REFLECTIONS ON LOCALITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD IN SELECTED FICTIONAL WRITINGS OF TEMSULA AO AND MAMANG DAI

Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut

for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

by

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under the supervision of

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Declaration

I, Sreekala. K, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Reflections on Locality and Neighborhood in Selected Fictional Writings of Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai,** submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature**, is a bona fide work done by me under the guidance of **Dr. Najeeb. P.M.** Professor, PG & Research Department of English, Govt. Victoria College, Palakkad, and that I have not submitted it or any part of it for any Degree, Diploma or Title before.

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Contents

Abstract

Northeast India which existed as a geographical frontier during colonial times has always been a site of complex political contestations. The technologies of colonial cartography and political interventions only served as handmaiden to social democracy or ethnic autonomy. The spatial configuration of Northeast states in postcolonial situation has significant overlap between territorial politics and national sovereignty. Nevertheless, Northeast is bestowed with literary luminaries who are committed to express issues specific to this region. This study has identified the general spatial problematic of borderlands, by focussing on localised spaces as represented in the literary works of Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai. The concept locality as elaborated by Arjun Appadurai is the framework for this study. Here, locality is conceptualized not in its essentialising feature as geographical entity. But production of locality involves the processes of socialization. When the natives engage in ritualized social activities they reproduce locality. Here, contexts for social activities are taken as the boundaries for the process of socialization. Local subjects or natives generate contexts from within their communities thereby legitimize their sense of belonging to such places. If the contexts are provided by external forces, the production of locality becomes weak and unstable. In this study actual situated communities are social formations identified as neighborhoods.

Key words: Northeast India, Locality, contexts, local subjects

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പ്രബന്ധ സംഗ്രഹം

അരുണാചൽ പ്രദേശ്, നാഗലണ്ട് എന്നീ രണ്ട് സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളെ പ്രതിനിധീകരിച്ച് ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ ഇടം നേടിയ വിഖ്യാത കഥകാരികളാണ് ടെംസുല ഓയും മമാംഗ് ഡൈയും. ഇവരുടെ രചനകളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കി നടത്തിയ പഠനമാണ് ഈ ഗവേഷണ പ്രബന്ധം. ഈ രണ്ടു സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിലെ തനതു ഗോത്ര വംശജരുടെ ജീവിത അനുഭവങ്ങളുടെ നേർകാഴ്ചയുടെ ആവിഷ്കാരമാണ് ഇവരുടെ സാഹിത്യകൃതികൾ.

ലോക്കാലിറ്റി എന്ന ആശയം ആന്ത്രോപോളജിസ്റ്റ് അർജ്ജുൻ അപ്പദുരൈ സമീപിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന രീതിയാണ് ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ ആഖ്യാന ചട്ടക്കൂട്. ഒരു പ്രത്യേക പ്രദേശത്തെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചുള്ള പഠന രീതിയാണ് ഇത്. ഒരു ഭൂപ്രദേശത്തിന്റെ ഭൗതിക മാനങ്ങൾ അതിൽ അധിവസിക്കുന്ന ഓരോ വർഗത്തിന്റെയും സമൂഹിക ഇടപെടലുകൾക്കുള്ള അസന്നിഗ്ധ മേഖലകൾ ആകുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഇടപെടലുകളുടെ നൈരന്തര്യം ആ പ്രദേശത്തിന്റെ ഭൗതികവും സാമൂഹികവും ആയ മാറ്റങ്ങളുടെ അടയാളപെടുത്തലുകൾ ആകുന്നു. ഒരു പ്രത്യേക പ്രദേശത്ത് അധിവസിക്കുന്ന സമുദായങ്ങളുടെ വ്യാപന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ അതത് പ്രദേശത്ത് അവരുടെ സ്ഥിര പ്രതിഷ്ഠിതത്വം ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നു. അതോടൊപ്പം, വൈയക്തികവും, സമൂഹികവും ആയ വ്യാപന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ മറ്റ നൂതന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള സാഹചര്യം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ സമുദായത്തിന് അകത്തു സൃഷ്ടിക്കപെടുന്ന സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ ബാഹ്യ ശക്തികളുടെ ഇടപെടലുകളിലൂടെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കപെടുന്ന സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും വിഭിന്നമാണ്. ഓരോ സമൂഹവും അവരുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും, ഇടപെടലുകളിലൂടെയും സൃഷ്ടിച്ചെടുക്കുന്ന സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ അവരുടെ പ്രദേശത്തെയും ജീവിത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെയും സാർത്ഥകവും മഹത്വപൂർണവും ആക്കുന്നു. അതുപോലെ, ഒരോ സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ അനുഷ്ഠാന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള സാഹചര്യം അന്യ ഇടപെടലുകളിലൂടെ സജ്ജീകരിക്കപെടുമ്പോൾ, ആ സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ അസ്തിത്വം ദുർബലമാവുന്നു. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ സൃഷ്ടിക്കപെടുന്ന സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ തിരിച്ചറിയാനുള്ള ഉദ്യമം ആണ ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ അവലംബിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. .

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Chapter I
Introduction

The myriad processes of marking geographical territory with cultural meaning include historicizing, collective imaginings, political claims, other narratives of identity and belonging, and social performances of inhabitants. The physical landscape needs to be transformed to meet the requirements of the heterogeneous multitudes. At the same time, the possibilities and potentialities of human navigation is constrained by locally customized spatial designs and properties. The focus on a particular locality apart from its spatial location is intended to bring to the surface its significance, meaning and properties. This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate how locality-based approach to spaces provides insight into the social construction of spaces. In developing the concept of locality, this study draws on the inputs of various scholars to examine social production, social construction, and the embodied and translocal perspectives on spaces. The spatial methodology adopted in the thesis has helped to look closely at a place, however large or small, simple or complex, in terms of its spatial dimensions, properties and dynamics.

As an analytical tool, spatial methodology is used in this study to focus on targeted locations or micro human settlements, to identify the properties and dimensions of physical spaces. The concept of locality borrowed from Arjun Appadurai's critical renderings is utilized to provide the conceptual framework of this study. Along with Appadurai's conceptualization, critical deliberations on

locality, identity and belonging by scholars like Nadia Lovell, Erin B Taylor, Angelo Torre are also highlighted to provide a comprehensive approach to the topic.

The theoretical framework of the production of locality formulated by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai illustrates how natives generate and encounter diverse contexts for the production or reproduction of spatial locality. It is significant to think how locality can be perceived today within the reality of modern society involving national regimes and processes of urbanization. In this era of Globalization, locality as a type of socialization of individuals is problematized by the existence of territorial foundation as a condition of its construction. Scholarly deliberations on locality are explored in this thesis to infer that social dimension valuates the given spaces which in turn narrates the different assertions of belonging. Hence, a focussed study on neighborhood or micro spaces helps to see how such localized spaces are important arena for performing, negotiating, and challenging the discourses of modernity. The main objective of this thesis is to find an answer to this question through the medium of fiction from Northeast India. Baishya argues that:

> Fictions from this polyglot region offer alternative representations that show the postcolonial nation-state to engage in acts of aggression that parallel colonial regimes. The militarization of everyday life and the subsequent growth of cultures of impunity have left a lasting impact on ordinary existence in this border zone. (ii)

By situating the traditionalized socio-cultural lives of local or native communities of Northeast India within the rubrics of modern epistemologies, it is understood that there are attempts to maintain ethnic identity through global cosmopolitanism. This

attempt to conserve cultural fundamentalism with an inclination towards metropolis seems to be paradoxical. Borah remarks:

> The paradox eventually becomes a travesty of time and space when ethnic goods and cultural fundamentalism are converted into museum species and 'local' is meticulously globalised with market ideology, connectivity, and technological support. (98)

Hence, this study is also an attempt to explore and describe the features of contemporary globalized world from a socio-cultural perspective, and to highlight the validity of local in global discourses.

The words 'local', 'locality' as used in common parlance have different meanings in various disciplines. The origin and etymology of the term locality can be traced back to the seventeenth century. The term has originated from the French word *localite* or Latin *localitas.* The dictionary meaning of the word is 1) "the fact or condition of having a location in space or time" 2) "a particular place, situation or location ("Locality," def. 1, and 2). The concept of locality as a bounded territorial segment invokes the idea of a homogenized neutral space, but this spatial metaphor fails to acknowledge the socio-cultural heterogeneity within such micro spaces. The most commonly used term 'locality' is treated in academic discourses to refer to a place with a habitus dimension or as a socially constructed space. From this perspective, the ritualized performances of social actors for its construction get highlighted. Accordingly, the constant need for mechanism of social power and control is felt in the production and maintenance of locality. Foucault has emphasised that space is central to any form of communal life and fundamental in any exercise of power (*Discipline and Punish* 16). Hence, the concept locality is put

forward to study the dynamics of specific physical spaces and constructed social spaces, as a cohort with shared history, and collective ritualized practices and technologies of interactivity. In other words, the social, ecological or cosmological contexts of such lived spaces act in concert and establishes relation between social and cultural domain. This also implies the constitutive fragility of such constructed spaces, which need to be maintained using mechanisms of power and control. Ulf Hannerz also approaches the 'local' not as an autonomous entity having its own integrity. It has its significance as the arena in which a variety of influences come together, to be acted out in unique combinations, under peculiar conditions (27). He views "the local" as more protean than primordial. He writes:

> In identifying the typical components of localness, we may also come to realize more clearly that they are not all intrinsically local, linked to territoriality in general or only some one place in particular. That connection is really made rather by recurrent practicalities of life, and by habits of thought. (27)

Appadurai's rendering of locality production is premised on the core precept of contexts serving as the link between social life and social form. Spatial locality for habitation in Appadurai's terminology is neighborhood, the actual situated community which is the setting for social actions of local subjects. Through the manoeuvres and schemes of local subjects endowed with local knowledge, spatial locality is rendered meaningful, or it is reproduced. Also, a pre-existing neighborhood with social rituals, expert practitioners and informed audience is mandatory for producing local subjects. Simultaneously, such a negotiable and legible terrain for socialization needs to be carefully monitored and maintained.

When social collectivities engage in activities like clearing forests, making gardens and agricultural fields, they produce neighborhoods or these can be counted as technologies of reproducing spatial locality. Moreover, all such locality producing activities are evaluated as properties of social life or to put it in other words, the social dimension of spaces.

In Appadurai's theory of locality production, natives or local subjects produce neighborhoods as localities, which he argues are fragile social achievement, continually reproduced and maintained through ritualized social activities. Thus, the quotidian activities of local subjects, produce contexts for meaningful action for themselves and each other. This context-generating dimension of neighborhood as locality production is different from already existing neighborhood, which is actual physical form of habitation in which locality as a value is realized. He makes a distinction between locality as a relational achievement, and locality as practical value in the quotidian production of subjects and colonization of space ("Production of Locality" 186). From this perspective, neighborhoods are actual, situated communities in which locality as a social dimension or value is realized. Locality is always produced from the practices of local subjects inhabiting specific neighborhoods. As local subjects or social actors rooted in specific territories or situated within definite spatial settings, engage themselves in the continuing task of reproducing their neighborhood, the eventualities of history, and environment and imagination contain the potential for new contexts – material or spatial and social to be produced. Hence particular neighborhoods as specific spatial form produces new social contexts or conditions for the production of locality. Neighborhoods viewed as spatial form for producing locality appears to be the unproblematic setting for the

production of local subjects as well (“Production of Locality” 185). Such neighborhoods existing as materially embedded, socially appropriate and unproblematic have context providing feature as well as context generating feature. All locality production is significant, if it is context generative. This context-generating dimension of locality production is in variance with context-driven dimension of locality production. To put it in another way, the possibilities for local subjects of a given neighborhood or an existing spatial locality to generate contexts within which meaningful activities take place, is in contradiction with such contexts produced by external forces. Appadurai observes:

> The capability of neighborhoods to produce contexts (within which their very localizing activities acquire meaning and historical potential) and to produce local subjects is profoundly affected by the locality –producing capabilities of larger –scale social formations (nation-states, kingdoms, missionary empires, and trading cartels) to determine the general shape of all the neighborhoods within the reach of their powers. (“Production of Locality” 187)

Here, Appadurai’s observations on locality production is corroborated by John Agnew’s studies, addressing the distinction between space and place. Agnew distinguishes between space and place as follows:

> Space represents a field of practice or an area in which an organization or set of organizations (such as states) operates, held together in popular consciousness by a map image or narrative story that makes the space whole and meaningful. Place represents the encounter of people with space. It refers to how everyday life is inscribed in space and takes on meaning for

> specified groups of people and organizations. Space can be considered as "top down," defined by powerful actors imposing their control and stories on others. Place can be considered as "bottom up," representing the outlooks and actions of ordinary people. (15)

Places tend to be more localised since they are connected to the familiar and the known. However, they can also encompass greater areas, contingent upon the spatial patterns of engagement, social links, and the projection of sentiments of attachment, belonging and inclusion. Agnew also identifies three geographical components for place. These integrate the unique characteristics of the place with its terrestrial position. The first is a locale or environment where a group of people spend most of their daily lives. The second is a site, or node, that connects the place to its embedded territorial area as well as to larger networks. The third is having a sense of place or identifying symbolically with a location that is unique and integral to one's identity and interests (15-16).

Simon Duncan conceptualizes locality not in the essentializing feature of geographical location. He argues, "…the term locality inevitably smuggles in notions of social autonomy and spatial determinism, and this smuggling in excludes examination of these assumptions" (247). Martin Jones also highlights the social dimension of spaces as locality-making. Social activities and interactions are involved in the acts of locality-making, through which localities are transformed from mere points of location to socio-economic–political assemblages. He assumes that if the concept of locality bears analytical value, then it is possible to attribute observed processes and outcomes to social, economic and political formations that remain uniquely configured in an existing locality, which requires a locality to

possess both material and imagined coherence. The conception of material coherence is institutional structures or territorial remit of local authority and imagined coherence is the inhabitants' sense of identity to the place and the kind of shared behaviour (Jones and Michael 36). Another famous theorist Nadia Lovell also highlights the sense of belonging to a particular place as the hallmark of locality concept, as she puts it in *Locality and Belonging*:

> Belonging to a particular locality evokes the notion of loyalty to a place, a loyalty that may be expressed through oral or written histories, narratives of origin as belonging, the focality of certain objects, myths, religious and ritual performances, or the setting up of shrines such as museums and exhibitions. (1)

Lovell argues that the twin concepts of locality and belonging may be moulded and defined by actual territorial emplacement as by memories of belonging to particular places whose physical reality is enacted only through acts of collective remembering (1).

Likewise, Mark Nuttall observes:

> Yet, "belonging" is not simply about being rooted in or connected to a piece of land, to an abstract address expressed in terms of a set of coordinates on a topographical map, but to the concrete reality of a particular place and network of close social relations. A secure sense of identity, which is achieved through the appeal to locality, community and kinship by claiming to be local and to belong, is, however, continually threatened. (54)

He also adds that local communities are affected by transformations from regional, national and global processes (54). Henri Lefebvre also emphasizes on social change

brought out by spatial change. He explains that social space includes, individual and collective social action, and social space works as a tool for the analysis of society. When regions or localities are thought of as 'contextualized space,' it can be delimiting functionally in various political, territorial, economic, administrative, social and cultural ways.

Erin B. Taylor also identifies locality as a concept which "… conjures up images of communities where cultural traditions and social networks are closely integrated and rooted in Cartesian space" (101). Taylor also acknowledges the significance of scholarly interventions on the strategies of localization. He infers that such interventions and strategies can be reckoned as effective political resources, because he argues continuous physical and cultural occupation of land underwrites claims of ownership, which in turn fuels indigenous movements (101).

Like Appadurai, Angelo Torre states that, "To exist, a place must not only be produced, but also maintained, for it is founded on intrinsically fragile social settings and interpersonal relationships that can blossom as easily as they can fade'' (193). Torre uses the term locality to refer to a place characterised by a "…matrix of human settlements, and thus of neighbours, whose intent to share resources and relationships is manifested in their ritual and political practices, their work and trade; in short, in activities that we can reconstruct from multiple documentary sources'' (1).

Thus, locality is also the context generated through techniques that strengthen the intrinsically fragile and complex relations between neighbours. It is possible to generate socially appropriate entities, empowered with shared local competences or entities that can be recognised as 'native', as properly belonging

citizens of the place, and who embody the culture, practices, and shared ways of thinking and acting. Locality is thus also a factor that generates context, creating as well as sustaining mutual relations between neighbours. From this perspective, locality interprets, maintains and materially enacts the context which it has itself generated. This is a fundamental process that explains some of the most crucial aspects of local societies and their wider connections (Torre 7).

Henrike Donner and Geert De Neve also adds another perspectival quality by stating that, "…localities are the concrete manifestation of spatial concepts, memories and practices that shape social relationships and are therefore relatively widely understood as loci for individual agency" (10). Another remarkable feature of neighbourhood or spatial locality is its role as sites for individual and collective memory. This is significant when the narratives of exclusion /inclusion or history of displacement or state politics play a decisive role in the formation of a locality. The other significant perspective on the concept of neighborhood, explained by Henrike Donner and De Neve is that they consider neighborhood as intermediary spaces, the locality that connects an individual's lived experiences to the wider networks of nations and the world. They have observed that, neighborhood remains as the site for studying culture, as it is the place where knowledge and experience of the wider world is articulated:

> Images and values of the wider world become meaningful only when translated into more localised narratives and practices located in such significant places of everyday interaction. It is precisely because of its mediating and translating role that the neighbourhood is an appropriate

> locale from where to start conceptualising the interconnectedness of places, peoples and cultures in a globalising world. (11)

Geert De Neve further says about "… the possibility that 'space', as a dynamic force in the creation of identities, can reproduce social differences by realigning caste, class and spatial positions" (21). In other words, if the politics of space allows for the disconnecting of locality and community, it allows as much for the reconnecting of identities and localities under particular circumstances.

All these observations on the concept of locality foregrounds its relevance as an analytical tool to identify spatial problematics. "Locality as an analytical concept has shifted from a national and essentialized notion to a more fluid, contested, and flexible idea, reflecting current debates across the Social Sciences and Humanities'' (Demossier 175). Demossier suggests that "Engaging critically with locality requires a major rethinking of our disciplinary contexts" (176). To sum up, all approaches to the concept of locality construction implicitly relate to spatial connections and configurations. To consider spaces as meaningful entity of settlement or habitation, everyday practices and ritual performances of social groups need to be analyzed to understand the way spatial patterns are transformed. At the same time, those practices and performances contextualize changes in spatial pattern along with new spaces evolving out of such contexts. One of the aims of locality research has to be the process "…to understand, not just the interdependencies between localities in the sense of direct links, but the ways in which, in part, the changes going on in them were products of a wider restructuring…'' (Massey, "Political Place of Locality Studies," 129). Edward Soja's *Socio-spatial Dialectics* brought forth a new materialist interpretation of spatiality by recognizing the fact that spatiality is

socially produced, and like society it exists in substantial forms, and as a set of relations between individuals and groups, an "embodiment'' of social life itself (Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* 120). Similarly, Doreen Massey also acknowledges space as the product of interrelations constituted through interactions; space is also the site of plurality, and space is also in the process of being made (*For Space* 9).

The techniques through which situated communities engage in social interactions infuse the given spaces with meanings thereby legitimizing their own sense of belonging to those spaces. Simultaneously, social contexts that are created by any dominant power structure or by external forces continue to be problematic. Hence, a critical engagement with contexts is required by the many modalities of producing a locality or ascribing meaning to a particular space. The techniques of social interactivities, shared common past or beliefs, myths and tradition or such cultural signifiers, embedded in the collective memory are invoked to assert rootedness to places. Thus, the process of socialization suffuses the physical spaces or spatial locality with significance. Likewise, this socialization of spaces which is identified as its particular value or property implicitly carries the idea of reconstruction of spaces. This reproduction or recreation of spatial locality through the ritualized social and cultural activities of the inhabitants is a dynamic process, always bringing about changes in spatial patterns. Also, enquiring the dynamics of spaces foregrounds the need for identifying the nested levels of contexts. Transformations in spatial configuration either emphasizes or privileges diverse kinds of contexts that are either produced or generated for bringing about

suchchanges. In order to determine the value or meaning of places, analysis of a few literary works has helped to identify the socialisation process.

As this study attempts to approach the concept of locality from the perspective of a spatial methodology, social dimension of spatiality is highlighted. A locality-based analysis is an attempt to connect everyday lives of individuals and communities with wider social and cultural fields. When locality is viewed as physical space, it contains the essentializing features of geography. The spatial locality with unique geographical specificities, inhabited by small communities, form the background and those micro, multi-cultural bounded spaces remain to be an important cross-road of global schemes such as travel, technological mediation and territorial politics. This spatial methodology is helpful in identifying the general spatial problem of a nation's borderlands. The literary texts selected for study focus on India's Northeast. This borderland is not conceived as a single territory or homogenous space contained within the limits of a nation. The fictional works chosen for analysis represent the ethnic communities of two Northeast Indian states – Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. These two peripheral states exist as a "… space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference" (Bhabha 212).

From the spatial perspective, India's Northeast can be viewed as a location of cultural pluralities with a different and distinct trajectory of colonial history, and as a site of post-colonial political hegemony. The shift from pre-colonial spatial patterns of Northeast India to modernity paradigms has also created fault lines in the

social map of the ethnic groups. Anthony Giddens' observations, on the consequences of modernity on localised spaces is as follows:

> In premodern societies, space and place largely coincide, since the spatial dimensions of social life are, for most of the population, and in most respects, dominated by "presence" — by localised activities. The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of modernity ... locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. (18)

The scrutiny of literary texts, representing certain communities of Northeast India is attempted to examine spatial dimensions. Here, dimensions of space at two levels are analysed: physical and social. The physical space can be identified as the distinct, negotiable and materially embedded setting for collective social activities. This physical dimension of space is the unproblematic setting for communities to socially organize and create a network of linkages within and outside. This default setting or physical property of space remains in force as long as the social and cultural narratives of the natives or communities form contexts for their own meaningful experiences and self-actualization. In other words, the importance of this dimensional aspect of space is reinforced by the processes of socialization. Meanwhile what defines the meaning and vitality of physical dimension of spaces is the context. The contexts mark the boundaries for socialization of spaces. If the contexts for the technologies of social interaction are generated from within the communities, those spaces become the unproblematic setting for the social groups to

perform and identify themselves as properly belonging to those spaces. But, if the contexts for forming a network of relationships are produced from the outside or imposed upon a group by a hierarchical organization, it may disrupt social cohesion. Hence, the native or indigenous communities unearth social and cultural practices which involve, creation, dissemination and stabilization of their sense of belonging to their own spaces. Also, those groups who have been presented as natives by outsiders attempt to redefine the parameters of legitimacy and authenticity of indigenous cultural idioms. At the same time, the way by which already existing "given" spaces are valued and given legitimacy can be considered as the processes of socialisation.

The writers from Northeast India attempt to use their creativity to get proper representation both in literature and literary historiography. Northeast lives only in the imaginations of the mainstream Indians due to lack of knowledge about the place and the people:

> But much of the people's ignorance of the region is due to the ill-representation of region in the knowledge database of the nation; there is hardly any mention of the region's history and culture in the educational textbooks up till the recent time. Being too less informed of the region, therefore, there is too little understanding. (Pou 226)

This region and the people are separated from the mainstream, in terms of their identity also, besides the geographical distance. In mainland India, tribals from Nagaland, Mizoram and other hill tribes often complain about the harassment to which they have been subjected to, mistaking them to be foreigners from China or Vietnam by the Indian officialdom and the Indian public. There has been the most

abysmal ignorance in India regarding the people of India's north-eastern borderlands (Rustomji 12).

