characters of the perusers to see the world through the eyes of the columnists and tracks down similarity of it in their own lives. Portrayal of life with picked words and sentiments helps the perusers to survey life as per substitute perspectives of predominant people. It gives an expected entryway to every individual to exemplify their sentiments and happenings of their lives as books or even stories. It is a technique for recounting the narrative of presence, with brilliant words and specific sentiments. It moreover helps with saving records and social orders of different individuals. Writing is a craftsmanship as William J Long depicts workmanship as, the declaration of life in types of truth and excellence; or rather is the impression of a few truths and magnificence which are on the planet, yet which stay inconspicuous until drawn out into the open by some touchy human spirit (Long 2). Writing incorporates folktales, legends, fantasies, folksongs separated from verse, novel, paper, history, and accounts. From a reduced point of view writing is characterized as the creative portrayal of life alongside various feelings and minds.

Zou writing is one such voice of the countable Indians standing up, to the entire world, offering their viewpoints and thoughts. It has seriously contributed towards the world writing, addressing different subjects like opportunity, battle, personality emergency, bigotry, individual awareness, and a lot more as such with Indian hint of flavours. In India, lately Indigenous writing has gained consideration from

numerous researchers as it is the writing of the underage voices. This writing sprouts in the far-off lands where certain communities live, having their own one-of-a-kind culture and legends. The writing of the Zos in India is much of the time disregarded as their social information is available only in oral structure in light of the fact that this community lives far away from the metropolitan culture which make them simple, rustic, unrefined and ignorant. At present times many are stepping up the plate to protect the rich social legacy of the native Zos that are dissipated indifferent territories of India. In the current paper the researcher envelops the Zou writing of Manipur with various clans and networks giving depictions of their set of experiences and culture's past, as portrayed by the pilgrim essayists as their progenitors. It is a benefit for the Manipuri scholars to expound on their own networks as they can undoubtedly follow out the underlying foundations of their way of life, local area, and language since they have a place with the community. The current situation including social, political, financial fills acts as a motivation for the authors alongside the present set of experiences gets unfurled in their works. Some noticeable Zomi writers along the belt are S. Thangboi, David Vumlallian, Vumson Suantak, Thang Sut Mung etc.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To demonstrate fundamental and applied research works on socio-cultural condition, language, everyday life & heritage of the Zomi and to suggest scholars in conducting research works related to the tribes of Manipur
- To unfold the cultural interaction of the indigenous Zomi of the state, and portray its rich, diverse cultural heritage and beginning.

The Indigenous 'Zo-man'

Indigenous literature in general is the literature of the indigenous groups who possess history, culture and language and are often in oral forms. Indigenous literature is widely defined as the literature produced by original or native people and their descendants. Indigenous research refers not only to research about Indigenous people, but also research by Indigenous people incorporating Indigenous tribal groups and their upliftment. In the aftermath of partition, North-east India emerged as a landlocked disenfranchised area where the springing-up of ethno-nationalist movements and guerrillas has elicited a process of growing militarization by the Indian state. This paper tries to unravel the drivers of the protracted ethnic and secessionist conflicts, and the resultant disorder that have marred the 'Zo-ness' (Vaiphei, 2022) of the 'Zo-man'. But such explanations fail to account for the large variance in violence levels within the region. A rather more fruitful line of inquiry is provided by a state-society reading of the political history of the Zo, that highlights the fact that conflicts are accompanied by a contested and weak authority of the fragmentation of society. Unpacking this causal connection demands that one delves into the region's history to study the process of Zo-making, in colonial and post-colonial times which was established by bureaucratic apparatuses and mobilised collective identities. By focusing on the cases of the Zos, and their very divergent success with mitigating conflict of self and identity, the paper demonstrates that in Manipur the process of composing written, and oral works was such that it consolidated the public legitimacy and authority of reigning institutions among all sections of society, resulting in the strengthened capability of agencies to provide services, manage group contestations and avoid breakdown. The aim here is to explore the idea of marginalisation and the relationship of regional northeast Indians with the other 'Zo-man' through the medium of literary expressions, particularly in the