During the post-independent phase, Indian Writing in English has attained a commendable reception and adequate representation in Euro-centric critical studies. Nevertheless, literature from Northeast India remained in the background for several decades after independence. Poets and authors from this region are excluded from contemporary anthologies representing Indian poetry, as "their work does not follow the poetics of the Anglo-American world that continues to dominate Indian English poetry and their writing is strongly political'' (P. Das 19). Quite recently, Shillong has emerged as the centre of Indian English Writing in the Northeastern region, especially having a sensitive and vibrant poetic field. Three influential and outstanding 'Shillong Poets' Ngangom, Kharmawplang, and Nongkynrih were excluded from the anthology *60 Indian Poets* (2008*).* Similarly, Ranjit Hoskote omitted the Shillong poets from *Reasons for Belonging* (2002), an anthology of the poems of fourteen contemporary Indian poets. Ngangom and Nongkynrih have argued that the Northeast Indian author has a different creative aim which is quite different from those belonging to other parts of India. "The writer from the Northeast differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. While it may not make him a better living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry and woolly aesthetics but perforce master the art of witness" (Nongkynrih and Ngangom). As A J Thomas writes about the poets of Northeast India, "However, these poets, though writing in English, are steeped in their own local cultures, and take pride in highlighting their unique features and peculiarities. The poems of Desmond Kharmawphlang, Robin S. Ngangom,

Kynpham Sing Nonkynrih, Mamang Dai and Soibam Haripriya bear this out." (31). It is significant to highlight the following observation:

> A literary categorization based on geographical location can never be a marker for excellence or uniqueness and the writers from these regions are justly involved in resisting this tag. However, many writers do concede that the world they present through their writing is totally unknown to the readers outside the region and this novelty contributes to the popularity of their works. (Mahanta 107)

Another unique feature of most of the Northeast Indian communities' is their distinct tradition of orality. They have a vibrant story-telling culture and in pre-colonial times, the communicative spaces of story- telling generated social relationships through direct contact which was obscured by the abstract nature of socialization brought in by modern discourses like print and technology. Still the distinguishing features of oral tradition have impacted the literary production from this region. With the introduction of print culture during colonial times, collecting, re-telling, and printing the folklore of various communities were carried out as part of colonial ethnographic agenda of mapping the region for political control. In post-independence period, the task of collecting and printing oral and written literature became part of nationalist agenda for asserting ethnic identity. Those communities who were marginalized for not being in line with Euro-centric concept of modernity, were committed to take responsibility of re- creating their past by re-inventing their tradition. This deliberate attempt to re-define oral tradition was also an attempt to create a new literature of their own that would resist the colonial project of denial of literature or history to the colonized (T. Misra, *Oxford Anthology* xv).

In post-independence era, nearly three generations of writers, especially younger writers of Northeast India wrote in English. There were numerous reasons for this. Since many of them had attended English -medium schools, they were well-versed in it than in their native tongues. Most of the hill states in the area adopted English as their official language, and it ensured that English would be the first language spoken by the next generation of literate people who used it to its fullest potential in both the professional and academic spheres. As a result, the number of these new English-language writers is certain to increase. While it may be debatable if English could ever fully replace regional tongues in creative writing, it is undeniable that some of the best works from the Northeast have been written in acquired languages like English. Furthermore, it makes sense that aspiring writers may want to write in a language that would guarantee them a larger readership, considering the small numbers of the linguistic groups to which many of the writers belong (T. Misra, *Oxford Anthology* xiii-xiv).

The writers selected for study Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai, belong to the first -generation writers who have carved a niche in the literary landscape of Indian English Writers. They have the commitment "… to create an alternative world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing" (Bayoumi and Andrew, 40). As writers, they have attempted to express their profound understanding of the intricate workings of traditional cultures. Their works also deny the claim of having pan-Northeast narrative as they represent distinct regions and distinct tribes. Another shared feature of these two writers is that their stories combine elements of mythology, history, memory, and fiction in a distinct way.

Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai have authored stories that fit the pattern of oral tradition. A pattern of relationships between the village and its past and present is established by each narrative, which centres around the community. Characters in the stories inhabit both the historical and contemporary spheres, navigating issues of identity, discontent, and revolt in their interactions with one another. The storyline imitates the traditional village stories' circularity. These writers in their own distinctive ways have attempted to present the logic of the order of the traditional world to the modern reader. This world has its own coordinates of space and time, its own geographical and cultural space inhabited by specific people and infused with a moral ethos that brings with it certain ways of looking and understanding. In the process of this experimentation, these two writers have not only negotiated the formal features of the novel but have also set up an alternative structure which represents the unique features of the world they seek to portray (Mahanta 112).

Temsula Ao writes about the people of Nagaland. She was born in Jorhat, Assam and she is one of the pioneers, writing in English from this region. She has attempted to visibilize her communities' travails and sufferings in mainstream literature by choosing to write in English. Further, her choice of English language had also the potential role of taking regional lores beyond the limits of Assamiya Literature. Her first collection of stories *These Hills Called Home: Stories from A War-zone*, published in 2005 depicts the plight of Naga people living in a militarized society. All the stories in this collection are true to life with well-drawn characters. *Laburnum for my Head* is another collection published in 2013, which fetched her Sahitya Academy Award. This collection of short stories also holds a mirror to the cultural traditions of Nagas. Her last collection of stories was published in 2022

titled *The Tombstone in my Garden: Stories from Nagaland.* Apart from stories she has penned seven poems which are more like songs that are deliberate attempts to retain the cultural ethos of her community. Above all, she has made a distinguished contribution to the academic, as well as to her own community by sketching the oral tradition of her people. She has authored *Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* (2000) after researching on her people's beliefs, values, and traditional practices. Her literary sensibility is subtle to realize "…the vulnerability of all indigenous cultures in the face of rapid modernization and other related forces." She is also perceptive to look at her own culture with a fresh insight and greater appreciation when she declares, a "…sense of urgency to 'learn' more of my culture before time caused any more diffusion and loss of the lore" (*Ao Naga Oral Tradition* xi). She always felt the insider's alienation which she expressed in the following words: "… even as a native speaker of the Ao-Naga language my knowledge about my own culture was limited and peripheral. It was so because I represent the so-called 'educated, urban' fringe of the people" *(Ao Naga Oral Tradition* xi-xii). *Ao Senla's Story* (2017) is another notable work by Temsula Ao. *Once Upon a Life: Burnt Curry and Bloody Rags* (2013) is the title of her memoir. She has also published a book of literary criticism titled *Henry James' Quest for an Ideal Heroine* (1989). She has also published a collection of essays titled *On Being a Naga* (2014). With her death in October 2022, she has left an unmatched legacy not as a writer or ethnographer but more as a cultural curator by being the voice of her community. "Temsula Ao endeavoured to give her community a voice and preserve the traditional Naga identity and culture", is what Indian Cultural Portal has written in its snippets on Temsula Ao (*Indian Culture).*

Another equally notable literary figure from Nagaland, Easterine Kire belongs to Angami tribe. Baishya hails Kire, Monalisa Changkija and Temsula Ao as representing the "Van-guard of Naga writing in English." (142). Kire's novels portray the life-experiences of marginalized Naga community. *A Naga Village Remembered* (2018), by Kire is the first novel in English from Nagaland. This novel celebrates Naga warriors, who put stiff resistance against the British in the battle at Khonoma. Kire's literary works offer a vast panorama of Naga folktales, myths and stories. Kire also has to her credit, the first collection of Naga poetry titled *Kelhoukevira.* (1982). She has given global visibility to her ethnic literary mores by collecting nearly two hundred oral poems of her native tongue and translating them to English. Hence, she has the honour of popularizing the fascinating and vibrant traditional Naga culture to the world through the medium of writing. Kire's recent work *A Respectable Woman* published in 2019 also articulates the travails and miseries of Nagas entrenched in conflict and war. *Walking the Roadless Roads: Exploring the Tribes* (2019) is a non-fiction work by Kire which is about Naga settlements. She has portrayed the lives of Chang Naga tribes in her latest literary work *Spirit Nights,* published in 2022. Kire struggles with "the anxiety of language, the anxiety of negotiating a gendered pan-Indian and pan-North-eastern identity, and the problem of negotiating a balance between eulogising the past and giving voice to the lived experience of people" (P. Singh 138).

Another unparalleled writer from the Northeast, Mamang Dai, has been in the literary space representing the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Dai, well-known as a poet and novelist is from Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh. She is a former journalist, and a civil servant. She has authored books of fiction, *Legends of Pensam, The*

Black Hill, The Stupid Cupid, The Sky Queen. Her work, *Arunachal Pradesh, The Hidden Land* and *Mountain Harvest:* The *Food of Arunachal Pradesh* (2005) chronicles the culture, customs, beliefs of the communities of Arunachal Pradesh. In *The Inheritance of Words: Writings from Arunachal Pradesh* (2021*),* Dai has compiled women's writings from her state, aimed at achieving visibility to the rich literary tradition of her homeland. This collection, exclusively by women belonging to different ethnic communities of Arunachal Pradesh, includes short fiction, poems, essays, artwork, and graphic narratives. *Once Upon a Moon time* and *Escaping the Land* are some of her other notable works. She was awarded Padma Shri in 2017.

There are a host of writers who have made significant contributions to the growth of literature from Arunachal. They entered the literary sphere at a time when Assamese literature dominated the mainstream literary space and written script was also absent. The nascent field of written literature in Arunachal Pradesh is illuminated by innumerable writers like Tagang Taki, Lummer Dai, YD Thongchi, Rinchin Norbu Moiba, Samuru Lunchang, and Kensam Kenglam, acknowledged to be the first generation of literary luminaries from this state. Lummer Dai, hailed as the first Arunachali novelist published her debut novel *Pharor Xile Xile* in 1961.

Along with Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai, prominent writers like Easterine Kire, Mitra Phukan and Dhruva Hazarika are deemed to be first generation writers. Other prominent writers are Anjum Hasan, Janice Pariat, Uddipana Goswami, and Siddharth Deb. Their works reveal social reality with a unique blend of orature, myth, folktales, and customs of their society. In later years English and Hindi were introduced in the academic spheres, which gradually removed the influence of Assamese in the literary domain. *Aye-Aluk* by Jumsi Siram published in 1993 was

the first Hindi novel by an indigenous writer from the state. Yumlam Tana's *The Man and the Tiger* came out in1999, and Mamang Dai's *The Legend of Pensam* published in 2006 placed Arunachali writers in the Anglophone literary landscape. Jumsi Siram's novel *Matmur Jamoh Gumnam Swantantri Senani* and Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* were based on historical events. Siram's novel was based on Abor Expedition and the killing of Noel Williamson, whereas Dai recorded the journey of French Priest through the hills of Arunachal. According to Yater Nyokir, in Arunachal Pradesh, several young, educated writers who have recently entered the literary scene have secured a distinct place with their willingness to experiment with new styles and genres. They narrate refreshing tales with unique temperament and have established themselves in the global literary arena. Tai Tagung in his drama, *Lapiya*, has deliberately employed Arunachali Hindi, thereby drawing the attention of linguists to the Hindi spoken in Arunachal Pradesh (Nyokir).

Outlining the contours of ethnic literature in recent times, Nyokir further adds that, there is also another body of writing coming up in indigenous languages. Some important names to be mentioned are Takop Zirdo, Tony Koyu and Yabin Zirdo along with a few Hindi poets and writers such as Taro Sindik, Jamuna Bini and Joram Yalam who have made tremendous contribution to the progress of Hindi literature in Arunachal Pradesh (Nyokir). Margaret Zama, acknowledges the multivocal, multicultural literary patterns of this region:

> They usher in a different brand of literary repertoire in ways that depict their various communities, their unique linguistic registers, and the worldview that they project in an endeavour to preserve their cultural and ethnic identities. This is not to be mistaken simply as blind nostalgia for a way of life long

> lost, but must be received as voices of individual authors from societies caught in the cross current of their political and historical inheritances, personal tragedies and cultural ambivalence, voices that are involved in developing and contributing to a much larger literary consciousness that needs to be recognized and interrogated. (Ch. Zama xi-xii)

Considering the literary voices from the Northeast, Parag M Sarma considers that the oral is concomitant with the written and authors like Ao and Dai, in their works, trust on the power and impact of the apparently intangible expressive heritage and integrate it into contemporary narratives. Sarma finds that Ao and Dai represent initial periods of the emerging creative voice in English and one of the older literatures of Northeast. Assamese literature is greatly enriched by the writings of many ethnic authors, who placed faith in their essentially oral heritage only, to write into the sensibility of an emerging nation, through the form of the novel, which by then was a familiar literary genre, being engendered by the colonial experience. He makes it clear with this observation:

> In the contemporary celebratory muse of difference, where asserting distinctive ethnic markers is held up as some sort of a deliverance from appropriative and suffocating overarching narratives imposed from above, the imperative is perhaps to understand the creative dynamics that went into the fiction created by ethnic voices like Yeshe Dorje Thongchi, Lummer Dai, Rong Bong Terang and others, who primarily wrote in the Assamese language about their land and people. (38)

The writers from Arunachal Pradesh have crossed linguistic barriers only to create a literature of their own (T. Misra, *Crossing Linguistic Borders* 653). Despite

having innumerable scholarly and critical articles on Northeast India, they are confined to either addressing political violence or probing the impact of modernization in Northeast India. Prasanta Kumar Nayak analyses the impact of Globalization on local cultures using Northeast as an example. Nayak concludes that there is mutual interaction between global forces and local cultural practices. Though he raises concern that globalisation will eradicate most of the customs and belief systems that are intrinsic to a culture, the emotional and psychological context in which individuals live seems to be something having a strong impact that the local cultures cannot just be eradicated ("Dialectics of Globalisation" 267). John Samuel has attempted to explore the complex and wide ranging ethnopolitical issues and socio-linguistic configuration in Northeast India. He records:

> The alienating mechanism in the formative process of nationality was induced by the colonial policy of linguistic hegemony and ethnic isolation. During the British rule the tribal communities of the hill area were virtually estranged from the plain civilisation, by the enforcement of the inner line system of 1873 and the Excluded Area Act of 1935. The admirable linguistic and literacy activities and socio-cultural transformation undertaken by the missionaries, along with the proselytization, paved the way for cultural assimilation, and language convergence of varying degree among the tribal communities, and this eventually helped the assimilated groups to develop their own nascent ethno-political identity. (92)

Birendranath Datta's work, *Cultural Contours of North-East India* is a collection of essays analyzing manuscripts, oral traditions and some performative traditions of Northeast. Despite the fact that substantial research on North-east India

is gaining momentum, cultural and critical repositioning of northeast studies has become an urgent matter. It is also necessary, "to understand the internal structure, the psyche or the cultural construction of tribal society" (Mallick 359).

Namratha Pathak and L C Gracy notes on the women writers from North - East India that, "In the women's writing in the North-East, there are attempts to find one's own space within the realm of feminist imagination and culture building." (xiv). They have also observed that "What the women writers from the North-East do is to claim equality in terms of historical specificity and to create an idiom of resistance" (xiv). In the book titled, *Women's Writings from North-East India*, the editors have compiled essays concretizing exclusive female experience which" renders the essays therapeutic and instructive" (xv). Tilottama Misra points out Northeast Indian writers' dilemmatic situation when confronted with orality and print modes of communication:

> Most of the communities from northeast India can pride themselves for possessing a vibrant story telling tradition. The culture of the 'face to face' communities which is distinguishable from the abstract nature of social relationships in the 'modern' world, is a distinguishing feature of the oral and it has continued as the dominant influence on the literary creations from the region. (*Oxford Anthology* xv)

Adding to this, Sarma also recognizes the position of orality in literary space, by acknowledging that for the different ethnic communities of the region, the written is an extension and continuation from the oral tradition. For Temsula Ao, and Mamang Dai, the oral and the written often straddle the same narrative space. Most of the pre-colonial communities of this region were oral societies, where verbal expressive

behaviour like folk songs, myths, and tales tried to harmonize the community to its environmental and cultural ecology (Sarma 38).

Among the first publishing editors to highlight Northeast Indian literature as a separate sub-genre of Indian English literature is Indu Swami. She attempts to expose new literary movements in Northeast India through her writings. Her writings aim to disprove the prejudice against Northeast Indian literature. Some examples of these works are *Exploring Untouched Shades of North-East Indian Literature in English: A Critical Understanding (2010), Multi-Ethnic Poetry in English from North-East India* (2012), *Voices from the Hills: North-East Indian English Poetry* (2011), and the two volumes of *Exploring North-East Indian Writings in English*. By challenging the existing critical canon, she has attempted to highlight readers' excitement in this new body of work by giving them accurate information about Northeast Indian literature.

Though there have been many published works on Northeast India, attempting to focus on the problems that the region faces, only a very few are as comprehensive and meticulous as *Northeast India Through the Ages: A Transdisciplinary Perspective on Prehistory, History, and Oral History,* edited by Rituparna Bhattacharyya. A substantial portion of the political, social, and cultural histories of the Northeast have been written by "experts" who are either outside of the region or local experts who typically concentrate on a single area or problem. These drawbacks are addressed in Bhattacharyya's edited collection because the authors not only have firsthand knowledge of the local issues, but also speak for themselves. Certainly, this edited volume presents the 'troubled periphery' with unbiased approach, as much as the majority of scholarly works produced in the last

few years. Though there has been a trend to represent the conflict in Northeast India as an ongoing struggle between nation and ethnic groups intended to subvert sovereignty claims of the nation, the articles in this collection provide an objective analysis of the region conducted through an examination of archaeological findings, ethnic histories, oral traditions, and ethnic affinities. This edited volume deviates from the trend of nationalism and ethnonationalism by approaching the region objectively from the perspective of an insider.

Writings from and on India's Northeast, an insurgency tainted terrain, are attempts demanding representation in literature as well as creative imaginings to showcase indigenous cultural practices. All critical and academic achievements and writings on Northeast are engagements with violence and conflict. Nevertheless, there are narratives addressing socio-political complexities and cultural practices of the region and on fast vanishing enchanting treasure trove of oral folklores:

> In the absence of any written history, the numerous myths, legends, tales, and names, as well as other aspects of the tradition, have been the only link between the historic past and the present. (Ao, *Ao Naga Oral Tradition* 175)

The Western attitude of authenticating written word as true history has shadowed the credibility of orality but as Ao tells, "The storytellers, singers, and raconteurs have been the custodians and transmitters of this 'history' from generation to generation" (175).

Almost all academic writings on Northeast India address the political and social issues specific to this region and have laid bare or made even starker the challenges faced by hill tribes: the essential conundrum of borderland existence. Sarkar notes,

> A re-imagining of the region known variously as Extended Eastern Himalayas, Upland Monsoon Asia, or Zomia, allows new learnings to emerge as we pay attention to the lived experience of populations kept apart by the boundaries created by 'Area Studies'. This post-World War II trope used conceptual borders and essentially homogenous regions and largely ignored social realities of the borderlands. As a result, the geographies of 'knowing' created geographies of 'ignorance', leaving the margins or borderlands as spaces where social and human construction is more complex and obscure than it appears. (2)

The study of borderlands from a historical perspective is suitable to address the issues specific to people living "in the spaces between geographies" (Sarkar 2). Hence, those narratives of memory or oral tradition and practices and experiences of those communities living in the fringes, when mapped in the literary landscape, allow a reconstruction of people's self-images and perceptions, and help to explore how these influence political, social and economic behaviours (Sarkar 2).

Northeastern India of post-colonial time exists as an extended version of colonial spatial imaginaries. The spatial politics of colonial era has induced the Northeasterners to assert their claim to territorial rights based on ethnicity. Sanjib Baruah suggests that the reinventing of local cultural practices is inevitable to understand colonial spatial order. Baruah cites the example of the annual Jonbil mela where the descendant of the Gobha king presides over a fair in which Tiwas, Khasis and Karbis scattered over the colonial hill-plains, trade edible roots in exchange for fish. An appreciation of such "…idiom of remembered tribalhood and primitivism, underscore the need to fundamentally rethink the political idiom of

territoriality and indigeneity in this 19th century" (S. Baruah, "Territoriality, Indigenity" 19). Moreover, the rediscovery of local spatial practices can also, be presented as resistance to ethnic reductionism of colonial knowledge.

The eastern frontier of India is "…located in the Indian National imaginary as distant, violent and backward" (McDuie-Ra, *Northeast Migrants* 35). Also, in India there exists diverse regions with different and unique socio-cultural practices. The distance between the mainland and Northeast Indian states is qualitatively different from the gap between India and other states. It is quite clear that a coherent national society is not traceable in India since regions and people throughout the nation are heterogenous groups. Hence, the social and cultural constructs within the nation differ with each other, and these differences are obvious, and often articulated forcefully at the local level. However, they harmonize with the larger national projects, though rarely without difficulties, in ways that the Northeast does not (McDuie-Ra, *Violence Against Women* 12-13). Despite the connectivity between mainland and these border States through government jobs, national education system, Indian citizenship, and other political and constitutional privileges, the separation is more prominent than the links. Duie Ra points out that:

> The national state is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of many of the institutions through which people's lives are determined such as the state government and departments, the Sixth Schedule, and the military. (*Violence Against Women* 13)

In the Northeast, colonial rule has invisibilized polyethnic socio-cultural fabric of borderland dwellers, leading to a reductive construction of communities with cultural alterities, changing them to subjects of ethnic violence and political

struggles. The public representations of Northeasterners in national imaginaries still bear the burden of colonial anthropological mores. According to Bhabha, "…colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (101). All the distinct and different communities of Northeast are enmeshed in the stereotypical image of the exotic frontier dweller from the uncivilized, unspoiled remote hill terrain of the country. The official administrative proceedings, policy and planning of the nation, continue to represent frontier peoples as backward prisoners of facile ethnic politics, requiring state guidance. Yet, people of Northeastern communities who have migrated to mainland cosmopolitan cities are influenced by external global cultural elements which have become an important part of articulating who they are and who they are not. Such global cosmopolitan cultural elements guarantee a common Northeast identity and challenge dominant stereotypes (McDuie Ra, *Northeast Migrants* 166). The British rulers were reluctant to consider hill people as part of India. Former Governor of the Assam province Sir Robert Reid's remarks highlight the extent of difference between hills and valley people, "…they are not Indian in any sense of the word, neither in origin, nor in language, nor in appearance, nor in habits, nor in outlook, and it is only by historical accident that they have been tacked to an Indian province" (Reid 19). During colonial administration, the vast frontier of Northeast was brought under varying degrees of control and organised as territorial units constitutionally within Assam but never administratively integrated. Further, several Acts and Regulations implemented by colonial rulers as part of gaining political control over hills people enhanced hills-valley differences (Hussain 20).

In a nation like India or its Northeast, ethnic identity is not considered as a major structural dimension of society. Even though the term ethnicity is etymologically used to categorise people based on racial features, now the term is used in a much broader sense to imply self-consciousness of any group of people, or collectivities either united, or closely related by certain shared experiences such as languages, religious beliefs, common cultural practices or political institutions. But this identity is also essentially a constructed category, not a significant or acceptable category in historical discourses that can bypass broader categories like class, caste or nation. Moreover, in Northeast India, ethnicity is not based on religion like communalist or similar caste-based identity in other parts of the nation. Ethnicity in Northeast India connotes the conjunction of similar consciousness, shared social patterns and cultural affinities. But the assertion of ethnic identity is always political problematic because of its separatist tendencies, challenging the format of the nation state.

While the states of Northeast India were formed by the erstwhile colonial rulers by marking boundaries in their areas of political jurisdiction, those boundaries very often lacked a convergence between state and nation. Later, the post-colonial ruling regimes took recourse to nation-building projects by seeking to forge a domestic political and social consensus to create a nation. But in the process, such states became victims of distorted nation-building techniques that rested on a centralizing drive of the state or nation. In India, within this particular dialectics, ethnic politics tended to be secessionist in nature (S. Das, “Ethnicity and Nation-Building” 680). The focus area of Northeast Indian studies is fixated either on

separatist insurgency politics or the incompatibility of ethnic groups to assimilate themselves into the projects of modern nation.

The migrants from Northeast in cities like Delhi engage in place-making practices by building neighbourhoods. Mc Duie-Ra's studies on Northeast migrants in Delhi showcases the processes and experiences of ethnic minority migrants, settled in mainland India. Duie-Ra's ethnographic study offers insight to the production of locality by the frontier minorities in a cosmopolitan city. She writes:

> The 'Northeast map' of Delhi is a collage of urban spaces where migrants have established a presence in order to navigate, negotiate, and survive the city. In doing so, Northeasterners enact complex and multi-layered identities. Parochialism and ethnic tensions from the frontier travel to Delhi, but a pan-Northeast solidarity that is virtually extinct back home characterises the migrant community in Delhi. At times the boundaries of this community extend to include migrants from across the Himalayas, mostly Ladakhis, Nepalis and Tibetans, and Burmese, especially members of ethnic minority groups sharing lineage and often faith with Northeast communities. (*Northeast Migrants* 14-15)

In India's Northeast, colonial cartographic process introduced dispersal and separation of ethnic communities. The drawing of boundaries and borderlines by colonial administrators discarded the primordial spatial patterns of communities based on social structure. The drawing and redrawing of the political map of North-East India has created social unrest and discontented communities as ethnic bonds failed to align with state-defined boundaries. Sanjoy Hazarika, in his book,

Strangers No More: New Narratives from India's Northeast has analysed that there is always "a sense of political, economic and historic alienation added to the fault lines of geography and ethnicity; this in turn has ensured that distances have grown in every sense of the word between the Northeast and the rest of India" (343). N. William Singh reiterates the point in *Becoming Something Else: Society and Change in India's North East,* that the re-drawing of political map of Northeast India in the post-colonial period, was only a hurried exercise in political engineering, which was carried out without considering the precolonial traditional territories of the various distinct ethnic groups of the region" (xiv). `Manash Pratim Borah makes a generalised statement on the writings from Northeast as follows:

> … literature written in this region is camouflaged representation in fictional form of social reality representing typical Northeastern socio-political experiences and violence along with social commentaries of socially committed writers. The literature of Northeast India, which has achieved a lot of ascendancy in the last few decades, has not only used violence and socio-political experiences as thematic interest but also foregrounded them as recurring motif. (15)

Though the writers from Northeast India are highly individualistic in their approach and narrative styles, collectively their works represent the cultural ethos and political turmoil of the region. They also make attempts to shape their political destiny in their writings and project a vision that transcends narrow ethnic mapping. Though the region as a whole is misrepresented as an area of violence and conflict, writers feel the commitment to move beyond the stereotypical representations of

Northeasterners as savages or primitives. They fetch in real stories in their writings to celebrate and promote their ethnic identity.

To sum up, in this thesis, it is attempted to reconceptualize locality from the perspective of a spatial methodology, highlighting the social dimensions of spatiality. A locality-based approach tries to reconnect everyday lives of individuals and communities with wider social and cultural fields. Again, physical spaces or such essentializing specificities of locality or local communities remain in the background, and the micro, cultural bounded spaces prevail as an important crossroad of global schemes such as travel, technological mediation and territorial politics. This locality approach based on spatial methodology begins with the dimensions of space — physical and social. The social dimension of space incorporates another component in spatial methodology namely properties of space since one of the spatial properties is determined by its proclivity to gather and configure. The significance of spatial property revolves round the key variable: contexts. To be precise, context determines the exclusivity, distinctiveness and meaning of spaces. So, in the analysis of literary texts the contextual patterns and differences that bring out social changes are also highlighted to identify the spatial reconfigurations.

This study has been structured into five chapters. The first chapter, "Introduction" outlines the research proposition, objectives, scope and methodology followed by an elaboration of theoretical concept used for analysis. It is essential to decipher the complex socio-political and cultural realities of Northeast India to conduct a proper study of that region. Chapter Two, titled, "Framing the Region:

Bordering and Territorialization in Northeast India", traces political, and historical trajectories of Northeast India to find out the processes of territorialization and the transformation to state-spaces. This chapter provides a historical overview of the state formation with a focus on Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, supported by theoretical inputs on the concept of territory. Chapter Three titled, "The Nationalized Space in the Literaryscape of Nagaland: Contexts and Contestations," intends to make a scrutiny of the writings of Temsula Ao to analyze the spatial contexts for social organization and for an understanding of the lived experiences of the people of Nagaland. Her two collection of short stories *Laburnum for my Head* and *These Hills Called Home: Stories from A War Zone* are selected for analysis. These stories present powerful characters belonging to Naga community and portray terror-ridden lives of Naga people. Their history is marked with violence and bloodshed. Their nationalist aspirations, inter- tribal conflicts, violence unleashed by nation-state's governing policies are documented in her stories. Both collections detail the cultural and traditional life forms of Naga people. Chapter Four is titled, "Negotiating Modernities: Changes in the Social Milieu of Arunachal Pradesh". This chapter aims close reading of the works of Mamang Dai to reflect upon the indigenous cultural practices of ethnic groups and analyze how social ties contribute to the production of locality. The works selected are *The Black Hill* and *Legends of Pensam.* In *The Black Hill,* Dai introduces two tribes of Arunachal Pradesh: Abor and Mishmi. Though the story is set in the 19th century, all the intricacies and complexities of life-worlds of these tribes are picturesquely portrayed in her work. Another work by Dai, *Legends of Pensam* introduces lifeworld of Adi community of

Arunachal Pradesh. Both the stories are a mixture of myth and history and a journey through the habitats of tribal communities, taking back to oral tradition of their community to find validation in contemporary times of change and turbulence. Fifth chapter of this study is “Conclusion” which sums up the findings.

Chapter II

Framing the Region: Bordering and Territorialization in Northeast India

Maps no longer are seen to simply represent territory but are understood as producing it; in important ways 'maps precede territory', they inscribe boundaries and construct objects that in turn become our realities.

- John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World*.

The region, labelled as India's Northeast, existed as a frontier in colonial political discourse. But, "North-East (NE) India represents a mosaic of diverse geographical features inhabited by different peoples with distinct ethnic markers. Howsoever diverse the region appears to be, the NE as an entity has been constantly shaped and reinforced by certain features, issues, and agendas" (Ngaihte 13). All terminological distinctions have not only validated a geographical reality, but also created a fault line in the cultural landscape of the region. The eight states Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Mizoram conjoined by the label Northeast are politically and culturally noncontiguous. As an exceptional geographical entity, Northeast India, lodged between Myanmar, Tibet, Bhutan and Bangladesh shares 96% of its borders with these countries and only 4% is connected to India. Hence this triangular piece of land with a longer line of international borders than the national border necessitates a complex and profound theorization of borderland discourses.

Historical perspective helps to understand state territoriality and boundary construction of India's Northeast. Such a perspective helps to understand "colonialism as History", with a clear trajectory beginning with territorial control and ending in the emergence of decolonized state-spaces (Prakash 2). Thus, "… when many imperial and colonial territories gained their independence, these emerging nation- states were faced with the task of building national discourses and unity within state boundaries that had little meaning to their populations" (Culcasi 252). New strategies of mapping with new and varied uses for maps have accompanied the reworking and recoding of social life (Pickle 146). Hence, the creation or recreation of a region is a never-ending process. It is an ongoing process which proceeds with a number of variations and deviations. Even in contemporary times, in India, larger regions are divided into smaller ones based on distinctive regional identities and political demands for autonomy. Researchers have observed that the process of delimitation of a region or the extent of a region is not the same all through the history, and its boundary is in constant flux, in the midst of hegemonic conflicts and negotiations. Any region, being historically determined, is not a solid entity but a fluid process of configuration (Shin 23).

This chapter provides a conceptual framework for examining the construction and connotations of territories in Northeast India and it offers a rudimentary historical documentation of the transformation of the region from a frontier in colonial time to a territory later. Since territoriality is historically contingent, this chapter draws materials from historical and statistical documents and theoretical inputs on the concept of territory. This chapter starts with an outline of the history of state formation in Northeast India, focusing on Nagaland and

Arunachal Pradesh, to suggest that territories are important sites and contexts for communities to perform and produce social actions. As Jilangamba observes:

> A historically informed interrogation of territories will bring to light the socially constructed and ideologically grounded nature of territorialities. To look at the making of the northeast frontier as historical practices and processes is to be aware that the different historical moments and initiatives changed the very register in which the territoriality of the Northeast came to be understood and practised. (180)

Nevertheless, this chapter attempts to delineate the geographical division of spaces of Northeast India as a political discourse. Theoretical underpinnings of several scholars like Robert D Sack, Claude Raffestin, David Delaney, Ansi Paasii and Jean Gottman are outlined to provide the conceptual framework for analyzing the process of territorialization in India's Northeast. The literary works selected for study represent two states: Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The works by Mamang Dai are set in pre-colonial and colonial spaces of Arunachal Pradesh whereas Temsula Ao's stories map the post-colonial political situation in Nagaland. Hence the four literary texts are analyzed for an understanding of the politics of deconstruction of natural spaces by colonial rulers, and the reconstruction of territorial spaces in post-colonial period. While Mamang Dai's stories project the representation of non - territorialised spaces of the tribes Adis, Abor and Mishmee, Temsula Ao's stories record the lives of Naga communities inhabiting re-territorialized post-colonial nation.

For India's Northeast, cartographic practices and colonial civilizational projects have created bounded territorial spaces. The historicity of bordering and

territorialization in Northeast India will be scrutinized to have an understanding of the ways in which communities have negotiated state-centric territories. It is an attempt to study the processes of territorialization in the Northeastern Frontier of British India, focusing on the hill tracts located between the great valley of Brahmaputra in Assam, and the Chindwin in Burma, from the year 1826 till the emergence of these areas as state spaces. The process of territorialization in Northeast India during colonial era not only delimited geographical spaces but compartmentalized communities. In order to unfold the key aspects of territorialization in Northeast India, theoretical perspectives on human territoriality are analyzed. This thesis which proposes to figure out social interactivities of certain communities of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, the emergence of these territories as state-spaces will be outlined. At the same time, the presence of these two states in the annals of recorded history is of recent origin. The historical lineage of these states can be traced to colonialism since documentary evidences are available only from the time of British encroachment on these areas. The colonial history of these two states needs to be understood in connection with the history of Assam as the hill areas, lying to the north and east of Brahmaputra valley form present day Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Even when Burma and the Northeast were conquered by the British, the frontiers, for a long period, remained outside colonial control. These frontiers were inaccessible to colonial rulers, and they realized the absurdity of fighting with the fierce tribes. Hence, the British was persuaded to leave those frontiers as Unadministered Tracts. The tribes of these areas, for quite a long time were not part of modern territorial regime. As Mackenzie has noted:

> The north-east frontier of Bengal is a term used sometimes to denote a boundary line, and sometimes more generally to describe a tract. In the latter sense it embraces the whole of the hill ranges north, east, and south of the Assam valley as well as the western slopes of the great mountain system lying between Bengal and independent Burma, with all its outlying spurs and ridges. (1)

Sajal Nag has observed in "The Other Partition" that artificially and arbitrarily drawn borderlines have separated geographic spaces along with social and cultural groups. He has also noted that the partition was the consequence of colonial conquests and administrative policies, which cannot be considered as "political accident" or a mere consequence of "geographical proximity." He thinks such arguments point to the lack of geographical, historical and ethnographic knowledge of the region. He observed the following about the partition of India and Burma:

> The Indo–Burma borderlands are also a meeting point of two regions – South Asia and Southeast Asia. It is the frontier where India, Burma, China and Thailand meet. It is not just the territories of these countries that meet in these frontiers but also the people and ethnic groups who spill over the frontiers of each other's territory. Hence it is the borderland which is impossible to demarcate ethnically and there are a number of ethnic and tribal communities whose ancestral habitat crisscross the frontier. (1)

Territorial boundaries bearing colonial legacies are fragile and unstable and has always incurred internal territorial disputes. Samrat Choudhury notes:

> The territorial boundaries of Northeast India, both internal and external, are essentially colonial inheritances- and they are by and large accepted by the

> people, although there are some remaining territorial disputes not just externally between neighbouring states. Assam, for example, has boundary dispute with Mizoram Nagaland and Meghalaya. (318)

Borderlines drawn during colonial era shows paucity of geographical knowledge and unfamiliarity of ethnic configurations. Thus, the Northeast Indian communities face the complexities of the dilution of ethnic boundaries due to the marking of arbitrary borders. Many a time, the borders were marked without cognizance of the local context, and by a policy outline which considered ethnic groups as pre-modern, and lacking development and progress. This also has been "the key experiential and ideational challenge" (Kikhi 142). Boundaries are not to be considered as simple cartographic representation of territories, but they are strategic markers for creating identity, indigeneity and are producers of included/excluded dichotomy. Borderlines also represent contested notion of dividing up spaces. As Nira Yuval Davis suggests, "Physical borders are there not only by virtue of tradition, wars, agreements, and high politics; they are also made and maintained through other cultural, economic, political, and social activities, which are aimed at determining who belongs and who does not" (7).

Colonial mapping was instrumental in defining territories and transforming frontiers to state spaces. The topography of Northeast India before colonial time was a shifting space with Tibet and Bhutan to the North, Burma to the East, and Bengal to the West and South. Three valley kingdoms of Assam, Cachar and Jaintia which are now in Assam, Manipur and Tripura existed within this space along with numerous tribal chieftainships in the surrounding hills. Before the coming of the British, the Ahoms, who came from the Shan region of Myanmar, settled in the

eastern part of Brahmaputra valley and ruled Assam for nearly six hundred years. Later in the early nineteenth century, the British invaded Ahom ruled territories, displaced them and established their rule. Until the second half of 20th century, greater part of the region which is today known as the Northeast was undivided Assam made up of Brahmaputra and Barak valleys and the encompassing hill areas.

Historically, the processes of emergence of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh as states can be located at the Anglo-Burmese War in 1822. For India's Northeast, the First Anglo-Burmese war was only a colonial hegemonic discourse which created flimsy boundary layout and territorialisation. The Treaty of Yandabo of 1826, which wrapped up the war, laid the foundation of British rule in Brahmaputra valley which formed the bulk of undivided Assam. When Assam was directly brought under colonial rule, the surrounding hill areas of north and east parts remained 'frontier.' These hill areas came under British control at different times within a decade. Though these spaces remained unnavigable, they were under the surveillance of the British officials because they remained strategic entry and exit points to Assam. At the Treaty of Yandaboo, King of Ava ceded the territories of Assam, Manipur, Rakhine (Arakan) and the Taninthayi (Tenasserim) coast south of Salween River, to the East India Company, thus putting an end to Burmese control over these territories. The Burmese also agreed to cease all interference in Cachar and Jaintia hills. The British control and rule in Brahmaputra valley started at the end of First Anglo-Burmese war. After the war in 1826, the British government attempted to consolidate power and authority in Assam, Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia. In 1828, lower Assam came under British rule. British annexed Cachari kingdom to Assam in 1832, and two years later Jaintia kingdom was also merged

with Assam. Later Goalpara and Sylhet districts of then Bengal were also linked to Assam. Though the British replaced Ahom dynasty and ruled lower Assam, Upper Assam remained a princely state till 1838, but under the management of British officials. Upper Assam was retained by Ahom rulers only for a brief period and by the end of 1842, it was formally attached to British empire. Assam was categorised as "Non- regulation Province." When the colonialists felt the need for an independent administration in the eastern portion of Bengal Presidency, partition of Bengal and Assam was implemented by the British. In 1874, Assam including Sylhet was separated from Bengal to form Assam chief commissionership which was known as Northeast Frontier. As per Article 2 of the Treaty, the hill tribes of Northeast Frontier, the Nagas, Khasis, Garos, Mizos and tribes of Arunachal Pradesh were categorized as dependencies of Assam (Gait 325).

In 1874, when Assam was reorganized as a province, part of Naga hills were already annexed to it. The new composite province was formed by combining four socially and culturally disparate groups: hills district, districts of Brahmaputra valley or Assam proper, Goalpara of same valley having a mixed culture, Sylhet and Cachar segregated from Bengal. The colonial commercial interests in Assam intensified the impetus to define the hill tracts and subjugate the tribal communities. The entire Northeast frontier, the hills, remained a buffer zone situated in between the imperial Britain and aggressive Burma, till the second half of 19th century. After two more wars on a financially and politically emaciated Burma in 1852 and 1885 the British swallowed up the Northeast in 1885. The political economy of development in Assamese territory compelled colonialists to interfere in neighboring hills and not to leave frontiers as unadministered tracts.

The process of colonial intervention in frontier, unadministered tracts gradually began with the flourishing of tea industry in the plain regions of Assam. "It was only the growth of the tea industry and other commercial interests in Assam that prompted the adoption of a more acquisitive policy, leading in time to the annexation of Naga, Lushai and Chin territory in particular'' (Heath 15). The threat of Burmese invasion also prompted the British to change the policy of indifference to a policy of annexation towards the tribes of hills adjoining Assam, Cachar and Jaintia kingdoms. As Shimray has noted this:

> The policy of non-interference was followed by area expeditions in order to quell the opposition of hill communities to the colonial extension. Eventually, the hill communities were brought under different territorial administrations and the concept of territorial politics, unknown to the hills was introduced. (4637)

Social patterns and interactions of different tribal communities inhabiting the hill tracts surrounding Brahmaputra valley were not arranged by decisive or rigid spatial differentiation, but the entry of colonial rulers separated communities not only politically, but on socio-cultural terms also. For introducing territorial regime in the primordial spaces of frontier- dwellers, colonial rulers realized the need to subjugate them for political control. Moreover, to safe-guard the commercial prospects of plains of Assam, they felt the need to prevent trading and other economic activities between hills- plains communities. Hence, the idea of separatism was implemented through various strategies. Apart from subduing tribal encroachment on the plains through military expeditions, other tools like mapping, and land surveys were successfully implemented by colonial administrators. They realised the power of

map as a device or a plan to delimit the environment and the practices that take place in it. They identified map as an explicit tool for the transformation of social, economic and political spaces of the state. As Pickles has identified, maps and land surveys have the potential to substitute the use of military force for control. He observes that these can be used as systems of social control through spatial strategies of concentration and increased visibility. He acknowledges that the map and the institutions within which it was produced can function as an archetype of what Michel Foucault refers to as a power-knowledge. His observations on the map as a device for social control and the institutions that produce it are as follows:

> That is, a discourse, practice and set of institutions that delimit potentialities through the control of space-time-action and thereby produce certain types of subjects, actors and places. Power-knowledge is thus a form of power that is at the same time both delimiting-controlling and enabling: that is, it is a form of productive power. (Pickles 111)

The primordial space of hill communities was appropriated by colonial administrators for introducing territoriality principles. Gradually, *terra incognita* of pre-colonial times was transformed to a colonized space with well- defined territorial limits, and social clusters remained non-contiguous with political boundaries. The process of territorialization of borderless, non-state spaces of Northeastern region was initiated by the British at the end of Anglo- Burmese war. In short, in the Northeast, colonial cartographic practices created bounded territorial spaces which excluded internal social relations. “The British also transferred the Northeast as a civilizational space to a colonial space. In this process, the erstwhile natural space was first deconstructed and then reconstructed. Border and boundary

consciousness was raised up more than ever before" (Chakraborty and Asok Kumar 12).

As David Ludden points out, that a map is a peculiar kind of visual text with some invisible components in it. "Equally invisible in maps are social relations of mapping that produce maps and authorize their interpretation ("Presidential Address: Maps in the Mind" 1057). Prior to British intervention, various Naga communities led autonomous lives in their own natural traditional territories. The war-like frontier tribes collectively known as "Nagas'' inhabited the northern slope of Patkai range facing Manipur and Cachar and the low hills to the south of Sivsagar district. Till the coming of the British, the communities inhabiting the hills were engaged in hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation for livelihood. Their political institutions followed a decentralized system with each tribe having a chief in their own clans or villages. Though inter-tribal feuds were rampant, they led autonomous lives with little interference from outsiders. The first Anglo-Naga contact happened in 1832.The British entered Naga territory for surveying the possibility of a strategic road communication between Assam and Manipur. Captain Jenkins, Captain Pemberton and Captain Gordon came to Naga Hills to explore the possibility of road construction between Assam and Manipur. In spite of fierce resistance from Angamis, the British subdued Naga resistance. The British advancement along the foothills of Assam by developing tea plantations were also thwarted by the Nagas. In between the years 1839 to 1850, the British made nearly ten punitive expeditions to Naga inhabited territories to expand accessibility and to control resources. But facing strong opposition from the Nagas the colonials were forced to adopt the strategy of non-interference policy in 1852. The Nagas even

raided the villages in the plains which were under direct British control. Hence the British adopted several methods to subdue Nagas. At first, the rulers of Manipur and Cachar were commissioned to check Naga attacks. Since it did not prove to be effective, the Kuki tribesmen were authorized to combat Naga invaders (Srikanth and Thomas 99). Between 1840 to 1870, the hill communities organized constant raids on tea plantations and on colony administered valleys, thus obfuscating colonial territoriality. The unceasing Naga onslaught induced the British to form the district of Naga hills to bring them under political control. As part of administrative control over Nagas, Deputy Commissioner for Naga Hills district was appointed at Samaguting in 1866 (Barpujari 68). Thus, Naga Hills district emerged and remained a frontier district of the British controlled Assam. Later the country of Lhota Nagas was annexed in 1875, the Angami Nagas in 1878, and Ao Nagas in 1889 (Guha 2). The next strategy formulated by the British was to implement the Inner Line Policy Regulations of 1872, which conferred on them the right over land and resources, and accessibility regulation. The maps attached at the end of this chapter shows the unadministered areas as well as the years of gradual annexation of hills to the Assam Province. Moreover, the Inner Line separated the hills people and plainsmen and instilled a feeling among them that they were racially and culturally distinct groups. Along with these bureaucratic devices the British rulers devised plan to commission Christian Missionaries to humanize Nagas, who were savage head hunters in colonial imagination, and to infuse pro-British feelings in them (Srikanth and Thomas 99). In 1878, for a direct and total subjugation of Nagas the headquarters of Hills district was shifted to Kohima. Finally, in 1880 at Khonoma, the organized resistance movement of Nagas within the British administered area collapsed. In

1881, Nagas dwelling in Naga Hills District of Assam came within British administrative jurisdiction. Till 1947, Naga Hills remained a frontier district of Assam.

After 1881, colonial administration was based on the policy of annexation and expansion and not founded on defined territorial boundary. During colonial administration, Naga Hills fell under three zones: Naga hills under direct British governance or administered areas; Naga Hills with only partial colonial political control, and areas which were free zones or unadministered areas. The Naga people dwelling on the Southern, Western and Northern side of Brahmaputra valley were directly administered by the British. At the same time certain Naga territories were only politically controlled by the British officers with the help of tribal chiefs, as those areas did not yield much economic benefits. The tribes who lived on the borderlines of present-day Arunachal and Burma were left unadministered. The British, pursuing the policy of gradual annexation, eventually amalgamated politically controlled areas with administered areas. Generally, the history of British relations with Nagas falls under four stages: 1) the period of control from without, by a series of expeditions, 2) the period of control from within, 3) total non-interference, 4) a second period of control from within, merging into British territory (Allen B C 9). The Daflas, the Abors, the Akas, the Mishmis and other similar tribes retaliated against colonial military advancements to Sadiya Lakhimpur and Balipara tracts. When such armed undertakings targeted to control belligerent tribes and to protect frontier with China flopped, they executed another governing tactic which was the implementation of Assam Frontier Tract Regulation of 1880. This Regulation was gradually extended to unadministered frontier tracts, Sadiya,

Lakhimpur and Balipara inhabited by Abors, Mishmis and others, and they were placed under the administrative control of the governor of Assam and not under the government of Assam. Consequently, an Assistant Political Officer was posted at Sadiya. These unadministered areas located between the settled districts of Assam and international border with Tibet and Burma was named as North East Frontier Tract (NEFT) in 1914. But after a few years plain areas of NEFT were merged with Assam and remaining areas of NEFT merged with Naga Tribal area also known as Teunsang. It was later rechristened as North East Frontier in 1954. In 1972, the North East Frontier Agency was separated from Assam to form Arunachal Pradesh. Another landmark event in the colonial history of Northeast India was the drawing of MacMahon Line in 1914, demarcating Tibet and Assam Province. In the North, the official boundary separating Tibet and British India was named after MacMahon, the British official who initiated the agreement between British and Tibetan governments. The drawing of Indo-Burma border in 1937 turned out to be another fault line in the cultural and political history of Northeast. The separation of Burma from India dispersed Nagas, Mizos, Manipuris and tribes of Arunachal Pradesh into two distinct administrative entities. The Radcliffe Line of 1947 partitioning Bengal and Assam also segregated those hill communities. In 1937, when government of Burma Act was implemented, Burma was officially separated from British India. At the same time, under the Government of India Act of 1935, Backward Tracts of Assam were categorized into ‘Partially Excluded Areas’ and ‘Excluded Areas’. Balipara, Sadiya and Tirap Frontier tracts came under ‘Excluded Areas’ and were loosely administered by the British. After independence, these Excluded areas became part of Assam government and Sadiya Tract was again separated into Abor

and Mishmi Hills. But, in 1947, as per Sylhet referendum, Sylhet was again cut off from Assam and annexed to East Bengal. Meantime the Nagas who backed up British Indian government in the World War set up the Naga Club in 1918 comprising of war veterans, government officials and village headmen. In 1951, Teunsang territory of North East Frontier Agency was clubbed with Naga Hills district, which was reorganized as a Union Territory named as Naga Hills Teunsang Area which was later renamed as Nagaland. On 1st December 1963, Nagaland was upgraded to the status of a full-fledged state. The process of state formation was based on separation and amalgamation of geographic areas.