context of modernity and civilization. Specific to this is a question: are there any distinct flavours of the north-eastern narrative and its linguistic influence that one can see in the larger paradigm of Indian literature? Here is a brief exploration of the movements that have carried forward the literary cultures of the region to the present day, into the other Indian culture. This tradition of storytelling has a group solidarity for collective welfare. The existential identity crisis is considerably mishandled by political endeavours, when appeared contrastingly to one conversation about the individual legitimate issues in its literature. It rapidly proposes the genuineness of shielding their individuality. Zo- man, however is an association among the Zos to advance and foster the indigenous values of the said people and to bring forth the identity which was once long lost through colonization. The creation of 'Zo- man' is amazing as it attempts to spread out a periscopic appreciation of characters, battles, and injuries of the said community inside imaginative gems. This paper is thus an endeavour to advance and foster Zou language and literature to make a milestone accomplishment in the world of academics. The manifestation of creative thoughts and emotions of myth & memory through storytelling provides uniqueness to the region and must be remembered by. People generally neglect to recollect the wellspring of the injury, yet they review it through imaginative betokens like writing, melodic courses of action, plays, books, stories, etc. Every written work of Zou literature like the narratives of Khup Ching le Ngam Bawm, Gal Ngam le Hangsai, and Neino le Nantal that are broadly famous all through the North-western part of Chin state and different areas of the world where Zo individuals were initially composed and spoken in unadulterated Zo vernacular are rarely found now. The memories of aggressive conflicts of the Zos are depicted by the setbacks of literature and the academic texts of the Zos expect a crucial part in exploring and understanding a particular conflict through the harmed mind which is unquestionably a record of past happenings.

Zou Studies

Zou studies is the study of literature, culture, history, and language of the Zos as a whole. According to Zou Literature Society, Zou studies is formed to promote and develop the Zou Literature. It strives to promote and develop the Zou language and make a landmark achievement in the introduction of Zou vernacular and literature, to define a concrete shape in the field of literature. The writings in indigenous languages apart from English language among a group of Kuki is known as Zou literature. This variant of literature is rich, priceless and is embedded with vast cultural knowledge of the Zou people. Though some Kuki communities don't possess a written form, their history and culture are produced in other local languages like the Simte, Vaiphei, Hmar, Mizo and the translation plays an important role in this type of literature. Through this platform the Zos "assert their identity, express their politics and creativity negotiate with the state and its institutions" (Dasgupta). The literal meaning of Zous according to Wikipedia suggests "people of the hills", a recognized Scheduled Tribe vide Government of India, MHA Notification No. SRO 2477A, 1956, Manipur, along with tribal communities in the Northeast, to position themselves, strategically and politically, as Indigenous people. The Zos of Burma migrated to Manipur towards the end of the 19th century to escape inter-village raids. Establishing an identity in a completely new land is still a controversial issue for them. The Zos moved to Manipur on the pretext of work and came to be known as 'Haomi' by the city dwellers, later many different names tagged behind them. Referring them with this name and often excluding them in the city, these Zos are often questioned about their identity as a Schedule Tribe. The folklores of the Zos generally give a description of their history and the marginalized life they had been living since days of yore. Anyone can write

about a particular community based on the facts available in the form of books, newspapers, journals, and documents but to present the actual reality of a particular tribe is possible only through their own traditional knowledge and experiences. David Vumlallian Zou in his paper, *A Historical Study of the 'Zo' Struggle* states that, “The indigenous solidarity and demographic character of the tribal peoples like the Zo who inhabited contiguous areas of the Chin Hills, within the dominant State structure which fails to meet their aspirations. Liberal regimes are generally more comfortable with the language of liberal-individual rights than collective indigenous rights or identity-related claims. But a degree of flexibility and sincere engagement with the concerns of marginalised indigenous peoples are arguably the cornerstones of political stability and enduring peace in the eastern borderlands of India”.

Archives and Folklores

To locate the ground of Indigenous literature, or writing about the indigenous groups, the historians and researchers often find trouble in collecting sources for their study. The sole reason for this situation is that there were no historians or researchers at that time to keep record of the inhabitants of the forest areas or distant lands who were completely cut off from the urban civilization and lacked transportation facilities. The tribal people were illiterate in the past, so they didn't know to write and keep a record for the future generations. In recent times historians and researchers have created great interest to unfold the history and cultures of the tribal people. They have a great significance in knowing different unique traits of different tribes and keep a written record of the memories and the traditional knowledge embedded in the minds of the tribal people. The tribals had their own way of record through folklores which was passed on from one generation to the next. Researchers and historians of 20th century turned to this mode of information recorded in the form of folklores and accepted it as a genuine source for their studies. Another advantage of accepting these sources is that the actual feelings, thoughts, and ideas of the tribals which are often excluded and subverted in the history books and other documents gets recorded. Archive refers to the collection of documents and records containing historical information. It is a means of preserving history and culture. It consists of records which are selected for permanent preservation based on the enduring culture, history, and evidently clay-stone tablets, of ancient archives which provide information of the ancient world. Archives are unique as they are normally unpublished and are not available in bulk like books and magazines. This means that archives are quite distinct from libraries in terms of their functions and organizations, as they are often stored in the local libraries. Folklores are mainly archival as it often accumulates large collections of ethnographic materials in home offices, from independent research and also public folklore survey work. Sometimes original documentation created through public folklore projects is not archival curated; even when placed in archives, it may not be processed or readily accessible to the public. In addition, established archives may not be receptive to acquiring folklore documentation in the first place, and when they do acquire it, the material may be low on the agenda for processing and access. All the stories or folktales such as the stories of Cing Khup & Ngam Bawi, Gal Ngam and Hangsai, and Neino le Nantal that are very widely popular throughout the North Western part of Chin state and other parts of the world where Zo people reside were originally written and spoken in pure Zo dialect.