In the case of India's Northeast, the concept of territory can be contextualized as colonial authoritarian regime which included military expeditions, and the dynamics of spatial connectivity and movement. This modern concept of territorialization in Northeast is introduced against the unboundedness of communities of precolonial times who have considered territory as a possession and not an object of political rule (Elden 758). As Mamang Dai reminds in *The Black Hill*, the "mere features of a landscape ignited love and ferocity'' (70). "The land belongs to us. It is the soul of our ancestors. Where would we be, what would we do, without this land?" (70). Also, territory as a concept cannot be imagined as an unproblematic geographic area or an assumed given and territorialization is an everchanging process contingent upon shifting contexts. Kajinsha's father in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* travelled to the wilderness beyond the mountains in the north and reached the land of lamas to stake claim to settle there, and it was a period of war and rivalry; a period of struggle for survival (75).

To have an understanding of the processes of territorialization in North East India, it will be useful to draw upon the various conceptualizations of territory by different scholars. Moreover, the concept of territory has specific connotations in different cultures and disciplines. In political rhetoric, territory refers to organizational principles which bears jurisdictional parameters whereas, social meaning of the concept involves a sense of belonging to a place and related settlement norms. Various approaches on the notion of territory point to fixed and stable boundaries as prerequisite for political narration of territory which in turn problematizes the dynamics of social discourses embedded in territorial configurations. As Tuathail puts it, "… territory is a regime of practices triangulated between institutionalizations of power, materializations of place and idealizations of the 'people'" (140). Hence, the contexts upon which territories are created or recreated vary from bureaucratic powers to the dynamics of geographical connectivity. As such, actualities of a territory entail boundary construction and technologies of spatial occupation and movement.

Territoriality, according to Robert D Sack, is basically an attempt made by an individual or a group to influence or control people, phenomena and relationships, by delimiting, and controlling geographic area. He identifies it not as an instinct or drive but rather it is a complex strategy, and it is also the device through which people construct and maintain and organize space. Quite clearly, Sack defines territoriality as a spatial strategy, specifically human territoriality, which is an attempt to control space primarily by marking boundaries. Hence, it is a geographical manifestation of power and politics. Sack identifies territoriality as a conscious domination over space; the power and functions of social actors are not

given much emphasis in his approach. His conceptualization does not consider the strategies, mechanisms and instigations of social actors in gaining as well as resisting control over space. He finds that territory itself is the agent which creates power relations since it makes relations impersonal. He details ten tendencies of territoriality of which classification, communication and enforcement are given predominance (55-56).

Another prominent theorist, Anssi Paasi also considers territories as social processes in which social space and social action are inseparable. He approaches the idea of territories as not frozen frameworks where social life occurs. He observes that they are made and, given meanings or destroyed in social and individual action. Hence, they are typically contested and actively negotiated (110). He also remarks that meaning of territories changes in different spatial categories like state, nation, and boundary. The challenges for territory and territoriality are apparent in the interplay of power and politics and in the processes involved in the socialization of spaces. Paasi also views that spaces are transformed to territories by way of social discourses, the instances of which occurs in all social contexts – from neighborhood to transnational spaces.

Since territoriality is not about occupying a geographically bounded space another prominent theorist Claude Raffestin's conceptualization of human territoriality is also analyzed. Theoretical investigation of territoriality based on Raffestin's conceptual approach enables to address the interrelations between social actors and space which leads to territorial linkages and conflicts. As for Raffestin, territory and territoriality emerge out of human activities carried out on a specific geographical space. He speaks about production of territory, analogous to Henri

Lefebvre's "Production of Space." Territory, in his view, is the result of the production of actors or it is produced when a community projects labor-energy and information – into a given space. Claude Raffestin's theoretical project on human territoriality provides ample scope to reassess the interconnection between society and space. Though many theorists have attempted to view territoriality from a narrow politico-geographical perspective or as a spatial strategy, Raffestin attempts to approach territoriality from a broader relational perspective. Raffestin describes human territoriality as:

> the ensemble of relations that societies, and consequently the humans that belong to them, maintain, with the assistance of mediators, with the physical and human environment for the satisfaction of their needs towards the end of attaining the greatest possible autonomy allowed by the resources of the system (Raffestin and Butler 129).

Primarily, Raffestin understands territory as a social product which is generated from space or territory or can be viewed as a socially appropriated space. Raffestin's conceptualization of territory involves "reordering of spaces." Moreover, Raffestin's territoriality brings out the multidimensionality of social life in a relational perspective. He lays stress on the processes of mediation of social actors for initiating relationship to alterity or social environment and exteriority or physical environment. Thus, the meaning and significance of territory, in Raffestin's approach lies in the social processes and relationships that produce it or simply territory becomes the producer and product of social life. In Raffestin's definition, territory cannot be thought of as given but it is a socially created space. Hence key concepts in Raffestin's approach on territorialisation involves establishing

relationship with physical and social environment, role of mediators and attaining autonomy within the system.

Raffestin's relational approach on territoriality puts emphasis on the role of mediators in establishing relationship with physical environment and social environment. According to Raffestin, the process of territorialisation is significant than the product or territory itself. Hence, mediators which can be instruments or techniques, are significant in his definition of territory.

To complement these conceptualizations, another prominent theorist, David Delaney's reflections on territory is also outlined here. Delaney defines territory "as a bounded social space that inscribes a certain sort of meaning onto defined segments of the material world. A simple territory marks a differentiation between an "inside" and an ''outside'' (Delaney 15). Delaney also conceptualizes territory as social construct, and historically contingent. He emphasizes the social processes and practices that condition territoriality. Territoriality, he says, is spatial organization of individuals, groups, and societies. As such, manifestations of territoriality also differ on a temporal scale, as well as on dissimilar social patterns. Delaney rightly puts it that social order itself is unintelligible without surveying its manifestation in territoriality. When spaces are demarcated by clearly defined boundaries, such bounded spaces are made meaningful through social interactions. These actions and interactions are prevalent on all geographical scales, from micro to macro levels. As a bounded social space, territory and its boundaries become meaningful depending on the kind of social relationships it connotes. Delaney shows that contingencies of territory can be historical, political, or social.

Among the communities of Northeast India, inside-outside spaces before the beginning of colonialism were created not based on political boundaries, but on the communal boundaries created by societal identities. So territorial conflicts were either part of inter-tribal feuds or triggered by social causes. In *The Black Hill* Dai shows how territorial affiliations are established through marriages, and at the same time how the abduction of a girl from a different tribe initiates territorial conflicts. In pre-colonial era of Northeast India territorial conflicts were contingent on social issues and not by political causes. People fought hard to win land, and as Kajinsha's father always used to say, "Land is a place of ownership and rest" (112). If a man has land, he can live with his family for generations and generations by planting crops and fishing in the river, and he can stake a claim over the land by clearing it. It was his wish to be a powerful and stronger chief that he married Marpa's niece, his first wife *(TBH* 114). In pre-colonial Northeast India, the process of territorialization was not a politically initiated urgency, but rather territory was a social product. Mamang Dai's works *The Black Hill* and *Legends of Pensam* set in pre-colonial India delineates the beginning of territorial settlement of clans. In *Legends of Pensam,* Dai describes the origin of Pigo town settlement, when the first -generation men and women, following the path of river settled on a fertile land, which later changed to a town (146). In the case of Mebo village, when tribesmen from mountains saw the fertile clear space in the middle of forest, they ended their journey to settle there *(TBH* 27). Kajinsha in the *The Black Hill* was born in a village beyond Dau River in Mishmee Hills which was nameless and unmapped with only three clans; if the clans moved that was the end of the village (6).

Usually, power and politics are blocked out in territorialization process if it is hinged on normative or ideological requirements. Otherwise, as Delaney posits, particular territorializations are disputed. Right from international boundary dispute to private property allocation right can be equally challenged. With colonial intrusion to frontiers of Northeast, political control was imposed upon the tribes and top-down hierarchical model of territorialization gave way to clan-based mode of territorialization. Analysing the political history of Northeast India, Samrat Choudhury views that "… the process of political integration of the northeast into India that started with the Treaty of Yandabo, between the East India Company and the Burmese King is substantially complete — not only administratively but mentally (317). Colonial civilizational projects like proselytization and technological advancement like road building mediated interrelations between society and territory. Raffestin emphasizes the instruments, codes and techniques through which interrelations between social actors and territory are mediated. Colonial commercial and Evangelical enterprises in Northeast India points to Raffestin's understanding of territory as socially appropriated space. Christian Missionaries were assigned with the task of disciplining and educating tribal communities of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Their activities and interactions have influenced and regulated social practices of communities and territories.

All these conceptualisations focus on the partitioning of geographical space which human communities use for certain purposes, and Jean Gottman identifies security to be most important. To ensure security against outsiders and within the community, access to territory needs to be regulated. In *The Significance of Territory,* Jean Gottman elaborates on the concept of territory "as the model

compartment of space resulting from partitioning, diversification and organization'' with two functions: one is security for the inhabitants and the other is to act as starting point for seeking out opportunities (14). But Gottman remarks that providing security is in contradiction with pursuance of broad opportunities because security involves regulating access and calls for isolation, but seeking opportunity implicates interdependency and interrelationship with the outside. According to Gottman, as part of civilizational projects people started demarcating in a clear way, the spaces to which they had access which resulted in different forms of territory. Gottman analyzes the close interlinking of the notion of sovereignty and territory. He suggests that the meaning of territory can be understood on a scrutiny of the relations binding sovereignty and territory. As he suggests sovereignty can be exercised only on bounded spaces and such bounded spaces are rendered useless unless it comes under a recognized sovereign power. To him, territory is a material and spatial concept that establishes link between politics, people and natural setting. He finds that:

> … the organization of space is largely determined by partitioning, which is inherent in physical diversity, but which is also politically molded and often modified in its many local details, to fit the aim of providing the various communities in the space with as much security as seems possible. (16)

He further elaborates on this organization of space as aimed at regulating access and opportunity, along with neglecting the threat of situations arising which are contrary to accepted societal norms. Any given space becomes territory only in its material manifestation.

Territoriality in Northeast India during British rule involved a form of classification by area as a means of asserting control. Territoriality was implemented as an effective strategy to enforce control over resources and communities. The potentiality of divide and conquer was strategically adopted by colonials to enforce control over aggressive tribes (Sack 58). Territories became mold or container within which tribes were forcibly settled, thereby curtailing their basic instinct of mobility. When the Ahom rulers were threatened by Burmese invasion, they sought British intervention, and the signing of The Treaty of Yandabo is the historical narrative communicating territoriality, a well-written statement about exclusion and possession. The Treaty states about randomly constructed boundaries between Burmese empire and British India. During colonial rule borderlines were drawn to demarcate inaccessible spaces, and they were categorized as "Non-regulation Province." The Inner Line of 1873 is yet another marker of territoriality. This line laid along north, east and south-eastern borders of Brahmaputra valley denied entry to inner spaces without licence. Apart from access denial, it curbed commercial exchanges between hill tribes and plainsmen, and engendered social stratification. These borderlines and boundaries are suggestive of territorial definition of social relationships instead of social definition of territories which has been the practice of pre-colonial societies (Sack 61). In pre-colonial times various tribes were defined or named referring to the territory where they belonged to or territories were socially defined as is the case with Abors, Mishmis, Adis and Lhota Nagas. But with the making of boundaries and other territorial markers, social groups were defined territorially based on the conditions and requirements of belonging or not, to a particular territory. Paasi also emphasizes the significance of boundary as a political

marker of territoriality. When commercial prospects in Assam flourished, colonialists resorted to different territorial strategies by securing borders to prevent Burmese infiltration, and for alienating belligerent border people. The British empire in the Northeastern India was separated from neighboring Burma by loose frontiers, and the colonial administrators laid out boundary lines to gain administrative monopoly over territory and to make territories "bordered power containers" (Paasi, "Bounded Spaces" 217). Paasi also explains the role of political and administrative practices that make territories, and the practices through which territories are institutionalized ("Territory" 111). Between 1835 and 1851, British launched ten expeditions to Naga territories and established an outpost at Samaguting in Angami Naga territory in 1846. These military expeditions to the frontier tracts resulted in the establishment of outposts in these territories inhabited by various tribesmen. Such gradual annexations reflected the colonial political discourses which detailed the institutionalizing of territory.

After Anglo-Burmese war, Brahmaputra and Barak valleys turned out to be accessible spaces for colonial political control but frontiers continued to be "*terra incognita.*" The political partitioning of Assam and Bengal Provinces developed by the British transformed Assam into British territory. As Jean Gottman elaborates, in geographical space there has to be continuity, from one point to another which exists in nature as well as in recognized knowledge (Gottman 10). In Northeast India, physical continuity of Assam with encompassing hills was interrupted by geographical barriers as well as Britishers' lack of knowledge about the features of landscape. British officials conducted surveys and explorations to collect authentic topographical facts. The arrival of surveyors and soldiers in the uncharted hilly

terrains is stated in Dai's *Legends of Pensam*. In "small histories" in *Legends of Pensam*, she has stated, "The first white priests, surveyors and soldiers had begun arriving in the region almost two hundred years ago, in the early 1800s. Since then, people from other worlds had come and gone, …" (36). In order to set up connectivity between Upper Assam and outlying frontiers, the British detected the need for discovering land routes. One such route established was the Stillwell Road, about which Dai gives an account in *Legends of Pensam;* the road which wound through Asia like a giant serpent, meandering across three countries, starting from Ledo in Assam, cutting through the territory of Adis, to the pass over the Patkoi Hills into Myanmar, and to the Chinese Province of Yunan. This road took one over remote and serene pine mountains to the teeming cities of prosperity all across Southeast Asia. It was also used by terrorists and insurgents as a safe corridor connecting India and Myanmar (*LOP* 40-41). The British first came into contact with the Nagas in 1832, as part of a survey organized for making road through Naga areas. Tribes inhabiting the present-day Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh fiercely resisted British encroachment upon their habitats. To control aggressive tribes, military expeditions were carried out by colonial rulers. However, such expeditions were obstructed by unfamiliar physical settings. Uncharted terrains were converted to accessible spaces through network of routes. The British recognized roads as an important tactic of governance. All sorts of geographical survey and explorations of the British officials were facilitated by the indigenous patterns of mobility and network of routes. Dzuvichu writes:

> Though roads were promoted as a tool to develop and facilitate mobility in an 'isolated' frontier, the existence of well-established routes highlighted

> various linkages and forms of mobility practiced in the hills. Colonial penetration and road construction often came to rely on these existing knowledge and structures. In the process, colonial roads became emblematic of the state's ability to penetrate territories inhabited by 'unruly subjects.' (108)

Hence, by establishing routes British raj's political presence in the hills was more than ever felt. The Nagas resisted this colonial intrusion through various forms. As a site of contestation and negotiation, roads slowly turned to be part of a larger scheme of socio-political disciplining and ordering of the landscape. Road making then came to constitute violent spaces, which were linked to regimes of forced labour, surveillance and taxation. The colonial authorities sought the services of intermediaries like headmen and the dobhashi to ensure compliance from the colonised subject to meet the resource demands of the state. Dzuvichu also states, "Roads, in this way, served as a conduit in taking the colonial state to the people and in turn taking the people to the state" (108). Thus, for colonial domination, for maintaining territorial sovereignty, secure borders and roads which function as access regulatory mechanisms cannot be dispensed with.

It can be deduced that all theoretical understandings on territoriality focus on two contexts: spatial and social. Spatial context in geographical terms involves demarcation or delimiting space, for claim and control over space, achieved through the regulation of accessibility. Such bounded spaces become meaningful through social actions and process. As such, territorialisation and bounded spaces are not static but liable to changes. Hence, the spatial aspect of a territorial entity initially involves the construction of an inside space, politically molded by drawing borders.

This space is gradually made an autonomous living space when the inhabitants gain political control and sovereignty over it. Such marked spaces are differentiated, and at the same time related to other outside spaces. Before colonial ingression, the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland lived in their natural habitats. Mamang Dai's *Legends of Pensam* abounds in the description of the natural geographical spaces unmarked by artificial boundaries where Adis lived. They lived "In these small clearings in the middle of the forests…" (10). Everyday Hoxo and Rakut explored the hills away from their village and climbed to the top of the hill and flung themselves down on the ground, talking to the trees (*LOP* 8-9). It happened in pre-historic times when territorial linkages were established through social ties. Rakut was brought to his village, but he was not born there. Nobody from his family lived in that village, and yet he had an ancient bond with that village. There are stories linking clans, connections made in the middle of war, through a woman, sometimes land, and sometimes through an object of past (*LOP* 61). *The Black Hill* too narrates the story of three great clans of Mishmi tribe who lived in the Mishmi hills, which was only a sparsely populated region with high mountains and swift flowing rivers (6). Dai further narrates the origin of Mebo settlement: the coming of first generation of tribesmen from mountain passes; their search for land, and how they settled eventually on a clear space of land amidst dense forest. For Kajinsha the land was there to be explored, and it was the mountains and rivers that kept the tribes apart (*TBH* 35). These spaces were not geographically classified or politically established and remained as autonomous spaces. All the unmapped spaces were travelled by Kajinsha, "If we follow the river, we will reach my home", he told Gimur. "And all animals and birds have a map. We can follow in their path"

(35). Moreover, river was the only mode of transport, and the land was covered with terrifying rivers and wild mountains. Kanjisha affirmed that, “We are people who belong to these valleys and rivers. We can wander at will travelling behind a wall of mist, find shelter with a friend, and disappear with the wind like invisible men who have no regard for boundaries laid down by any authority” (106). For Kajinsha and his people, empires and borders meant little, and their world were undivided since they had been living in those lands for centuries irrespective of the different imperial regimes.

Territoriality calls for strategies employed for regulating access to, and from inside spaces. Politics of access is presumed to be integral to the project of shifting land to territory. Accessibility needs to be expanded, gained and denied staking out claim, to control and preserve territorial sovereignty. The British rulers in their attempts to gain access to the remote and interiors of hills and frontiers, and to subdue hostile tribesmen developed various strategies. Making roads through the territories of hill communities was a major regulatory mechanism which helped imperial rulers to control and claim sovereignty in their administrative regions. The partitioning of geographical area through the establishment of formal territorial boundaries always has repercussions on social patterns and practices. Politically bounded spaces are contexts for socialization, and the social side of the idea of territory means territory as lived in space of social actors. Samrat Choudhury records in *Northeast India: A Political History*, “The Northeast as it exists now is therefore more of an administrative construct rather than a historical region with a shared past” (xi). Choudhury also states, “Necessities of colonial administration created new territorial units. Maps froze these into territorial identities” (315).

The construction of territories in Northeast India can be viewed as a political discourse. Historically, the Treaty of Yandaboo which inaugurated boundary making and demarcation of spaces can be read as a hegemonic discourse. The emergence of territorial units in Northeast India with a multiplicity of partitioning and annexation could not assure security for the divided and dissatisfied communities. Here, the purely political entity called territory failed to serve two main functions highlighted by Gottman: 1) a shelter for security to its inhabitants 2) a springboard for opportunity (Gottman 14). Moreover, territory though a material, concrete entity did not express the psychological and social characteristics of the hill communities (Gottman 15).

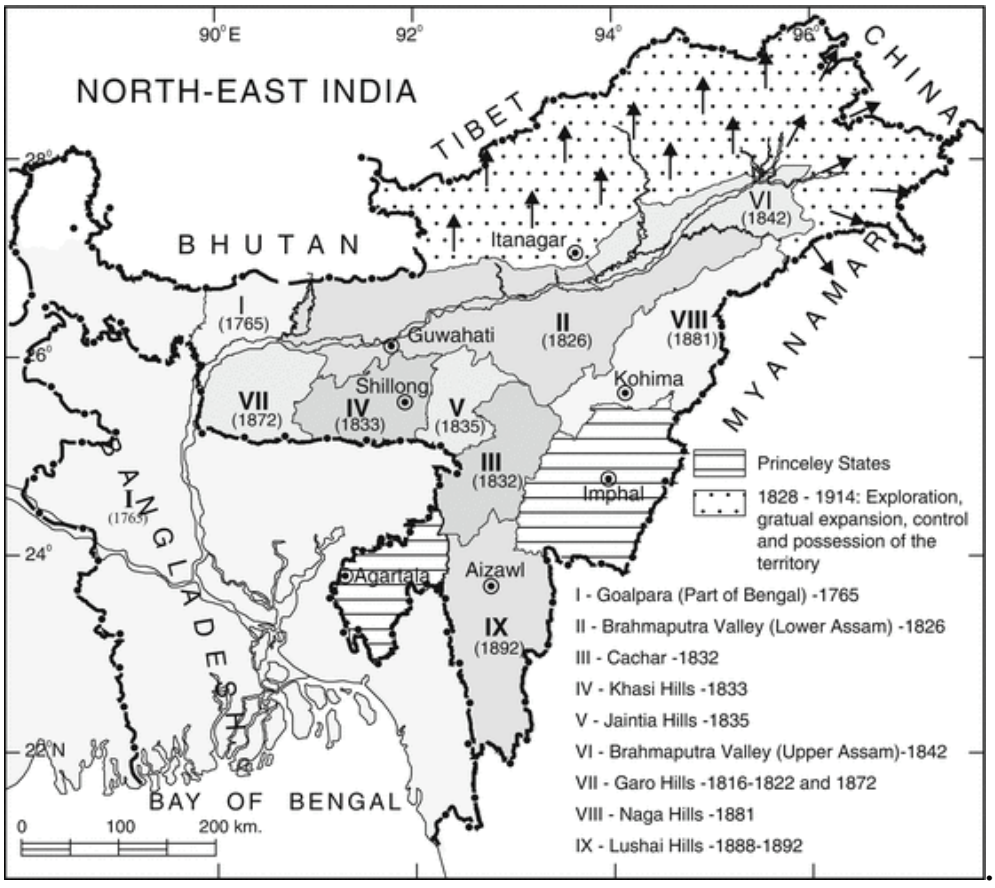
In an "Afterword," Willem van Schendel writes that, "… spatial imaginations of Northeast India are comprehensible only in view of the moment of Partition" (273). Schendel views Northeast India "as a new space, a contested space, a vertical space and a fragmenting space" (273). In pre-colonial times Northeast India as a geographical or cultural entity did not exist, and if at all the term was used in colonial times it was a much larger geographical unit including Odisha, Bengal, Bihar and Assam. He states:

> It is as if the new spatial frame of Northeast India sets limits on our enquiries into history, both pre- and post-Partition. For most of us it is now hard to re-imagine the web of connections that once linked the peoples of the region with friends, trade partners and political associates in areas that fell to Burma and Pakistan – and to perceive that many similar webs of connections persist today. (275)

Schendel identifies “contested incorporation” (274) as another spatial outcome of Northeast Indian partition. On the one side there was the imperial design or wish to have an independent mountain state: the Crown colony which includes the Chittagong Hill Tracts, now in Bangladesh, the Chin and Kachin areas of present day Burma/Myanmar and the regions covering Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram,Tripura, Meghalaya and the mountainous areas in Assam. Along with this there were refusals to join Indian national space like the Nagas struggle for an independent state, Nagalim. There were similar challenges from Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizos and certain other tribes. In addition to this, India has territorial disputes with neighboring states. These contested incorporations still persist in spatial imaginaries. Another important spatial perspective on Northeast India is identified as “verticality,” which Schendel identifies as social importance of differences in land altitude (278). It is the idea that altitude has an impact on human organisation, and that economic, ritual and political connections between people living at different altitudes need to be considered. The partition of Northeast India was based on religious demography; Islam followers inhabiting lowlands were separated from hill tribes, and they moved to East Pakistan or Bangladesh. Likewise, India controlled the upper reaches of the river when Bangladesh and Burma controlled lower reaches. Northeast India is also a “fragmenting space” with discourses of separate homeland, and narratives of exclusionary politics are still gaining momentum in the social and spatial imaginaries (280). The current political geography of Northeast India is shaped by different local majorities — Naga, Mizo, Khasi, Garo and Jaintia Hills who have carved their own sovereign areas previously dominated by Assamese upper castes and Ahoms. The claim for separate identity

and nation through armed insurgencies began with Naga insurgency in 1947. Even in Manipur, three major tribes — the Naga, Kuki and Meitei have been engaged in fraternal conflict as it was thousand years ago, when inter-tribal wars were common (S. Choudhury 142). Thus, the whole process of territorialization of Northeast India based on an unequal power equation established by colonial regime in Baruah's phrase privileged "the state space in the lowlands" over the "non-state space in the hills" ("Territoriality, Indigeneity", 17).

Chronology of the Colonial Expansion of British Rule in North-East India



Chapter III

The Nationalized Space in the Literaryscape of Nagaland: Contexts and Contestations

As an apparatus of symbolic power, it[nation] produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or 'cultural difference' in the act of writing the nation.

- Homi. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

In post-colonial critical enquiries, there has been a resurge of scholarly engagements on the concepts of nation, nationality and nationalism. In India, debates and discourses on Nation and Nationalism have to be reckoned as a corollary of anti-colonial struggle. But in the Northeast, nationalism, instead of being liberatory in nature, has to be identified as a disciplinarian project. In India's Northeast:

> … the nation- state appears as a form of colonial persistence, a perpetuation of, rather than emancipation from, colonial ontologies. Indeed, in certain cases one would be hard pressed to find the difference between colonial and national cartographic techniques and the manner in which they were applied, particularly in relation to long-marginalized populations whose relationships to any state form — whether colonial or national — were invariably conflictual and unequal. (Craib 30)

At the same time, all these discourses follow different trajectories within the colonial political space. Moreover, Nagaland as a state space can be conceived as

the product and producer of different political calibrations. This state was attached to the nation as the product of territorial politics of colonial regime and later this border-state also became the producer of political possibilities and expectations within the post-colonial nation-state. In post-colonial India, territoriality and indigeneity were recurrent themes in political discourses.

> But the prevalent notions of territoriality and indigeneity are shaped significantly by the colonial spatial order. Thus, the politics of territoriality and indigeneity often becomes an exercise in defending the fences and walls that colonial rulers had erected. The continuing hold of colonial knowledge is reflected in both official policy discourse, and the political imagination of local activists. (Baruah, "Territoriality, Indigeneity" 16)

Baruah also suggests that it is important to get rid of colonial way of seeing, and to identify the cultural dynamics and practices of space, and to recognize the violent break in spatial dynamics that colonial rule represented. He also states, "The colonial spatial order involved the radical subversion of existing social, political and economic networks and property regimes" (16). Achille Mbembe has defined colonialism as a matter of capturing, delimiting, and controlling territories that might eventually produce a new set of social and spatial relations. Mbembe also says that colonial rule produced "new boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves" (25-26).

India's Northeastern region is strategically situated at the convergence of South, East, and Southeast Asia. The geopolitical tension prevailing in this region is manifested in the statement, "Southeast Asia begins where Northeast India ends" (*North Eastern Region Vision* 2020). Further, the region has been subject to

geopolitical rivalry from the time of colonial rule. The shattered past and the colonial geopolitics have contributed a lot towards political instability of present times. The region is entrapped in geopolitical disasters in the post-independence period in spite of its transnational region-building potential. Dilip Gogoi has identified three major dynamics of conflicts in this region: interstate territorial rivalry, low-intensity conflicts in the form of insurgency, and societal conflicts. The interstate conflict includes territorial disputes challenging the territorial sovereignty of India; low-intensity conflicts have posed threats to the unity and integrity of the Indian nation-state, and societal conflicts have posed a major threat to India's internal security and societal harmony. These conflicts are resultant of long lasting hostile geopolitical influences on the region (82).

When colonial cartographers jigsawed hills and plains of Northeast India into shapes that decisively determined their political authority what remained in post-colonial nation was an unequal blending of radically different and distinct ethnic communities. The spatial configuration of Northeast states in post-colonial situation has significant overlap between territorial politics and national sovereignty. All the eight Northeast Indian states share the common history of colonial encounter, but the political context of colonialism varied within this region depending on geographical and demographical factors. A study of the everyday lives and socio-cultural practices of Naga communities will provide insights into the different forms of relatedness between territories, communities and individuals. A reflection on specific localities or neighborhoods reveals the complexities of spatial contexts for social organization and experiences. The concept of locality has different meanings and contents across various disciplines, but here it relates to social practices of

communities within the specific spatial contexts. In the process of nation-building, the contexts of territorialization and re-territorialization have impacted the social patterns of Naga communities. Hence this chapter aims to reflect on such Naga settlements or villages to analyze the process of production of locality by local subjects through the performance of ritualized and collective social action.

First part of this chapter provides an overview of political narratives of secessionism and insurgency specific to the state of Nagaland followed by a concise account of the social and cultural practices of Naga communities. An overall pattern of Naga social structure and some of their unique cultural practices are outlined in this chapter. The lived realities of Naga people can be understood in the interstices of history, politics and social experiences. Also, the social interactivities of Nagas in the context of a politically contested space and life –worlds of individuals, as represented in the works of Temsula Ao are examined to make an in-depth analysis of the ways in which social spaces are contested and re-created by the political imaginaries of nation state. Archival records and relevant historical documents on Naga culture and society are also made use of to trace the customs and practices associated with Naga community and to find out how the production of locality survived through ages, that is from pre-colonial to post- colonial times. Here, the reading of literary texts from the perspective of locality production, as elaborated by Arjun Appadurai and other scholars provide the conceptual framework for analysis. The method of socio-spatial dialectics helps to examine the dynamics of specific physical spaces and constructed social spaces of collectivities with shared history and ritualized practices and technologies of interactivity. The analysis of literary texts is attempted to investigate how nation as a larger social form produce contexts

and conditions for locality production in localized spaces, specifically of Naga settlements. The micro social spaces of individuals, and nation as a political unit represented in the works of Temsula Ao help to find out the ways in which local social groups relate to their larger political contexts, to study the relations of individual and social collectivities to spatial units ranging from the level of household to the level of an entire nation.

Nagaland was placed as an independent state in the post- colonial political map of India in 1963. This state tucked into the north east corner of Indian Union shares national and international borders. Three Indian states, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur lie to the North, West and South of Nagaland and Union of Myanmar is in the East. The mountainous terrain with Kopli river on the West, Barak valley and Tipperah frontier in the East, Assam valley in the North and hills dividing Assam and Bor-Khamtu country in the East and South-east was inhabited by tribes, collectively known as Nagas. Nevertheless, historical archives lack documents to prove etymological roots for the term Naga. These inhabitants belonging to different races were recognized by their corresponding tribes and not by any generic terms. William Robinson in his book *A Descriptive Account of Assam* states that there are certain linkages between different tribes; at the same time, they are separated by a wide and disparate range of dialects. Within those tribes there existed inter- tribal wars; social ties were also established through inter marriages (381).

The overarching term ‘Naga’ includes more than thirty tribes, dwelling not only in the state of Nagaland but also in the neighboring states of present-day Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. Even India’s neighboring country

Myanmar is home to some tribes categorized as Nagas. Also, a common Naga identity as a nation is a westernized idea. In the historical documents of colonial times, the representations of Nagas share a common perception- the 'separateness' of Nagas from the mainland. As J P Mills has written that the Nagas for a long time were ignorant of the existence not only of the British, but of India itself.

The blanket term "Nagas" generally referred to a group of people living mostly in the mountainous terrains of Naga Hills during the British colonial period. Certainly, they share a common culture, but they also varied remarkably, in their languages. "Thus, the concept of the Nagas as an ethnic group and the Naga homeland is an idea that is still evolving" (Thong, *Colonization, Proselytization* 6). Nagaland's strategic location and its mineral and natural resources, besides tea, made the hills economically attractive to the colonial rulers. Though coercive force upon the Naga tribes was minimised, there was a process of cultural construction which changed the indigenous social fabric of the region (Sanghamitra 3273).

The image of Nagas represented in colonial discourses is premised on the concept of exoticism. This is stated by Longkumer:

> The British used descriptive and visual mediums to depict the Nagas (savages, head-hunters, warriors) that have had a lasting impact on the perception of the Nagas. These colonial-era representations have retained a certain image of the Nagas in the Western imaginaries, further reinforced in more recent times through cultural reproductions of the Nagas in museums, tourist brochures, and 'ethnic' clothes and jewellery. Colonial representations of the Nagas are also perpetuated through vast photographic

> compilations in books, mostly in the West, due to the financial viability of publishers and wide circulation. (152)

This kind of representation at 'reflexive level', as Stuart Hall puts it, aims at just reproducing or re- presenting what actually exists in the world. Another level of representation of Nagas is at 'intentional level', where the observer aims at expressing intended meaning. The third kind of representation is aimed at constructing meaning through images and language with an aim to represent the world meaningfully to outsiders (15).

Nagas usually identify themselves by giving names of their respective villages. The different tribes have different traditions of origin and even clans of same tribe do not have homogeneous origin. Generally, Naga tribes are classified into four categories: The Southern Nagas, classified based on linguistic difference, include Zemi, Liangmei, Ruongmei and some tribes of Manipur. Angamis, Chakhesangs, Semas, Rengmas, Lothas, Maos and Marams are categorized as Western Nagas. They practice terraced cultivation. Another category of tribes- Central Nagas include Aos Tangkhuls, Sangtams, Changs, Phoms Yimchungrus, Khiamngans and Eastern Nagas include the Konyaks, Wanchos etc. All these tribes differ considerably in physical appearance, dressing patterns, weapons, language, cultural practices, social structure etc.

British invasion in 1832 initiated the process of westernization of Nagas. In 1839, American Baptist missionaries landed in Naga territories for proselytization of the Nagas and other native inhabitants in Northeast India. British colonial rule and the introduction of education and Christianity by American missionaries served to considerably transform the Naga way of life in all aspects. Naga culture was

transformed by the introduction of Western education. The Naga people were either hostile or indifferent to the arrival of American Missionaries. When they thought about the social and economic advantages that came with education and Christianity, in the newly emerging Western socio-cultural paradigm, their perspective towards Western culture progressively changed. Thus, the missionaries' introduction of education and religion was set to permanently alter their indigenous way of life. This is recorded by Thong:

> For the educated Nagas, their attachment to White people through education and employment created alienation from their own community and culture. They tended to consider themselves in a class of their own, with superior knowledge and achievement. Education enabled them to pursue non-traditional means of livelihood, causing disinterest in and detachment from participatory cultural practices such as festivals, rituals, ceremonies and other social activities. a tendency towards individualism and personal achievement at expense of alienation from the community and culture, previously unthinkable, became an acceptable norm. ("To Raise the Savage" 901)

Though the state of Nagaland came into existence many years after Indian independence, even now there are Nagas dwelling outside the politically defined state space. It was the expedient political tactic of marking boundaries that created geographic diversification of Naga communities. Moreover, the process of re-territorialization of the political spaces of the nation further problematized the notions of belonging.

> Demarcating jurisdictional boundaries are acts of the state. They re-territorialize a region, creating new notions of spatial identity. But people living within such re-territorialized spaces often have a conflicted relationship to these state defined lines. Their sense of identity and feelings of belonging are never entirely shaped by the practices of the state. (Bhattacharya 4)

The territorial imaginary of Naga homeland includes contiguous areas in the Northeast Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur, as well as parts of Burma/ Myanmar (S. Baruah, *Beyond Counter-insurgency* 101). The Nagas and Mizos demanded for a separate nation but were finally granted statehood. There are other smaller ethnicities like Bodos and Hmars demanding for independent homelands carved out of Assam and Mizoram. The demands for separate states have changed to secessionism as Subir Bhaumik observes:

> The failure to achieve separate states radicalized the movements and made turn to secessionist rhetoric. Territorial demands based on ethnicity in northeast India are very often sustained by historical memories of separate tribal kingdoms. (33)

Nagas demand for a separate nation is considered to be one of the remarkable ethnic conflicts of the 20th century, marked by radical shift of political structures and worldviews. Nevertheless, the process of consolidating the Naga ethnic identity was not a recent phenomenon. The colonial narrative about the Nagas shows how the different Naga groups grouped together to resist the colonisers' incursion into their homeland. In 1879 and 1880, the Angami Naga village of Khonoma and its allies rebelled against the colonial control. In the military

expeditions led by the British, Naga villages were raided and confiscated. Many Nagas were left homeless wanderers which made them dependent on the kindness of their neighbouring Nagas and they lived in makeshift homes in the jungles. After the invaders ‘confiscated’ their village land, the Nagas were desperate to reclaim it. The chronicle of colonial history demonstrates the Naga people's fight for national unity.

The Naga community was the first one to challenge the nation building process in free India. Eventually, their movement changed to an insurrectionary form in the early 1950s. As Shimray writes:

> The historical roots of the Naga political movement is in fact as old as colonial expansion in the region. Nagas initially fought against the colonialists for intruding into their "way of life". To cite historical records, it was in the early 1940s, that the idea of Naga nation emerged as a discourse in the Naga political movement. Thus, began a struggle, which has lasted for more than 50 years. The Naga political movement is one of the oldest political struggles in the south-east Asian region. (4640)

The demand for uniting Naga inhabited areas within the three states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, to form a “Greater Nagaland” has been raised by Naga insurgent groups, civil society organizations and the political leadership including Naga State Assembly. Greater Nagaland also attempts to attach the ‘Naga inhabited’ northwestern part of Myanmar into its projected political boundary. (Oinam 1)

In Nagaland, the struggle against the nation was engendered by the feeling of separateness from the mainland incited by colonial administrative regime. Though there was lack of unity among different tribes, they lived in autonomous settlement.

The formal beginning of Naga insurgency movement can be located in 1918 with the establishment of Naga Club, aimed at assisting colonial administration but with an emphasis on promoting solidarity of Naga tribes. During World War I, nearly two-thousand Nagas volunteered to assist British Indian government, and they were sent to France. They were recruited in Labor Corps to undertake roadworks in Europe. Those war veterans, on their return formed Naga Club in 1918. The Club consisted of Naga elites educated in Christian educational institutions, village headmen, dobhashis and government officials. Scholars studying the origin of ethnonationalism identify the Labor Corps recruitment as having a crucial role in Naga nationalist aspirations. Exposure to world outside and war experiences contributed to instill the wish for an independent Naga state. In 1929, Naga Club submitted a memorandum to Simon Commission requesting to be excluded from the purview of Constitutional change (Datta Anup 52). They asked for the withdrawal the Naga Hills from the Reform Scheme and to be placed outside the Reforms but directly under British Government. The then District Commissioner of Naga Hills District, Charles Pawsey, encouraged educated Nagas to form a body called the Naga Hills District Tribal Council for ensuring adequate tribal representation in postwar political scenario (Thong, *Colonization, Proselytization* 102). "However, once it was formed, the council increasingly became a platform for Nagas to express and debate some of their pressing political concerns, ultimately leading to the formation of the NNC in February 1946" (J. Thomas 101–102). The Naga club formed in 1918 is a precursor in regard to the formation of Naga national consciousness, and the first significant manifestation of the same was evident in the memorandum submitted by Naga Club to the Simon Commission in 1929.

Meanwhile tribal councils were also formed, and the Lotha Council formed in 1923 and Ao Council established in 1928 emphasized separate Naga socio-cultural identity. Naga Club was succeeded by Naga National Council, formed in 1946. In February 1946, NNC, reorganized as a federation of different tribal councils, launched a small newspaper titled *Naga Nation*, aimed at spreading the idea of Naga nationalism. Leaders of NNC met Akbar Hydari, the governor of Assam and signed a Nine -Point Agreement. It was agreed that Nagas had the freedom to decide their future after ten years. When the Constituent Assembly disregarded the Hydari Agreement, the enraged NNC under the leadership of Phizo declared independence just a day before Indian Independence. Naga nationality consciousness was challenging to the nation-building process since India's independence on 15 August 1947.

It follows that the Nagas were totally not involved in the anti-colonial struggle led by Congress, and that they were relatively isolated from the spirit of Indian nationalism. The Nagas were therefore surprised when the British Parliament passed the Extra-Provincial Jurisdiction Act and the Indian Independence Act on the eve of the British withdrawal from India, enabling the new Indian Government to continue its governance in the Naga Hills. They learned that their assent to become a part of the Indian Union had not been requested. The Nagas were not psychologically ready for this kind of alliance (U. Misra, "Naga National Question" 619). The Nagas' plead the British to reclaim their right to sovereignty which was rejected. Then they turned their attention to the Indian leadership. But when negotiations with Indian government, in the shape of a nine-point accord failed, and the post-colonial Indian state refused to guarantee it, they decided to declare their

sovereignty unilaterally. Following a first round of petitions and submitting memoranda, the leadership of the extremists started to exert further pressure. A Z Phizo led this faction and, following his election as the President of NNC in 1950, he became increasingly demanding and aggressive (Nag, "Nehru and the Nagas" 50). Over the course of their nearly 30-year conflict with the Indian government, this political faction, the Naga National Council (NNC), which is the subterranean branch of the Naga Federal Government, has consistently argued that the Naga people are an independent nation. The NNC asserts that, except from a century of British domination, the Nagas had never been subjected to foreign domination or subjugation and had never been a part of the modern Indian nation. This sense of alienation from the mainland is shared by the Nagas in general and this has been the prime force in their fight against the nation (U. Misra, "Naga National Question" 618).

The year 1951 was another landmark in Naga political struggle, when a plebiscite by NNC, after collecting thumb -prints by visiting the remotest village announced that 99.9 percent of Nagas wished independence. This referendum was a kind of emotional integration of Naga tribes. Later, NNC under the leadership of Phizo launched violent secessionist movement, leading to the first clashes in Naga Hills district of Assam. Indian military forces were assigned the task of subduing this violent political struggle which was the beginning of the era of violence and terror in Northeast India. In 1956, Phizo's NNC set up the federal government of Nagaland with a President and Parliament having a council of ministers. The military wing of this new government, Naga Federal Army was formed to combat India Army. To contain the potential danger of this political turmoil, the

government of India implemented Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in 1958. When Phizo fled from the country, unable to manage the crisis, some moderate leaders, guided by Imkongliba Ao came forward, resolved to retain the land, individuality and identity of Naga people, even if independence was not possible. This led to the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1963 which they thought would give the Nagas visibility in the mainstream (Ranganathan 62).

Since 1963, there were cease fire agreements which were breached till the Shillong accord of 1975. As per the conditions of this Accord, the representatives of the underground organisations had to abide by the conditions laid down in the Constitution of India, and it was also agreed that the arms, now would be surrendered. It was also agreed that the underground organisations' representatives would be given chance to express their concerns through discussion and to reach for conclusive settlement. This prompted Phizo to drop weapons, but rebel leaders of NNC opposed Phizo, and the disgruntled NNC rebels under the leadership of Isak Chishi Swu, Muivah, and Khaplang formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980. The NSCN runs a parallel government with four major "Ministries"—defence, home, finance, and foreign, and also formed a government in exile called the Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland (GPRN) with a motto to create a sovereign Nagalim—unifying all the Naga-inhabited areas in the northeastern region of India and northern Myanmar.

> The map of Greater Nagalim created by the NSCN (IM) covers an area of 1,20,000 sq. km, whereas the area of Nagaland state itself is only 16,579 sq. km. Since 1990, there were again ceasefire agreements and talks between leaders. In 2015, the Naga Peace Accord was signed by the government and

> NSCN (IM) to put an end to the insurgency problem. Nonetheless, the neighboring states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur are cautious and doubtful about the possibilities of creating Greater Nagalim as it involves the redrawing of their boundaries which in turn would seriously impact trade and commerce, as well as their cultural diversity and ethnic unity (M. Das 144).

The Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagalim Isaak Muivah (NSCN -IM) has been in the forefront demanding a Greater Nagaland claiming that Nagas were under British governance before the unwelcome annexation to Indian Union. “While the NSCN (I-M) has been steadfast in its demand for a solution of the Naga issue outside the parameters of the Indian Constitution, it cannot disregard the collective voice of Naga civil society, which favours a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Naga issue (Misra U 269). NSCN (IM) has also attempted to get global attention to Naga cause by sending a delegation to UN Conference of “Indigenous Peoples” held in 1994. Muivah also formed links with Asia Indigenous People's Pact and the Belgium-based Flemish support for Indigenous People. The Nagaland assembly also passed a resolution supporting the demand for Greater Nagaland or Nagalim (Das Nava Kishore 552).

In a Memorandum submitted by Naga National Council to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India in the year 1946, Nagas attempted to project Indians as others, so as to assert their identities. They argued that they descended from a distinct stock, having a distinct social, cultural and political

systems. They also claimed that though majority of them were animists, Christianity was fast spreading.

Historical evidence shows that the initial phenomenon that spurred Naga identity assertion was the rising discontent among the Naga people due to their incompatibility with the changing socio-political scenario on the eve of India's independence and the approaching end of the British Raj. They feared losing their land and forests allied with the fear of plainsmen exploiting and interfering and encroaching upon their ‘cultural autonomy.’ The Naga struggle has a distinct past with a long history of mobilisation of ethnic groups for political causes. They maintain that there is a political framework to address Naga nationalism since they have always maintained that it is a political problem rather than one of economic egoism or economic internal colonialism.

The Naga intelligentsia constructed their identity, based mainly on ‘differentiation’ adapted from colonial tropes. Such a narration was popularized and legitimized by common Nagas as well as international communities. This has to be countered by the nation at a discursive level too which was done by the government in its publications and the speeches of its representatives. The counter narrative of the nation rejected Naga’s claim to be a single nation, arguing that they were not a single group having a common language or anything to tie them as a group. The interdependency of India and the Nagas based on a development discourse was also highlighted (Nag “Nehru and the Nagas” 53).

In the fifty years after the 1951 Naga referendum, there have been numerous changes and phases to the Naga nationalist movement and the fight for "Nagalim." Like other movements in the northeast, there is widespread consensus among the

Nagas regarding the hegemonic power of nation-state, despite the fact that definitions of ‘freedom’and ‘self-determination’ is not the same within different regions of Northeast (Dolly Kikon 2833). There has been an orchestrated campaign, justifying the Naga people's demand for an independent nation based on their ethnic background and historical experiences. The main feature of this campaign was the creation of a distinct identity for the Nagas, presenting them as having a history unrelated to India, and also the claim that the British were entitled to govern them since they had defeated the Nagas, which the Indians had not done. They also wanted to return to their dependent status following the British evacuation.

NSCN-IM which has been in the forefront for creating Nagalim- a homeland for all the Nagas of Northeast. The NSCN (IM) has acknowledged the "legitimate aspirations of all neighbouring people, including the Meiteis, the Assamese, and others" and has urged them to put an end to the prevailing tension among themselves, in a statement titled "Journey for Peace." The NSCN (IM) is grateful to the Government of India for acknowledging their unique history and status (N. Das 555). There have been attempts from the secessionists’ side and the government of India to put an end to hostilities and maintain peace in the valleys and hills. The result of those peace endeavours was a bilateral ceasefire, which ended hostilities and belligerence. The fratricidal splits between the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland and the other factions of the Naga National Council, including the Isak-Muivah group, have been a source of concern even during the truce. The signing of the ‘Framework Agreement’ between Government of India NSCN-IM, on 3 August 2015 is welcomed as a step towards restoration of peace in the state. The signing of the Agreement, which has been welcomed by most of the

civil society outfits in the state led by Naga *Hoho.* Naga's struggle for independence and absolute sovereignty has a long history of more than sixty years. NNC-sponsored plebiscite in 1951 and mass boycott of the first General Elections in 1952, were major instances that helped to prove the illegitimacy of being an Indian state, and it also reiterated the Naga national question. There have been several attempts to resolve the Naga issue. Nagas demand for autonomy and sovereignty is based on the firm belief that their unique culture and history can be protected only through investing sovereign rights in the hands of Nagas themselves. To understand the issue of Naga independence struggle, it must be situated in its historical context. Hence, the uniqueness of Naga political history and socio- cultural patterns is briefly outlined here.

For the Naga communities dwelling on the mountainous terrain surrounding Brahmaputra and Barak valleys during pre- colonial times, forest and mountains marked boundaries of their habitation. They inhabited the hills that separated Assam from North-West Burma. The most important of them were Angamis, Aos, Kachas, Lhotas, Rengmas, Semas and various small tribes collectively known as Eastern Nagas or Konyaks (Heath 22).

David Ludden has remarked that Asia's historical geography has been defined by the colonial projects of territorialism, spreading out from the lowlands. The inhabitants of forest, mountain and hills, desert, and such not easily accessible terrains became peripheral, and such exotic habitats remained outside core regions of imperial culture. This imperial culture was marked by intensive farming, trade, urbanity, and spatial order. The discourses of progress meant imposing their imperial design of development on the peripheral communities. Towards the end of

sixteenth century, modern territorial policies which included systematic methods of measurement, classification, and spatial boundedness were formulated by the imperial states (Ludden "India's spatial History" 24). This is true of North –east Indian spatial politics when new territorial regime of colonial and post-colonial state created new territorial identities. National state borders marked boundaries for inclusion and exclusion, fracturing identities of peoples-in-space and posing new challenges. One such major challenge was the influx of refugees, cross border movement of stateless individuals, interstate conflict over national boundaries. The new territorial framework of national states effectively sealed national identity in place. As peoples-in-spaces that occupied international borders acquired new troubled identities: both inside and outside of contentious limits of nation's territorialism (Ludden, "India's Spatial History" 25).