Shrinking literary cultures

Indigenous peoples have been threatened for centuries as development encroaches on their lands and traditions. What is different about the present situation, however, is that it goes beyond basic questions of native land rights into more ambiguous issues, such as the prerogative of individuals to decide

between traditional and modern ways. Indigenous knowledge disappears when natives are stripped of their lands, but in many parts of the globe, knowledge also disappears because the young who are in contact with the outside world have embraced the view that traditional ways are illegitimate and irrelevant. The most intractable aspect of the crisis is that it is largely voluntary. Entranced by images of the wealth and power of the First World, the young turn away from their elders, breaking an ancient but fragile chain of oral traditions. For the elders, it is difficult to persuade an ambitious young native that he is better off hunting boar with blowpipes than reaching for the fruits of “civilization”, even if those fruits might translate into a menial job in a teeming city. For the well-fed, well-educated visiting scientist to make that argument can seem both hypocritical and condescending. The pace of change is startling. The number of different tribes around the world makes it impossible to record or otherwise preserve more than a tiny percentage of the knowledge being lost. Since 1900, 90 of Brazil’s 270 Indian tribes have completely disappeared, while scores more have lost their lands or abandoned their ways. More than two-thirds of the remaining tribes have populations of fewer than 1,000. Some might disappear before anyone notices. A recent study by M.I.T. linguist Ken Hale estimates that 3,000 of the world’s 6,000 languages are doomed because no children speak them. Researchers estimate that Africa alone has 1,800 languages, Indonesia 672 and New Guinea 800. If a language disappears, traditional knowledge tends to vanish with it, since individual language groups have specialized vocabularies reflecting native people’s unique solutions to the challenges of food gathering, healing and dealing with the elements in their particular ecological niche. Hale estimates that only 300 languages have a secure future.

The Price of Forgetting

The most immediate tragedy in the loss of knowledge and traditions is for the tribes themselves. They do not always die out, but the soul of their culture withers away. Often left behind are people “who are shadows of what they once were, and shadows of what we in the developed world are,” as one Peace Corps volunteer put it. The price is real as well as psychological when native peoples lose their grip on traditional knowledge. Investigation reveals that those tribals afflicted by diseases had been treated for a variety of ailments with traditional medicines delivered in suppository form. The problem was not the medicines but the dosages. As the old healers died off, people would try to administer traditional medicines themselves or turn to healers who had only a partial understanding of what their elders knew. This problem is likely to get worse because western medicines and trained nurses are becoming ever scarcer in an economically beleaguered society.

Identity crisis faced by the Zos

Zos in India has had a historical presence in the country and world as the focal point of ethnic violence, extremism and insurgency. The fear and existential crisis due to mismanaged political affairs have, as compared to earlier, increased in the northeast region of India and when one talks about the identity politics in tribal communities there, it immediately alludes to the urgency of preservation of their identity. With Manipur, constituting of various tribal groups of very unique identities in terms of food, language, culture, the whole of the state has been and still remains a politically vital and strategically vulnerable region of India. Increasingly, subsequent to interactions with non-tribal communities and excess immigration, tribal communities have been facing threats and are close to social exclusion in the country. Due to this threat of exclusion, the Zos have, over the years, witnessed emergence of extremist organisations challenging the sovereignty and integrity of the Indian Constitution.

Conclusion

This paper thusly aims at genuine proposal of acclamation and acknowledgement of the Zos in relation to their forgotten literary geniuses. The Zou Literature Society is a movement to promote hegemonic development of the said literature. With its establishment in 1956, it aims to sweep derogatory infliction of literary exclusion as it vows to define, refine and shape the jumbled historiographic image of the tribe. As such mis-portrayal of regional identity led to the communitarian grounding of indigeneity. Reshaping and re-reading Zou Literature might enclave oneself with authenticated reseriving of ostentatious concentration, further embarking on a new venture in the arena of popular literature. This paper attempts to concentrate on the culture, history, and lifestyle of the Zos of Manipur through Zou composing and drafts a note on Indigenous indigeneity and its underpinning identity study.

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