Nevertheless, a secure sense of identity, can be achieved through the appeal to locality, community and kinship. The claim to be local and to belong, implies the significance of specific territory inhabited by people engaged in forming a network of relationships through quotidian activities. Appadurai recognizes the fragility of locality and states that hard work is required to maintain social relations, to produce locality and to inscribe locality on individuals and landscapes. He rightly suggests production of locality is similar to identity as both are processual and contextual. Here, locality production envisaged as the social context of people inhabiting a place is unraveled through connections and interactions.

It is significant to investigate the historical dynamics of local place construction to have an in-depth knowledge about rootedness and displacement which in turn produce sense of insecurity and conflict along the peripheries of a

nation. The *terra incognita* of Naga communities were mapped and marked by colonial rulers. Thus, non-territorialized Nagas were territorialized as part of the political unification pursuits of colonial administrators but they were geographically dispersed. Naga society is identified as a 'segmentary society' by Chongpongmeren Jamir. Jamir analyses key features of Naga society as (I) autonomy of the segment (ii)unity of the whole (iii)collective opposition against societies that are not related. Before the coming of British these ethnic groups were identified themselves at a local level, based on their language or region, and the borders of an actual village determined and marked their social and cultural identity., "The Naga villages of pre-British times are often described as such: individually organized social entities that were not only characterized by their basic democratic systems but also had bilateral relations as far as the Chindwin River, …'' (von Stockhausen 132). Stockhausen identifies the indigenous governing pattern together with the traditional legal system of Naga groups to underline the quest for an independent Naga state/nation. The fact that head-hunting was a very common phenomenon which was often happening even within villages, between different village areas, reveals that the concept of group identity was spatially limited (132-33). Chasie Charles also writes about the spatial factor in determining Naga identity "Before the advent of the British the world of Naga revolved around his village: family, clan, *khel* and village largely represented the extent of his concern and involvement" (253). More or less the same view has been recorded by Verrier Elwin:

> Naga society presents a varied pattern of near dictatorship and extreme democracy. There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs . The Konyaks have very powerful Chiefs or Angs who are

> regarded as sacred and whose word is law; before the greatest of them no commoner may stand upright. (6-7)

Nagas as indigenous groups settled on hill tops and their way of life in pre-colonial times was closely linked to their land, forest and hills. Traditionally they were warlike head-hunters. Their religious beliefs were purely animistic and life revolved round agricultural cycle. Such small Naga societies, in pre-colonial times existed as autonomous neighborhoods. Those organically evolved neighborhoods with a habitus dimension, was socially appropriate and materially embedded context for local subjects to perform and organize social collectivities. In the case of Naga settlement, here, analyzed as neighborhood, each with its own distinctive ritual practices is imbued with meaning with the collective action and ritualized practices performed by settlers or social actors. Naga villages in pre-colonial times were made of khels or sections, each inhabited by one clan. The making of Naga village before colonial intervention started with site selection; land fertility, water sources and defence aspects were also considered in selecting the site. First, the building morung or bachelor's house was constructed (Elwin 8). Several rituals and ceremonies followed the building of villages.

Hence in the case of Naga settlements, what Appadurai conceptualizes as the spatial production of locality has context-generative dimension as opposed to the context- driven dimension. The production of locality as a making of neighborhood requires intentional or even violent action in respect to environment and human settlements and uncontrolled spaces and peoples. In other words, production of locality can be figured out as either production or reproduction of neighborhoods. Even in the most desolate or marginalized society, the simplest technologies of

social interaction are the contexts for reproducing neighborhoods. The contexts generated by individual and collective social action reproduces neighborhood (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 186).

The stories selected for analysis are included in the two collections *Laburnum for My Head* and *These Hills Called Home: Stories from A War-Zone* The selected stories are grouped into two thematic and methodological paradigms. The first centered on space focusses on micro social spaces to examine how such spaces contextualize the production of locality. Here, micro social spaces are identified as spaces ranging from household to community where an individual performs quotidian activities and attempts to remain culturally identified within such specific locales or spaces The second perspective on locality is political in bent, highlighting territorial and political issues specific to a community or region. Patrik Young and Philip Whalen states the following in *The Local in French History: Changing Paradigms and Possibilities* "…the prerogatives of national sovereignty and national institutions invested locality with new and often politically laden meanings" (22). This perspective takes into account the production of locality within the context of macro- physical space, or the nation as a political entity.

In the stories of Temsula Ao, analyzing the life-worlds of Naga communities with an emphasis on spatial contexts posits the link between social interactions and the significance of settings of such actions, the interrelatedness of space and everyday life which is structured and re-created in diverse contexts. To understand the everyday experiences and life-worlds of communities inhabiting border zones of the nation, an outlining of the connection between locality as the essence of social life and the setting of social activities is required. When locality is viewed as a

phenomenological property of social life, it presupposes certain premeditated activities by subjects of a specific social structure. The validity of social activities in a particular social setting is signified by the mediation of contexts. These deliberate practices of performance, action and interaction can be documented as the socialization of space and time or the spatiotemporal production of locality. The rituals performed in communities like naming places, marking of boundaries, building pathways, houses, mapping fields and forests, navigating transhuman spaces are taken to be techniques for spatial production of locality as well marked as the property of social life. As such locality cannot be approached as an already existing or given entity but the materiality of locality is produced, reproduced and maintained through the ritualized activities and hard work of its inhabitants. Those inhabitants or reliable local subjects having actual local knowledge can produce and maintain the materiality of locality (Appadurai, "Production of locality" 180). At the same time, without such a known, named, and negotiable terrain already existing, the ritual techniques for creating local subjects would be abstract, and sterile. Thus, the reproduction of a neighborhood which is at once practical, valued, and taken-for-granted depends on the seamless interaction of localized spaces and times with local subjects possessed of the knowledge to reproduce locality. Problems that are properly historical arise whenever this seamlessness is threatened. Such problems do not arrive only with modernity, colonialism, or ethnography (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 181). The properties of the production of locality under the conditions of contemporary urban life, which involve national regimes, and mobility patterns seem to be complex and challenging.

Literary analysis of Ao's stories shows the significance of locality as an important marker of individual and collective identity. Temsula Ao's titular story "Laburnum for my Head" is the story of Lentina. It seems Ao has emphasized in this story, an individual's perception of landscape and environment. The features of landscape and elements of natural world are intertwined with her daily life. She has an innate passion for laburnum: a special admiration for those feminine flowers and desperately wishes to have laburnum in her garden. Her unhealthy fetish for those flowers gets severe disparagement from her family. But as an individual belonging to a collective of kinsmen and existing within the network of social relations, she has access to resources and manages to have laburnum in her garden. Later, the epiphanic sensation she experienced after her husband 's death prompts her to plant laburnum tree on her grave. Instead of erecting stone edifices which she thinks to be human beings' puny attempt to claim immortality, she embraces eternalities of nature. In this story, Lentina, as an individual social actor expresses certain kind of agency and sociality, and she becomes the embodiment of locality. Here, in the making and remaking of cemetery, the very local neighborhood is socialized and localized by the deliberate practices, performance and action of an individual. Being an individual subject, Lentina is pledged to maintain symmetry in her social relations and her micro social space operates through her practices, values and belief systems. Further, the concept of "shared intentionality" (680) put forward by Michael Tomasello gives insight to Lentina's activities. She and her driver Babu, who later becomes her confidant are individuals belonging to a hierarchical social structure; they are individuals who understand one another, as intentional agents, interacting socially and having a shared commitment and coordinated actions (680).

Tomasello explains that joint activities of individuals having these three essential characteristics (1) the interactants are mutually responsive to one another, (2) there is a shared goal and (3) the participants coordinate their plans of action and intentions some way down the hierarchy – which requires that both participants understand both roles of the interaction (role reversal), and so can help the other with his role if needed. Tomasello illustrates how joint activities or shared intentionality create unique form of cultural learning and engagement which leads to unique processes of cultural cognition and evolution (675). Mattia Gallotti also stresses the significance of shared intentionality in social discourse (587). In short, the physicality of particular space or neighborhood –cemetery –is altered or modified by shared intentionality of individuals. The laburnum symbolizes eternity or gives meaning to the spatiality of cemetery. Finally, an individual like Lentina rooted in micro space of domesticity can script agency and her technologies of social interactions generate contexts for redesigning spatial patterns of the cemetery.

The character, Imchanok, in the "Death of a Hunter'' included in the collection *Laburnum for My Head* is an individual experiencing the unfolding of a new sense of agency and identity. This story relates the hunting practices of Nagas, and reveals how such an indigenous practice is revitalized by Imchanok, the Deleuzian nomad. Deleuze has conceptualized the nomad in the following manner:

> But the nomad is not necessarily one who moves: some voyages take place *in situ,* are trips in intensity. Even historically, nomads are not necessarily those who move about like migrants. On the contrary, they do not move; nomads, they nevertheless stay in the same place and continually evade the codes of settled people. (149)

Rosi Braidotti also, following Deleuze, foregrounds a nomadic, non-unitary vision of the subject. Braidotti's notion of nomadism helps to understand how the character Imchanok in the story "Death of a Hunter'' makes choices and negotiate subject position to seek for a potential transformation of his subjectivity. Braidotti conceptualizes nomad like this:

> Being a nomad, living in transition does not mean that one cannot or is unwilling to create those necessarily stable and reassuring bases for identity that allow one to function in a community…. Rather, nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent. The nomad is only passing through; s/he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity. (Braidotti 33)

Hence, analyzing the variations that exist in the individual identity spectrum enables to understand the transition from *being* to *becoming.* Deleuzian state of 'becoming' refers to the process of transformation of the individual based on his experiences. The very idea of nomadic thought presupposes deconstruction of established identities in favour of identities that welcome change and fluctuation.

In this story "Death of a Hunter'', the main character Imchanok was a teacher in a village school but that identity had long been eclipsed by that of the hunter'' *(Laburnum* 21). His fame as a skilled hunter had grown over years. He accepted the order from the government to kill a rogue elephant which destroyed farmlands and killed people of his village. He was provided by the state with all essentials required for hunting and given seven days to accomplish the task. Imchanok was unprepared for this challenging situation. Yet he has to comply with

the government order since the government threatened to revoke the hunting licence of those who did not cooperate and he found himself committed to the task. To an extent, it has opened up new possibilities for Imchanok's life and thought. After this episode of elephant hunt, he became even more famous. Though he accepted cash award sponsored by the state for his services, he declined the gun since he did not want to engage in such tasks in future, and being a nomadic subject, he surmised that he would be forfeiting his freedom of choice if he took the gun. Here again we see Imchanok relinquishing his idea or desire for fixity. His nomadic self must continue to act and is in search for new representations. As a nomadic subject he is reflexively aware of unstable subjectivities conditioned to temporal and spatial changes. His hunting spree lasted for several more years which included killing of a monkey and a wild boar. Previously, he had thought about hunting as a necessary supplement to gather food for his large family as he was a provider for and protector of his family. Engaging himself in the rituals of hunting after each expedition, he allowed himself to become new, to adopt a new outlook that acknowledged the transitory nature of identity. Each hunting instance was new and unique and represented change in the threshold of becoming. His nomadic consciousness urges him not to take any identity as permanent. He never takes on fully the limits of one fixed identity (Braidotti 33). Here, nomadic thought or consciousness is a sensibility that encourages creativity, and it can be seen as an epistemological imperative for sustaining traditional cultural patterns. Imchanok, in this story, embodying nomadic thought is empowered to accept government order, to register his identity as a hunter. Hunting is an indigenous practice, as it is interwoven in the social and cultural fabric of the villagers. The rites and rituals associated with hunting highlight

their belief in animism and the sacredness of nature. These rituals also play a vital role in establishing the social status of hunters in the community. The activity of hunting is crucial in determining individual and community interests. Hunting is not just an economic activity but plays an important role in the religious life of the tribe. Despite a decline in its traditional methods, hunting remains a contemporary practice, with its socio-cultural and religious aspects playing an important role in the day-to-day life of people. Imchanok, a true nomadic subject, is in constant search for his authentic self, hostile to settled patterns of thought, and has the agency to subscribe to ways representing indigenous practices. It is this nomadic consciousness that empowers Imchanok to revitalize traditional practice of hunting. Imchanok is committed to protect fields and 'other reproductive spaces and resources' (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 180). This sort of intentional activity by an individual belonging to micro familial space, generates context for production of locality. Also, he possesses the knowledge 'to produce and reproduce locality under conditions of anxiety and entropy, social wear and flux' which Appadurai terms as local knowledge (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 181).

In another story titled "A Simple Question'', Ao makes a significant step in giving the woman character a voice to challenge hegemonic discourses. She has portrayed this female subject as a powerful agent, performing in specific spaces to effect changes in patriarchal socio-political status quo. She re-experiences or re-utilizes her social space to resist the complex interplay of gender and politics. "A Simple Question'' included in the collection *Laburnum for my Head* is analyzed to identify how female subjectivities situated in domestic spaces negotiate such gendered spaces to challenge patriarchy. Women belonging to Naga communities

share the common history of colonial encounter, and their lives are impacted by the influences of nationalism and insurgency. In this story Imdongla is an illiterate but an otherwise worldly-wise woman, knowledgeable about the history and politics of her village (*Laburnum* 81). Her father and husband were gaonburahs. The gaonburahs who belonged to major clans were government agents appointed to maintain peace and order in villages. Though they enjoyed privileged status they were always closely monitored by the Indian army as well as the rebel leaders of underground group fighting against the army *(Laburnum* 82). The village where Imdongla lived was gripped by terror unleashed by the underground fighters and government soldiers. They engaged themselves in an eternal conflict, and villagers were caught in the hostilities between these two warring groups. On the one hand, the villages where army set up camps were sought after by the rebels to punish the villagers. On the other hand, resisting the army was not an option for the villagers, as government would punish un-cooperative villages. In this critical struggle for power and domination, the life of villagers reached an impasse, often punctuated by violent outbursts.

Imdongla, the protagonist in the story "A Simple Question" is confined to the realm of domestic space, whereas the public space of politics is dominated by men- her father, being a gaonburah and her husband Tekaba. At the outset of the story itself Imdongla is presented as a character exhibiting stereotypical feminine traits. She is superstitious – she wakes up with an uneasy feeling that something bad would befall her husband as she had a weird dream. She is an ideal wife and a dutiful daughter, well –informed about the politics of the village. It was customary for the villagers to pay 'taxes' to the underground leaders, to pay for the travel

expenses of rebel group members going outside to fight for the independence of Naga territories from India. Those who protested or refused to give money or failed to meet their demands were severely punished. On a very delicate situation, it was Imdongla's intervention and presence of mind that saved her husband from being beaten by rebel leaders when they came to collect tax from her house. She was aware of the effects of terrible pressure on her husband as he was preparing to resign from the post of gaonburah. But she alerted him that his resignation would be mistaken as it would label him as a coward, and he would be recognized by the government as a sympathizer with the rebels. On another occasion, Imdongla powerfully barraged the village elders with criticism for their attitude of misgiving about meeting the rebels to plead for tax exemption. When village elders held a discussion in Tekaba's house to plan further dealings with fighters, Imdongla forcefully butted in to advise them to resist the jungle leaders. Tekaba attempted to silence her and indicted her of being naïve. Tekaba tried to hush her, "Keep quiet, woman, you know nothing." At this she flared up:

> Know nothing? Well, who saved you the last time when you stood there like a statue about to wet your loin cloth? Just think how our daughter will feed her children if they take away what's left after paying their debts to the uncle!' And turning to the other men she continued, And you venerable elders, where is your wisdom? Your courage? Can't some of you go to the jungle and talk to the leaders? Plead with them? Haven't we always given them what they wanted? Ask them for time; instead of rice offer them some pigs and chickens. We can do without meat but we cannot live without rice. Don't you see what's happening to our children and women? (*Laburnum* 85).

This part of the story clearly indicates the dictates of patriarchy in familial and political contexts. Political space in this story refers to space where political decisions impacting local or national levels are made. Here, in such space participation is not neutral or women are silenced. Nevertheless, Imdongla articulates her concern and attempts to gain participation in male centered political spaces. Ao demonstrates how powerfully this character negotiates such an unequal space of power to challenge normative gender roles. Ao has presented this character to delineate female subjects who are able to script agency within their specific domestic spaces, overriding constraints imposed by gender norms.

When Tekaba was detained in the army camp for allegedly assisting underground leaders, Imdongla rushed to meet the captain, "… when the captain approached her, she stood up and made as if to take off her waist cloth which he knew was the ultimate insult a Naga woman could hurl at a man signifying his emasculation" (*Laburnum* 86). Here again, Imdongla, positioned in a militarized masculine space appropriates her body as a tool and site of resistance. She strongly registers her protest by performing such an act which is surreptitious as well as a taboo. Imdongla, the coarse, illiterate village woman could unsettle masculine confidence and challenge the validity of male dominance simply by assuming socially acceptable masculine traits of courage and worldly wisdom. Her personal or female identity reflects traits uncommon in her social role and context. 'What do you want from us?' was the single question Imdongla asked that affected the captain most and persuaded him to release Tekaba and other villagers held captive in the camp. This episode illustrates her adroitness in transcending feminine and gender – specific attributes that could even emasculate an army officer.

It can also be assumed that political intervention of nation state in the lived spaces of female subjects can powerfully transform normative social and spatial mobilities. Here, in Ao's story, deploying Anindita Datta's interpretive strategy of periscoping visibilizes unseen spaces of power within which Imdongla's agency is performed. Such space or counter-space, though transient, co-exists in the very spaces of powerlessness. As Datta aptly points out, performance of such indigenous feminisms using body as a tool of resistance creates feminist counterspace:

> …indigenous feminisms operate within private spaces. They work subtly to create spaces of power and subversion within the domain of family life. For the bulk of women who remain firmly inscribed within the family, without the wherewithal to negotiate power through formal means or legal recourse for themselves, such tactics become all the more relevant in obtaining some measure of agency. (Datta Anindita 153)

In another story in this collection "Sonny", the micro social space of the protagonist has significant overlap with macro physical space represented by nation as a political entity. The main character of this story has no name, but is an individual whose lived experience is contextualized in "the convoluted politics of a ravaged land." (*Laburnum* 101). She is a nameless woman, having an obsessive love for a man, Sonny- the politically engaged youth; who considers his own nationalistic passion more important than the love of a woman and armed rebellion was a heady wine for him. In the beginning of the story she feels that the murky politics of a contested land would once again rip apart her assiduously restructured life *(Laburnum* 88). In such militarized society, repression and indiscriminate violence were rampant. For the villagers, armed rebellion systematically mapped their social

spaces, fracturing the fundamental social structure. "Families were separated, women were raped and killed and the men were forced to see the humiliation before they too , were either maimed for life or simply killed" (*Laburnum* 97). Haley Duschinski puts it thus:

> …practices of militarization give rise to conditions of punishment and punitive containment, and how these conditions constitute and constrain local forms of life through the production of power of the state to delimit the life trajectories of members of an entire category of the population and thereby to permit or preclude certain social futures, including the possibility of life itself. (Duschinski 695)

The conditions of locality production within the context of nation state existing as a political entity is analyzed in the story "The Boy who sold an Air-field''. This story set in pre-independent India, is about Pokenmong , "a fixture in the transit camp of American soldiers" (*Laburnum* 41). This young tribal boy was first employed in the house of Jiten Das, employed in Railways. But quite impulsively Pokenmomg joins the troop of American soldiers recruited to evacuate men and materials from their previous allied command post during Indo- Burmese war. Within a short while, Pokenmon or 'Porky 'proved to be an indispensable part of the transit camp. The village where the camp was constructed is an ' ethnoscape ' with the white soldiers or 'others' as immigrants. The village, at the same time, exists as an autonomous political entity with a gaonburah as administrative head. The presence of 'white soldiers ' had significant implications in the everyday practices of ' settled villagers'. "The villagers were living in anxiety given the proximity of the white men's camp: they did not know that the Great War was over.

They were so jittery that whenever they heard the planes, they all ran into the nearby jungles.'' *(Laburnum* 48). The dimensions of power and exclusion are induced by this newcomer. Local knowledge helps local subjects to escape to jungles when they hear sound of planes. Pokenmong, who enters village from the company of white soldiers is whole-heartedly welcomed by villagers. Even though he does not properly belong to village where the camp is situated, he is permitted to enter the village and the notion of social mobility is involved in the responses of villagers to his entry to the village. Quite attentively they listened to the news he delivered about the soldiers and urged him to come the next Sunday too with more news. The gaonburah' s wife even cooked a delicious meal for him Halll(*Laburnum* 48). The image of this mobile population of soldiers gradually changes with the reports of Pokenmong's experiences with them. In fact, Pokenmong activates the interaction between the inhabitants of this village and the 'outsiders.' When Porky's identity as 'camp-hanger' ended with the piece of paper handed over to him by the commander, he envisioned himself as the inheritor of an abandoned camp. Later, he used the same document to outwit the villagers. He guesses almost by instinct that a villager treasures his land most. He cunningly 'sells' the airfield to the villagers by giving them this document on the pretext that it was the sale deed.

Another significant work selected for analysis is Temsula Ao's collection *These Hills Called Home": Stories from a war –zone*. This collection includes ten stories consisting of several strands of Naga culture and history. She has chronicled the lives of Nagas existing in the borderlines of violence and amity; struggle and order; of tradition and modernity; of ethnicity and nationality; of life and death. In the preface " Lest We Forget'' she states, "Many of the stories in this collection

have their genesis in the turbulent years of bloodshed and tears that make up the history of Nagas from the early fifties of the last century, and their demand for independence from the Indian State'' (*These Hills Called Home* x). Besides, there are stories documenting traditional Naga way of life. To a large extent Ao unsettles the attempts of essentializing mainstream discourses on Northeastern states as a hotbed of terror and violence or as an eerie fantasy land. *These Hills Called Home* highlights the existence of nation – state as a context in the political imaginaries and social ethos of Naga communities. Their attempts to find safe spaces in the midst of terror are vividly portrayed in these stories.

If the nation is to be imagined as a limited and sovereign political community (Anderson 7) there is disregard for the socio-cultural and linguistic pluralism of indigenous communities. This plurality as well as the borderland existence of Naga communities further destabilizes the community concept of nation having "deep and horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7) between its mainland and peripheral people. This is true of Naga communities and their claims for territorial sovereignty and political struggles are to some extent, legitimized by their social and cultural rootedness to territories. For Naga tribes, their territories or neighborhoods are stages for their own self- reproduction which they conscript themselves for the production of locality to legitimize their sense of belonging. Ao' s collection, *These Hills Called Home* is analyzed to explore the relationship between experiences of belonging and the production of locality with reference to Naga communities as depicted in the stories. In post -colonial political restructuring and the sovereignty claims of nation state, Nagas were initiated to the process of reterritorialisation. Hence attempts of Naga communities to recreate socio-spatial coherence at local

level is contested within the wider spatial contexts of nation. Subir Bhaumik analyzes the following in *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India 's North East:*

> As successive Indian governments tried to Nationalize the political spaces in the Northeast by pushing ahead with mainstreaming efforts, the struggling ethnicities of the region continued to challenge the 'nation-building processes' , stretching the limits of constitutional politics. (xvi)

"The Jungle Major", the first story in the collection relates the story of Punaba and Khatila, a mismatched couple, leading a normal life in a village, soon to be engulfed in conflict between the rebels and the government forces. Almost all the stories with an exception of two, narrates the struggle between underground army and Indian army. "Soaba" is the story of a boy, a town orphan named Imtimoa or referred to as Soaba, meaning idiot in Ao language, who lived on people's charity. Quite accidentally, he reached Imlichuba or Boss' house. Boss representing unquestioned authority of nation was a dreaded figure. Villagers involved in subversive activities and agents of underground outfits were arrested and brought before him for interrogation. In this story Ao describes how everyday lives of villagers were impacted by the ongoing conflict between Indian army and rebels. "Words like convoy, grouping curfew and 'situation' began to acquire sinister dimensions as a result of the conflict taking place between the government and underground armies" (*These Hills Called Home* 10). Even a simple word 'situation' in the context of underground movement referred to the fall-out of the struggle between the conflicting parties. Thus, it is clear how such political spaces impinged upon normal lived spaces.

‘‘The Last Song’’ is the story of Apenyo, ‘the singing beauty’ of the village. In this story also, her village gets involved in the independence movement either directly by joining the underground army or by paying ‘taxes’ to the underground ‘government. (*These Hills Called Home* 26). The curfew man Satemba in the story ‘’The Curfew Man’’ was formerly a constable in Assam Police but physical disability prompted him to quit job and later he pursues a shady career as a government informer. Another story named ‘Shadows’’ details the story of Imli ‘ a last minute entrant into the group’ of underground soldiers. This story pictures the process of selecting soldiers to underground army and their journey to training camp to get training in guerilla warfare and in the use of sophisticated weaponry. Those who displayed extraordinary courage while combating Indian army were enlisted along with a consideration on adequate tribal representation.

The underground army is the ‘other space’ ‘heterotopia’(Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” 24) representing a space that is isolated and penetrable but not freely accessible like a public space. As we find in ‘’ The Jungle Major’’ the underground outfit is supplied with information, food and arms. Some other stories included in this collection, “The Curfew Man”, “Soaba”, “The Last Song” and “Shadows” also mention the functioning of underground army which can also be considered as heterotopias, ‘the other space’ in society. There are the band of sympathizers like government officials, doctors, teachers, housewives, helping the underground army to procure essential supplies, medicines and information about troop movements. Even villagers who villagers supported the rebel cause by paying ‘taxes’, without being members, were brutally punished by government forces (*These Hills Called Home* 26). Thus, we find the underground army as an isolated space existing within

society and major social actors as conduits for procuring arms and information. The subject of independence was a public talk and the villages to which the underground leaders belonged were punished and the names of the leaders were spoken only in whispers.

After joining the underground army, Punaba, in "The Jungle Major'' made quiet, irregular visits to his village and his wife Khatila also lead an unsociable life. In "Soaba''Ao writes about this exclusion, as a form of punishment, when the whole village having members in underground outfit ,would be dislodged from their ancestral sites, "by forcibly uprooting them from the soil of their origin and being, and confining them in an alien environment, denying them access to their fields , restricting them from their routine activities and demonstrating them that the 'freedom' they enjoyed could so easily be robbed at gun point by the "invading army" (*These Hills Called Hom*e 11). Hence, underground army exists as an isolated 'other space', outside of normative social order. In fact, to get into it one must have permission. People inducted into the underground army of freedom fighters were the group of nationalists aspiring for sovereignty of their territory, who wished for an independent Nagaland, a free nation in the world. The members were also 'outsiders' in their own territories. Ao narrates like this:

> For example, a town like Mokokchung would obviously have more Aos than Angamis or Semas because the town is in the Ao territory. Such towns also had many 'outsiders': Assamese or Bengali doctors or teachers, Marwari and Bihari traders, Nepali settlers, whose forefathers had fought with the British army and were given land to settle down. Slowly but steadily, a new environment was emerging and overtaking the old ways, and youngsters

> growing up in such places began to think of themselves as the new generation. (Ao, *These Hills Called Home* 10)

Such dissident young people caught in the crossroads of Naga history incited separatism and they abandoned family, career and jobs to join the band of nationalists to free their homeland from forces representing nation–state. They aspired for Nagaland to be counted as a free nation of the world. Besides, there was a method of conscription based on clans, and many rural and urban adults were enrolled in underground army. Geographical boundaries for legitimizing political supremacy blurred the border lines of social and communal groups. These social outcasts as well as heterogenous demography created rebellious group of separatists. Those separatists existed out of social spaces and were carefully monitored by the Army. In "The Jungle Major", while Punaba was in his village, soldiers from Indian army approached the village looking for him and searches were carried out simultaneously in different sectors of the village. It was a routine to patrol the outskirts of all suspect villages. "Soaba" also mentions massive deployment of army personnel at various strategic areas (*These Hills Called Home* 10) In "The Last Song" the front porch of the new church is the base for Indian army's strategically planned surveillance mission. Underground hideouts were often raided by soldiers of Indian army and records of payment of money to rebels were seized. The army would go to a village, suspected of supporting the rebels, and would arrest the leaders for betraying the government. In this story, it was the day when the new church building was being dedicated, the army conceived a vile plot to attack the villagers in retaliation. Another story "The Curfew Man" records stories of villagers subjected to humiliation and threats or killed by the patrolling parties of Indian

army. In “Shadows’’ the number of trainee groups had to be reduced since the routes of underground army were constantly patrolled by Indian army.

Here, in Temsula Ao’s stories, the underground army can be analyzed as a heterotopic site: the other space in society. The function of this space is to create a space of illusion – a heterotopia of illusion- insurrectionary in essence devised to destabilize political structure of nation – state. As such this space challenges and ruptures the dominant discourse of power imposed by the nation. Moreover, the members of this space have the will to protest against normalization by interrogating and challenging dominant power structures of nation.

Consequently, this heterotopia is constituted as a site of resistance to nation’s political hegemony and claims of absolute territorial sovereignty. It is constructed as an autonomous space and uses violence, force and militarization to recreate structures of power. Underground army as a heterotopia is the space where a new way of political ordering emerges, that is in contrast to the hegemonic political discourse of nation state as it offers a temporary passage away from power imposed upon. But this other space favors a transparently hierarchical way of working. As in “Shadows’’ Imli being the son of second –in- command of the underground army, his inclusion was departure from the norm. Again, Punaba’s leadership qualities elevated him in rank and he was made captain in rebel army. Nation on the other hand adopts the strategy of militarization to contain the explosive potential of such spaces.

“An Old Man Remembers’’ is an uncanny portrayal of the brutalities of militarization and the intensity of armed forces rebellion is explicitly narrated by the old man, Sashi. When Sashi and his friend Imli were recruited into Naga National

Army, they thought that they were resolved to remain underground soldiers, which obfuscated their social futures. The perpetual warfare between Indian army and underground rebels produces a continuum of violence infiltrating into the life-worlds of social groups and everyday social space like school. In a violent combat, soldiers were shooting those helpless villagers including nursing mothers, school children and old people. This story relates the brutal state- sponsored violence to which individuals or social actors are subjected to, and shows how overlapping of social and political spaces has contributed to suffering and punitive containment of villagers

In the Northeast, people are identified by the clan to which they belong and their territory defined in terms of social groupings and social relations. Territorial divisions were based on spatial configurations of social collectivities and societal identities were normative pattern of territoriality. Nation state, on the contrary attempts to identify people in a pre- defined bounded space. It produces citizens within a definite space by effacing societal identities. It seeks to construct identity for people in a defined space-that of a citizen- to maintain sovereignty within that limited space. Hence heterotopias in postcolonial nation unsettle imperialistic cartography which has carved politically homogenized space and challenges sovereignty claims of nation. The physical space of a nation, marked by arbitrarily marked boundaries, a key determinant of territoriality, is invariably problematized by heterotopias. As heterotopias exist as autonomous spaces, they are in contrast to the hegemonic political discourse of nation state.

> Heterotopias are not quite spaces of transition- the chasm they represent can never be closed up-but they are space of deferral, spaces where ideas and

> practices that represent the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never actually achieve what they set out to achieve- social order, or control and freedom. (Hetherington ix)

In India's Northeast, as Sankaran Krishna rightly suggests that, "…the ubiquity of cartographic metaphors, the production of *inside* and *outside* along the borders of the country, reveal both the epistemic and physical violence that accompanies the enterprise of nation –building" (508). He further states in the article that, "The encounters between the state and the people along frontiers is suggestive of the contested and tortured production of sovereign identity'' (508).

In pre-colonial times, for all Naga tribes, the hills and mountains, surrounding Brahmaputra and Barak valleys provided an organically evolved, known setting within which their indigenous cultural and social practices were rendered meaningful. To understand the process of post- colonial nation –making with reference to the Northeast and to analyze how Nagaland can be perceived as a state space affiliated to the nation, it has to be analyzed how Naga tribal groups experience contexts of colonial territorialization and post- colonial reterritorialization.

It can be seen that India's Northeast is an exceptional space which has been politically engineered by colonial cartography to introduce and normalize territorial discourses. Instead of providing opportunities for spatial mobility, unnatural borderlines and boundaries immobilized social patterns. Thus, the process of territorialization initiated by imperial cartographic practices can be viewed as a reduction of context generating dimensions of spatial locality. Hence organically evolved life-worlds of ethnic communities on peripheries, in which local interests

and activities became meaningful were at odds with the political projects of colonialism. When colonial rule required accessible spaces and controlled and unaggressive inhabitants, the local subjects resented what they experienced as spatial locality produced by such outside forces, as opposed to spaces or contexts for locality production generated from within.

As Vidal observes in *Principles of Human Geography*, "As various groups tended to conquer and to occupy more and more space, nature offered no serious obstacle to the formation of intermediary groups, serving as connecting links between fundamentally different races" (178). In pre-colonial times, for the non-territorialized tribal groups the actualities of the hills and mountains formed the contexts through which those communities experienced and lived out their everyday worlds. Their way of life and indigenous practices like hunting, predatory warfare, their relationship with plainsmen, intertribal alliances, conflicts, and governing patterns can be viewed as processes in which each Naga group created specific neighborhoods or produced spatial locality. Through their actions and strategies, they produced contexts for themselves and each other thereby creating space for their movement, interaction and colonization. At the same time, they responded to the contexts of territorialization brought forth by colonial mapping expeditions.

When the mountains and hills were strategically manoeuvred by imperial rulers for establishing political base in the plains, the unchartered spaces including hills of the Northeast were reconfigured as bounded spaces. As Sarma has noted thus:

> In a region where movement of people in search of pasture and field was as natural as the hills or the mountain streams, the drawing of maps has sadly

> identified people with territory, thus setting loose social and political movements that try to sanctify territories from the perceived outsider or the ethnic other. (44)

As Samir Kumar Das puts it, "Settling the wandering population and eventually making them part of a political order has to do with fixing the borders and confining them to their respective homelands. Border and order have historically proven to be only complementary to each other…". (Das S K 21)

Analysing Ao's stories in the collection *Laburnum for my Head* focusing on the spatial dynamics of localities or micro units of settlements helps in identifying the ways in which within micro spatial contexts, individuals are able to develop and sustain their customs and norms which form the basis of their collective behaviour. Such spaces exist outside of the political projects of the nation. Those micro-spaces insulated from the politically charged macro spaces contextualize everyday activities of individuals who can perform social practices and underwrite narratives of belonging. At the same time, individual subjects also assert rootedness to micro spaces, as they script agency for themselves Their ritualistic performances, day -to-day activities contextualised in the social spaces of family or clan "actually produce a wider set of contexts for themselves and each other" (Appadurai "Production of Locality" 196). Such spaces can also be adapted as sites of resistance. Sarah Pink observes in *Situating Everyday Practices*: "Therefore everyday life is a context of human creativity, innovation and change, and a site where processes towards a sustainable future might be initiated and nurtured." (5). On activism, she remarks as follows: "It also involves sets of practices and processes that are inevitably both

experiential at a personal level, embodied and social as well as political and intended to lead to forms of change'' (6).

The characters Lentina in "Laburnum for my Head'', and Imchanok in "Death of a Hunter'' shed light on place-based practices. Being local residents, their engagement with place is implicit in their local ways of knowing and sociality. Moreover, rituals associated with hunting as illustrated in "Death of a Hunter'', the trials and tribulations of people engaged in pot making, demonstrated in "The Pot Maker'', and all such 'spatial practices' (Lefebvre 38) have an inclusive and integrative dimension. Such spatial practices are techniques of social aggregation and in Lefebvre's words such practices "ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion." (38). Each member of society is attached to that profession or practice and it implies a level of competence and specific level of performance by local subjects. In "The Pot Maker", the little girl Sentila's mother and grandmother were all pot makers. "They told her that it was back -breaking and often frustrating work…'' (*These Hills Called Home* 57). Sudden rain could ruin weeks of labour or improper firing in the makeshift kiln could destroy batch of pots. Still pots made in Sentila's village were famous all over the region and people from far off villages came to buy or barter pots with produce from their fields. *(These Hills Called Home* 58). In "Death of A Hunter'', rice and paddy fields destroyed by boar and elephants necessitated the service of Imchanok , the skilled hunter. The villagers enlisted in Imcha's hunting troop were skilled trekkers, "knowledgeable in the habits of wild animals'' (*Laburnum for My Head* 24). Hence, these very localised practices provide interactive framework for societies for maintaining solidarity among communities and through these kinds of collective actions along with the

eventualities of history and environment spaces are socialized. In Lentina' s story, though the character is rooted in familial space, the cemetery or such sacred place becomes the key factor in the process of production of locality. Likewise, in "The Boy who sold an Air-field'' the airfield has a social dimension which is historically contingent or politically specific. So Pokenmong , the Naga was welcomed by the white commander and was assigned menial duties to the extent that he finally became an indispensable part of the camp. Porky, learned the language and mannerisms of white sahibs, and the airfield which was a new world to the homeless boy. His inclusion in this group of 'whites' sanctions him with a kind of social mobility as he is treated with regard and respect in the neighboring village.

In the stories selected for study from the collection *Laburnum For My Head* characters Lentina in "Laburnum for my Head'', Imchanok in "Death of A Hunter'', Pokenmong in "The Boy who sold an Airfield'' and Sentila in "The Pot - Maker'', included in *These Hills Called Home*: *Stories from A War Zone* are individuals situated in micro spaces of family, and as local subjects rooted in micro spaces they produce the social contexts within which their very localizing activities like planting laburnum in the gravestone , revitalising and sustaining traditional practices of hunting and pottery acquire meaning and historical potential. The second collection selected for study relates the presence of nation as a political context affecting the lived spaces of individuals. The stories analysed from the collection *These Hills Called Home*: *Stories from A War Zone* include "The Jungle Major", "Soaba" , "The Last Song" , "The Curfew Man", "Shadows", "An Old Man Remembers" document the controlling measures and practices of macro spatial form or nation like military intervention and territorial politics. In all these stories

state politics or power structures play a decisive role in locality production and practices of nation state like sovereignty claims and militarization or political homogenization contextualize changes in spatial patterns and new spaces evolve out of such contexts. The characters Imdongla in “A Simple Question,’’ the nameless woman in “Sonny’’ use micro spaces as sites of resistance and protest.

When considering nation as a macro-physical space, the context of militarization produced by the nation is in conflict with the other insurrectionary, politically charged spaces generated by communities. Citing Kashmir valley as example Haley Duschinski in the article “Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley” demonstrates “how the militarization of everyday life allows for the elimination of those segments of the population identified as "threats to national order" and incarcerated, literally and figuratively, as prisoners of the state’’. (692). He makes the following analysis:

> …how deeply-entrenched patterns of militarization produce real social suffering for particular local communities while simultaneously being obscured and rendered invisible through popular rhetoric of protecting national security, promoting national interests, and maintaining law and order. (693)

As for Nagas, spatial redesigning beginning from non- territory of pre-colonial times, colonial territorialization and post-colonial re-territorialization have contextualized and impacted their social lives. The stories selected to analyze from political perspective relates the confinement of locality within the meta narratives of nation, whereas the stories analyzed from the vantage point of micro –social spaces reveal the context generating feature of locality production. The concept of

territory is always a shifting one and is conceived as the physical embodiment of political organization with a significant role to provide security to its inhabitants by drawing borders and boundaries. So, the techniques of mapping spaces by marking boundaries are always challenged by sovereignty claims of independent nations. Appadurai has noted thus:

> …the isomorphism of people, territory and legitimate sovereignty that constitutes the normative charter of the modern nation-state is itself under threat from the forms of circulation of people characteristic of the contemporary world. ("Production of locality"191)

The political imaginaries of post- colonial nation state touched on the concomitant problem of territorial sovereignty. The nation-state sanctifies its political existence on bounded territory with fixed and unthreatened boundaries. For this, nation uses all its apparatuses to create a network of formal and informal techniques for the nationalization of space under its sovereign territory.

Appadurai's observation on the contestations involved in the process of nation -making is significant:

> The nation –state conducts throughout its territories the bizarrely contradictory project of creating a flat, contiguous, and homogeneous space of nationness and simultaneously a set of places and spaces (prisons, barracks, airports, radio stations, secretariats, parks, marching grounds, processual routes) calculated to create the internal distinctions and divisions necessary for state ceremony, surveillance, discipline, and mobilization. ("Production of Locality" 188)

Appadurai also points out that when social groups or communities sharing common history and properly belonging to known spaces, undertake activities to reproduce neighborhoods or spatial locality which is often at odds with the projects of the nation-states since the commitments, mechanisms, attachments that characterize local subjectivities are more demanding, more continuous, and sometimes more distracting that the nation-state fails to manage the efforts and experiences of local subjects. When nation states attempt to generate regulated public life and disciplined national citizens, local subjects' affiliations to specific locations or areas and their conceptual and ideological affinities are discarded. Spatial localities or neighborhoods are arena for self-reproduction, which contradicts with the imaginary of the nation state. For the nation state neighborhoods are containers of a generalizable mode of belonging to a wider territorial imaginary. The modes of localization that the nation-state can afford have a disciplinary quality about them even in activities like sanitation and street cleaning, in prisons and slum clearance, in refugee camps and offices of every kind, the nation-state localizes by fiat, by decree, and sometimes by using force. This sort of localization creates severe constraints, even direct obstacles, to the survival of locality as a context-generative factor. Liisa Malkki suggests, transgressing boundaries are not just corporeal movements of groups of people, but a kind of "cultural displacement of people, things and cultural products"(25). Thus it can be assumed that the production of locality is fragile or it becomes a difficult achievement when the practices of local subjects are conditioned by the context -producing projects of a hierarchical organization like nation -state. Also, the production of locality, articulated as a

property of social life is valued when the contexts are produced from within micro social spaces.

Hence, considering locality as the particular value of social life, the production processes involve two key determinants, the first one being the physical space ranging from household to clan, from community and village and nation state. The second significant factor is the context for socialization of such spaces which can either render localized spaces meaningful or contested spaces. The stories analysed here show the production of locality with reference to Naga community as represented in Ao's literary works. In Appadurai's terminology, 'local subjects' rooted in micro spaces of family, clan or community, knowledgeable about the patterns and paradigms of belonging, through their ritualised practices and interactive strategies, generate contexts for their own meaningful actions. In such an already given or existing neighborhood, or the actual community, embedded with the rhetoric of social discourse, provide contexts for creating meaningful terrain of habitation. To some extent, such spaces are also counter-spaces where local subjects script agency to challenge or resist power structures or hegemonic discourses. On the contrary, political intervention of hierarchical macro spatial entity- nation- produces contexts causing ruptures in the social fabric of communities. Epifanio San Juan Jr. has also analyzed the political context of nation -making and violence implied in it. He states:

> Postcolonial theory claims to expose the artificial and arbitrary nature of the nation. Such signifiers of homogeneity not only fail to represent the diversity of the actual 'nation' or body politic, but also serve to impose the interests of a section of the community as the general interest. But this is not all. In the

> effort to make this universalizing intent prevail, the instrumentalities of state power—the military and police, religious and educational institutions, judiciary and legal apparatuses—are deployed. Hence, from this orthodox postcolonial stance, the nation-state and its ideology of nationalism are alleged to have become the chief source of violence and conflict since the French Revolution. (Juan, 12-13)

The political contexts imposed upon local subjects of Nagaland include territorialization of colonial times and post-colonial reterritorialization, which have obliterated norms of belonging based on societal identities. Further, the context of militarization, for the purpose of political homogenisation and sovereignty policies of nation have also created volatile spaces, transforming local subjects to insurgent subjects. Hence political contexts of nationalization processes produced by the nation as large entity, have created contested spaces within the state space of Nagaland.

Chapter IV

Negotiating Modernities: Changes in the Social Milieu of Arunachal Pradesh

The history of our race
begins with the place of stories.

-Mamang Dai, *An Obscure Place*

Mamang Dai is a reputed writer from Arunachal Pradesh whose literary imagination and narrative technique are not constrained by Anglophone tradition,but energised by her own ethnic oral poetics. Dai's works of fiction and poetry reflects her ethnic consciousness and identity. In her fictional work *Legends of Pensam*, she has skilfully used the riches of her community's oral tradition at thematic level as well as for its structural pattern, only to prove that orality is extremely flexible and highly inventive. *Legends of Pensam* is an intricate web of stories and images which are linked to the place where it happens, and it narrates the history of a tribe. Here, the author has digressed from the conventional structural pattern of novel. Dai has used the literary space to narrate the history of her tribe. The history of her people is rendered through a series of stories by linking it to the place where it happened.

This chapter attempts an examination of her literary works *Legends of Pensam* and *The Black Hill* which represent the social and cultural ethos of Adi and Mishmee communities of Arunachal Pradesh. An analysis of these works helps to identify the different contexts, nuanced patterns, and problems of insider-outsider encounter within geographically delimited spaces to discern how such confluences

catalyze transformations in the social milieu of communities. Also, to find out how outsider's or non-native people's entry to specific geographical locations facilitate resurrection of past narratives encoded in the collective memory of the inhabitants. This in turn promotes insider's spatial affinities and sense of belonging which reiterates the social dimension of spaces. There is yet another factor that impacts the significance of spatial locality which can be identified as technological mediation. The penetration of technology in the life-worlds of communities problematizes the link between territory and the sense of belonging of social groups as it creates non-contiguous spaces as sites for multiplex social interaction. Another perspective on social changes focusses on the significance of journeys to and explorations of uncharted spaces by individuals or groups.

First part of the chapter provides a brief sketch of the history and geographical peculiarities of Arunachal Pradesh along with an overview of the cultural peculiarities of certain major tribes, which will help to locate the people in the larger sweep of history and on the wider social and cultural map of the nation. North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), later renamed as Arunachal Pradesh was a Union Territory till January 20, 1972. It became a distinct political entity on February 20, 1987, with its emergence as a state. With scheduled tribes accounting for two thirds, or 64.22 percent, of the population, it is essentially a tribal state. The state is home to around 100 sub-tribes and 26 major tribes. The only people who practise Tibetan Buddhism in the Lamaistic style are the Monpas and Sheredukpens in the Tawang and West Kameng areas. Despite its strategic significance, the state is not so economically developed. Power supplies, educational and healthcare

facilities, infra-structure developments are lacking in this area due to rough terrestrial space.

The second part of the chapter focusses on the select literary works to examine the dimensions of locality formed by the links between the technologies of interactivity derived out of the sense of social immediacy and the relativity of contexts (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 178). Dai's use of myths and tribal beliefs within the framework of historical events holds a special cachet as it demonstrates the communities' affiliations to places. Here also, social dimension of locality construed as the essence or value of specific geographical spaces is legitimized when the inhabitants contribute contexts for such socialisation process. At the same time, such localized spaces are also locations of social and cultural pluralities, when the spatial patterns are reconfigured as a result of relationships that are formed through encounters. Further, an analysis of collective social interactivities of the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh, to know certain myths and beliefs that structure their social lives will help to understand the depths and patterns of changes. As Dai herself states in *Legends of Pensam*:

> But it wasn't as if change hadn't touched our land or have come only recently. The first white priests, surveyors and soldiers had begun arriving in the region almost two hundred years ago, in the early 1800s. Since then, people from other worlds had come and gone, though the only records of their journeys are the stories that the older men and women remember. (38)

In many ethnic communities of Arunachal Pradesh, oral tradition, has been their way of life. They have been raised over the years through oral tradition and all their customs, ceremonies, and beliefs have been transmitted to them orally. In this

state, the Adi communities' classical literature is made up of epic tales that were initially passed down in ceremonial language by shamans known as miris, who were well-informed about the evolution of the tribes, and their history. This literature is collectively referred to as *Aabang.* The *Aabang* is essentially a story or an act of storytelling for an audience. Narratives of fires, floods, and lost civilizations are prevalent themes, yet they carry significant implications for the group. Every branch of the narrative develops into a different tale. *Aabangs* are numerous and can consist of multiple sections. Additionally, there are two types of Miri: pure rhapsodists and those with the ability to connect with the world of spirits. In an interview, Mamang Dai has stated that oral histories had an impact on her life and writings. She feels like having an identity only because she knows the stories. She finds it as a world of myth, memory, and imagination, serving as inspiration for her writing. She also finds its significance on the symbols incorporated into the stories which tells about the value of life and what it means to be human ("In Conversation" 2).

Stories form an integral part of the lives of her community; they are so intricately woven into the fabric of their existence. They penetrate into every aspect of the lived experiences as they engage in conversation about people and incidents, read books or exchange messages. Thus, stories for them are much more than just a book or narrative; they are the means by which they process thoughts to interpret the world and their lives. By creating narratives to interpret, they attempt to comprehend situations and individuals. So also, these stories create views of the world and act as a looking glass through which they construct meaning about themselves and others. Storytelling provides the platform to form relationships and establishes community linkages. As stories transmitted orally travel beyond borders, religion, class, and

culture, they are also the means to explore unknown cultural spaces. Kathy G Short views on this power of stories:

> … to move between local and global cultures and to explore the ways in which people live and think in cultures that differ from our own. Whether these stories are directly shared with us by global members of our immediate community or through literature from people living in distant geographical places, they provide access to shared and unique experiences and beliefs. We need more than facts to understand the storied lives of people in diverse global cultures. (9)

Through stories we familiarize ourselves with diverse worlds that are different from ours and they give us the feeling that we belong to our groups. Banikya observes:

> The sharing of stories has always been a part of humankind's history — through them, we make friends, form bonds, and understand others a little better. In a country that's increasingly getting polarized, we hope that these stories bring people closer together and create a place that's more inclusive, connected and cohesive. (Banikya)

For studying the dynamics of territorial affinities and sense of belonging of ethnic groups and communities of borderlands, from the perspective of locality production allows for a fine-grained analysis of the spatial and social dynamics involved in assertions and performances of belonging to specific spaces. The concept of locality as an analytical tool is effectuated to examine the logic of space, to understand the cultural meaning of the place, translated through connections, interactions and mobility. Thus, locality or local knowledge is not generated by an individual or community's shift in location or by a territorial and symbolic reconfiguration of

their immediate physical environment. Therefore, it is inappropriate to view locality as a top-down cultural dynamic. Instead, locality can also be viewed as a feature of social life or the outcome of bodily interaction of either individual or a group, with a location.

The notions of identity and belonging with territoriality as a reference point are problematized by those diasporic communities, travellers, migrants, and other forced settlers whose definition of belonging is predicated on movement, as they transcend the features of bounded territories as identity markers. The sense of belonging to places are reinforced when the social and cultural affinities to places are unearthed from antiquities and origin myths. To some extent, for asserting place-based identities and to establish links between place and the sense of belonging, history needs to be resurveyed. The process of revising history approved by geography, anthropology and similar ethnographic narratives further revamps the epistemological concerns on identity and belonging.

Historically, the state that is now called Arunachal Pradesh was on the fringe of two great civilizations: the Hindu/Ahom in the Assam valley to the South and the Tibetan across the high ranges to the North. Both Tibetan and Ahom written sources mention the existence of hill tribes on their borders, but the earliest documented descriptions of these hill tribes come from the British invasion of the Assam valley in the early nineteenth century (Aram and Blackburn 1). According to the 2001 Census, scheduled tribes make up 64.2% of the population in Arunachal Pradesh. They are divided into 25 major tribes and a number of subtribes, and they live in 3,649 dispersed villages. The “Arunachalees” identity is dependent on distinction and is rooted in mythological tradition. Their origin myths have no historical or

physical justification, but people nonetheless accept them as an essential component of their past. Within their social boundaries, each tribe has maintained to exist as a unique ethnic entity with its own language, social customs, and dress norms (Nayak, “Dialectics of Globalisation” 264).

The British presence in Assam and other parts of Northeastern India did not significantly affect the state. Protecting the inhabitants of the plain areas under British administration from the sporadic raids of hill tribes was the goal of British rule in the region’s Northeast. They created the “inner line” as an administrative boundary to accomplish this. The territories beyond this boundary were referred to the Frontier Tracts. These frontier tracts were designated as partially excluded and excluded territories under the Government of India Acts of 1909 and 1935. In 1937, these regions were placed directly under the governor's control, who ruled them at his discretion in accordance with section 92 of the Government of India Act, 1935, through the Political Officers and Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur. The Naga Tribal Areas, the Balipara Frontier Tract, the Tirap Frontier Tract, the Abor Hill District, the Mishmi Hill District, were collectively renamed as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1954, which was later renamed as Arunachal Pradesh. In 1972, Arunachal Pradesh gained the status of a Union Territory. Despite the century's isolation, its elevation to full-fledged state on February 20, 1987 cleared the path for the state's quick progress in terms of expanding its administration, embracing the market economy, and developing a new concept of social status (Aram and Blackburn 1).

Arunachal Pradesh, the frontier state of Northeast India shares more than one-thousand-kilometre border with Tibet which is claimed by China. Being

surrounded by mountains and bordering four other countries—Burma (Myanmar), Tibet, Bhutan, and India—Arunachal Pradesh (formerly NEFA) has far more strategic significance than any other state in the Indian Union. The Ahoms had contact with the hill people of this area in different ways and they were successful in asserting their dominance over them. When the British entered, they came into contact with them, they used various startegies to win over these tribes and conquer their territories. The British policy towards Arunachal was evident in various aspects, such as the hill trade, the continuation of the Posa system, established by the Ahom ruler Pratap Singha during his reign 1603-41) and the relationship between the Inner Line and the Mc Mahon Line. For convenience, the state can be divided into three cultural zones: groups of Buddhists who have been Tibetanized live in the West and along the Northern border; groups of animists who are mainly being Christian in the central zone; and groups from Burma who practice both Buddhism and Christianity, including some Theravada Buddhists and tribes related to the Naga Community, who live in the Southeast. Major river systems also serve as boundaries for these areas, or culture zones: the West's Kameng, Subansiri, Siang and Dibang in the centre, Lohit and Tirap in the Southeast.

Although the majority of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh can be classified as animist, there exists tremendous heterogeneity among the deities, spirits, priests, rituals, and oral traditions of each tribe. But here also, the tribes are undergoing the process of transition, and Christianity is gradually becoming one of the dominant forms of faith practiced by many tribes of this state, such as the Adi, Nyishi, Apatani, Galo, Tagin, Wancho, Nokte, Tangsa, and the Sulung, and many other groups (Chaudhuri, Sarit 260).

This northeastern state of India covers an area of 83,743 sq. km. sharing an international border with Bhutan in the West, China in the North and Myanmar in the East. This region was part of undivided Assam during colonial rule. There are nearly 26 major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, among them Apatanis are the most popular, believed to have descended from a legendary ancestor called Abotani. The people have migrated from the Tang-Tsnagpo valley of Tibet and settled themselves in the areas beyond Khru and Kamla rivers during the Neolithic era. Most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, maintained good relations with the outside world. There was the system of *Posa*, a kind of tax, imposed by Ahom rulers, through which they established relationship with outsiders. But Apatanis did not receive *posa* from Ahom rulers due to their agricultural prosperity. The term 'Apatani' was coined and popularized by Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, an Austrian anthropologist appointed as officer in charge of Subansiri region to maintain friendly relations with the tribes. Apatanis were members of an umbrella tribe called *Tanii*. *Apa* was prefixed before *Tanii,* derived from their earliest ancestor, *Abotani*. Previously there were different names like *Onka Miri*, *Auka Miri*, *Ankas*, *Apa Tanang* etc. (Ghosh 1187). Furer-Haimendorf named them as Apatanis which was quite unknown before 1940s. At the same time, for the present generation the term *Apatani* is not acceptable, and they prefer to introduce themselves as *Tanii*. They consider the Tanii as their real tribal identity. When Furer-Haimendorf visited Subansiri region, he knew that the inhabitants were living in complete isolation, untouched by outside world. He has recorded thus:

> Many of the villages which I visited in 1944 and 1945 had never been entered by any outsider- European, Indian or Tibetan – nor had the villagers

> any conception of life outside their immediate neighborhood. This situation gave me the matchless opportunity of observing the economic and social life of population without any contact with modern life or indeed the political system prevailing in the rest of India. (4)

The state of Arunachal Pradesh, nestled in the eastern Himalayas, is also the bone of contention between India and China. Indo-China border extends to 3488 square kilometres, of which 1126 square kilometres are shared with Arunachal Pradesh. There has been a long history of territorial dispute between these two countries which is divided into three sectors: western, central, and eastern. In the western sector, China continues to control over roughly 38,000 square kilometres of Akshai Chin territory. China's claim to Ladakh, of which Akshai Chin was a part, is debunked by historical evidence. Ladakh and Tibet have coexisted since the Mughal era and a treaty was signed between two Kings in 1680. After getting independence India accepted the border drawn by British surveyor W. H. Johnson, which was approved in 1897 by British General John Ardagh. This was rejected by China. One of the causes of the 1962 India-China War was China's construction of the Tibet-Xinjiang motorway, which runs across Akshai Chin.

After becoming sufficiently modernised through contact with the West and recognising that the state's territorial integrity was an important concern at the beginning of the 20th century, China emerged as a powerful Asian nation and occupied Tibet. This led to China’s increased interference in Arunachal Pradesh’s territory, which ultimately put the state’s strategic positioning in jeopardy multiple times. A buffer against China and Myanmar was offered by this state nestled inside the Himalayan Mountain ranges. There was also the need to critically re-evaluate the

politics of the entire Himalayan borderland due to the construction of Chinese National Highway, which passes through Mishmi regions of Arunachal Pradesh, northwestern Myanmar, and finally finishes in Nepal. The issues involved in border politics were subtly managed by the British because they needed strong footage in the frontier tracts of Northeast. This ended in the delineation of a border line, Mc Mahon Line, which divided India and Tibet (Nayak, "British Strategy and Mc Mahon Line" 553).

The territorial dispute between India and China over the boundary lines of Arunachal Pradesh led to Indo-China war of 1962, which adversely affected the mobility, social ties and trading activities of communities inhabiting the frontier regions, especially Mishmee tribes. The Mishmi hills is inhabited by three sub-groups Idu, Digaru, Miju of Mishmi community. These groups reside on the Indian side of the border in the districts of Lohit, Anjaw, Lower Dibang Valley, and Dibang Valley, collectively known as Mishmi Hills. Another group, namely Deng Mishmi, settled in Zayul valley of Tibet, is not connected to the groups residing in India. Within this major group there are several clans, living along the rivers and tributaries flowing through their regions. The Mishmi consider themselves as a distinct ethnic group, who differ from their neighbors, the Adi. The Adi group belong to the Tani group which consists of the Adi, Nyishi, Apatani, Tagin, and Hill Miri tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They believe that they have a common ancestor, Abotani, their primal ancestor. But each sub-group of the Mishmi, believe that they have their own primal ancestors: Nani Initaya for Idus, Amik Matai for Mijus, and Jamalo for Digarus (Aiyadurai 370).

The Tani group, the collective term used to denote all tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, is believed to have descended from Abo-Tani, which literally means Father of Man, or the "first man". They share a kind of similar life pattern and belief systems. They inhabit the central tract of the state. Their supreme divinities are Donyi, the Sun and Polo, the Moon. This indigenous faith system provides an explanation to the phenomena of nature, and origin of creation and life in this world. Later this has evolved as the concept of Donyipoloism. Their belief system is deeply rooted in the existence of spirits. The actions and influence of spirits determine the success and prosperity or evil and distress in the life of an individual or community. For the well-being of individual and society, these spirits need to be appeased through sacrifices and offerings. These priests, miri or shamans perform the role of intermediaries between the world of spirits and humans. They perform rituals on certain occasions and ceremonies, to appease spirits. Now, the priests also, called *nyibo, are* the sole repository of the history and mythology of these tribes. The stories of origin and migration of tribes are contained in the songs and stories chanted by the priests. Even the origin of nyibo is buried in oral tradition of the nyibo agoms or priest lore. It is also believed that Donyipolo intervened to mediate a quarrel over the superiority of first man and spirit (Riba 114 -115).

The British saw immense trade prospects in those unexplored frontier regions of Mishmi. They entered Mishmi Hills for mapping and surveying and later they made punitive expeditions to gain control over the resources of this region. Another strategic move by the British was the implementation of Inner Line Regulations of 1873. For colonial rulers, the frontier region, including Mishmi hills remained an important region for trade expansion. They needed to subjugate the

inhabitants to enhance their economic interests. Also, peace has to be maintained in the area as there were inter-tribal conflicts as well as between the Mishmi and the Tibetan ethnic groups over territorial encroachments. The colonialists also attempted to establish a rail link from Sadiya to Batang in Sichuan, China through the Mishmi Hills, but this never materialized because they feared the entry of Chinese troops to Indian territory. Nevertheless, there was trade between the Mishmi Hills, China, and Burma by the natives using the historic trade routes. The British also feared the Mishmi people, if not managed properly would end up becoming "Chinese" subjects. The colonialists' lack of geographical knowledge was another impediment in reaching out to the tribes. Later, the British had to change their approach to Mishmi people from non-interference to direct confrontation to gain control over them. The murder of the political officer Noel Williamson, Dr Gregorson, enraged the colonial administrators. The British troops started extracting fines, arrested those whom they thought to be offenders and even destroyed Mishmi villages. In 1853, an expedition was carried out to Mishmi villages when two French Missionaries, Fathers Nicolas Michael Krick and Augustine Etienne Bourry, were killed by a Mishmi headman named Kaisha in Anjaw district. This man was later arrested and hanged in Dibrugarh. Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* is based on this historical incident. Again, expeditions were sent to the Mishmi Hills in 1911, "the Mishmi Mission" by W. C. M. Dundas, the Chief Political Officer, to subdue and settle three groups: the Abors, Mishmis, and Miris. The Mission was undertaken with an aim to punish the murderers of British officials.

The Adi group is another major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh believed to have come from Southern China during the sixteenth century. The Adi people are spread

over the area stretching from Dibang valley districts in the east to upper subanshi district in the west including west and east Siang in between. They follow an animistic faith, worshipping nature and natural elements like air, water, fire, and trees.

Even in postcolonial administrative regime, the history of Arunachal Pradesh remains mostly unchanged. Administrative mechanisms like the Inner line and direct control by the central government, acting through the Governor as its representative, continued after the withdrawal of the colonial forces. Despite being part of the state of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh remained under direct central authority until 1965. The External Affairs Ministry remained in command of it, and its administrative divisions were still referred to as "frontier divisions". Arunachal was still viewed as a border at the end of an empire, even in postcolonial India, primarily due to the state's closeness to China.

Following the war with China in 1962, Arunachal was given a more inclusive vision known as NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) until 1972. At that point, the Home Ministry took over and districts were established, with Deputy Commissioners in charge, just as in other parts of India. It attained full statehood in 1987. The 60-member legislative assembly of the current representative form of government contains 59 seats set aside for the Scheduled Tribes who account for more than 60% of the population (Goswami 5).

In this context it is remarkable to see that individuals who enter Arunachal Pradesh from outside will become somewhat tribalized as a result of natural social contact and cultural transformation. The following is from Elwin's records:

> For centuries the real ruler of the tribal people here has been Environment; it has shaped their bodies, directed their art, forced babble on their tongues; it has been their governor, their policymaker; and today when we are challenging its harsh dominion, it remains our greatest enemy (6).

The local cultures have flourished in unison with the surrounding ecosystems, nurturing them and contributing to their own preservation. There is a goldmine of traditional knowledge among the people of this state. Also, progress in the field of technology among tribes of pre-colonial Arunachal Pradesh is significant' especially technological progress in iron works of the Khamptis and the indigenous paper of the Monpas in pre-colonial Arunachal Pradesh, suggest that the tools and techniques developed and used here were largely the products of indigenous materials and native genius, used suitably in the varied ecological niches (Thakur 805). Mamang Dai also narrates the journey of villagers to the snow- mountains, to harvest a precious root – the deadly aconitum – collected for the preparation of poison arrows (*LOP* 58).

Sudhamahi Regunathan's studies on the belief systems of Arunachal's tribal communities underscores the spiritual ethos of the communities of Arunachal Pradesh as entrenched in their lived experiences. The kind of hardest life on hilly terrains has led the tribes to probe deep into the mysteries of life by closely associating themselves with nature, also making them believe in spirits and shamans as their protectors. The concept of *Donyi Polo* illustrates their animistic religious faith. Donyi is viewed as Sun while Polo is moon: divine representations that watch over their world. Together they represent energy and they are symbols of truth and justice. A supreme energy that moves the world or keeps the world "happening"

(Reghunathan 140). Dai also mentions about this in her work, "…almighty Donyi - polo, the sun and the moon, whose light shines on all equally, is the invisible force that guides each one of us. All life is light and shadow; we live and we die, and the path of destiny is the quest for faith" (*LOP* 57).

Another story related to the creation of Donyi Polo is *keyum* or 'nothingness'. The Tani group believe that the beginning was nothingness. A vacuum, existing and yet non-existing, the whole and yet nothing. From this nothingness, came beings. This nothingness is referred to as *Keyum-Kero* by the Adi, Minyongs, Padam and Pasi, as Koyum Jimi by the Adi Gallongs, and as Kolyung Kolo by the Apatanis, Karam Kolo by the Nishings and Kurium-kulu by the Tagins. In *Legends of Pensam*, Dai speaks about this:

> In the beginning, there was only *Keyum.* Nothingness. It was neither darkness nor light, nor had it any colour, shape or movement. Keyum is the remote past, way beyond the reach of our senses. It is the place of ancient things from where no answer is received. Out of this place of great stillness, the first flicker of thought began to shine like alight in the soul of man. It became a shimmering trail, took shape and expanded and became the Pathway. Out of this nebulous zone, a spark that was the light of imagination. The spark grew into a shining stream that was the consciousness of man, and from this all stories of the world and all its creatures came into being. (56)

It is also believed that the first human to be created was Abo Tani and they worship Donyi-polo.

The link between a semi-spirit form and the wind is another belief of tribes. The Tani group also believe in spirits, some malevolent, some benevolent. The appeasement of the spirits paves the way to a happy and comfortable life. They also believe that there are three worlds but the exact conception and description of the three worlds differ in each tribe. Yet there is the common belief that the comforts which a man receives in the next world when he departs from here depends on his action and fame in this world. The *miri* or the priest, also called *nyibu,* chants the route of the soul's departure at the time of death. The priest has divine powers which are in-born and makes him restless later in his life and certain events guide him to his calling. Though he starts as apprentice to senior priests and can perform major events only over a period of time, he is not instructed in chant, called the *abang*. Longer chants are recited for days together but generally most are short sentences ending with a rhyme.

All these myths, folktales are integral part of the tribal lives, and they provide knowledge for rediscovering social and cultural lineages of the communities:

> All or majority of these folktales have characters or components which are directly linked to nature, i.e., animals, birds, trees, rivers, mountains which points to the implicit belief that man, animals, and nature are all interconnected is found embedded in many of the mythologies and folktales. The folktales in a way suggest a kind of environmental ethics, though they do not belong to a scientifically established ethical or philosophical methods/doctrines. (Varghese 36)

As Edward Said points out, through acts of geographical violence, communities have lost locality to outsiders, which can be restored through imagination:

> If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical in it. Imperialism, after all, is an act of geographical violence through which every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored … Because of the presence of the colonising outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through imagination. (Said 77)

A close reading of Mamang Dai's literary works shows how space can be imagined as a "simultaneity of stories-so-far"(Massey, *For Space* 9).The literary works are analyzed to examine how space emerges as the result of relationships that are formed via encounters, that becomes the location of plurality, which is constantly being created (Massey 9). Also, Appadurai states that the practices of communities let bodies position themselves in socially and spatially defined spaces and make way to understand how social actors and agency function in different spatial contexts and how these localized spaces are changed or recreated when juxtaposed with macro-spatial coordinates involving nation and discourses of modernization (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 179). It is helpful to analyse socio-spatial dynamics from a micro-analytical perspective to understand how localized spaces are contested, constructed, and endowed with meaning through ritualised practices. A phenomenological perspective of localization as a property of social life presupposes members of a particular social structure joining in certain

premeditated activities. Contextual mediation indicates whether such social activities are legitimate in a given social milieu.

Socialization of space and time, or spatiotemporal production of locality is identified by Appadurai as the intentional practises of performance, action, and interaction of individuals and groups. Those common practises such as naming and exploring places, mapping fields, fishing and navigating seas, hunting, and clearing forests are viewed as both general aspects of social life and strategies for the spatial production of locality. The materiality of a locality, which does not exist as a given entity, has to be diligently preserved. Dai explains the quotidian activities of villagers in "Pinyar, the Widow" which shows the spatial production of locality. She writes about fields in villages which seemed like patchy clearings dotted on hillsides. Some villagers owned plots for growing vegetables and herbs. They used to spend the whole day or even nights in such open workplaces, where they did the planting and weeding *(LOP* 27). In another section, ''The Heart of the Insect" she gives a vivid picture of the villagers' trek to the snow mountains to harvest deadly aconitum for making poisoned arrows. This terrifying journey was a ritual, and they believed that spirits followed them in the trek (*LOP* 58).

In another section in *Legends of Pensam*, there is a story titled "The Road", where the author writes about the origin of Pigo settlement. The first men and women came from mountains, following the course of the river and settled in a spot where the land was level and fertile which later turned to be a settlement: Pigo. These ritualistic practices and beginnings of human settlements or neighborhoods documented in Dai's *Legends of Pensam* can be taken as the general teleology of localisation or spatio-temporal production of locality. In the last section, "Daughters

of the Village", Dai further details the impact of colonial encroachment in Pigo town. The white sahibs were not strangers in the whole of Siang valley, since the Abor expedition of 1912. Several villages of frontier hills came under colonial rule. It is also stated that the British had bargained land with the villages of Duyang to which they agreed on a square mile of territory to build houses for the political agent, a doctor, and a police officer. A permanent camp was also set up on the riverbanks in Pigo. The whole area was like a free trade zone with land, and river convoys, all traders, officers, and porters moving everywhere. People crowded and this new destination came to be recognized as the seat of power *(LOP* 90/91). This colonial spatial accession for power and control can be viewed as the context for spatial reconfiguration, effecting transformation in the social dimension of spaces.

Here, Appadurai's idea of "locality" is identified as a structure of feeling that is realised in encounters, forming bonds between individuals and the locations they pass through, whether they are real or imagined. Further, the scope of this chapter is extended to examine whether oral traditions, myths and rituals of communities represented in literary works, can revoke the growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement. In line with Appadurai's observation on the formation of locality, spatial as well as contextual, being challenged by the disconnect between territory and subjectivity and collective social movement it is examined here how spatial engagements are changed and challenged when contexts are produced by external forces and how such conflicts and transformations are negotiated by discourses of local spaces.

As Philip Whalen and Patrik Young researching on the significance of local in modern French History observes:

> ... local place now carries a richer interest and possibility in a post national age. As the abundant insecurities and dislocations of neo-liberal reordering compel new forms of local re-rooting, deepened scholarly understanding of the historical dynamics of local place construction becomes all the more important (Whalen and Young 18).

They have projected a "critical attunement to the spatial and temporal dimensions of place and locality and to the ways in which localities do in fact "move'' across space and time'' (Young and Whalen 22).

Analysing Mamang Dai's *Legends of Pensam* and *The Black Hill* has helped to find out how stories, myths, folktales, rituals and local practices of social collectivities sustain spatial relations and to investigate how the logic of the spatial is enriched or weakened by the contextual mediation of the local subjects. Also, mythical stories and folklore are powerful interactive tools, considered in a wider sense, to mediate people's relationships to their communities, fostering a sense of commitment to both the community and the others they engage with. Frantz Fanon makes it clear when he says:

> On another level, the oral tradition — stories, epics, and songs of the people — which formerly were filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernize the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke, together with the names of heroes and types of weapons. The method of allusion is more and more widely used. (120)

Fanon also observes that when the storyteller gives free rein to his imagination, he makes innovations, thus producing a work of art. “The emergence of the imagination and of the creative urge in the songs and epic stories of a colonized country is worth following. The storyteller replies to the expectant people by successive approximations, and makes his way, apparently alone but in fact helped on by his public, toward the seeking out of new patterns, that is to say national patterns” (121).

To understand the dynamics of territorial affinities of social groups, the significance of oral tradition and story-telling need to be foregrounded. Dai has dexterously furnished the features of orality as a template to narrate stories of her people. She identifies the significance of stories as they are the signals indicating spatial affinities of a community. Dai says:

> We are here today as members of a particular community with a particular set of beliefs, by an act of faith, because we reposed belief in the 'word' as composed in our myths and legends. In the world of our ancestors this was the art of the storyteller, the medicine man, the orator, the priest. Everyone knows the stories, in one form or another; and it is this knowledge that links the individual to a group. Perhaps this is why if you asked someone to tell you a story, they would say there was nothing to tell, because now the stories are inseparable from the routine of daily life, the customary practices of a community... They are not even perceived as stories anymore but as beliefs determining a way of life. (*On Creation Myths* 5).

From a spatial perspective stories can have strong link to places or storied place is created location, giving people a sense of “situatedness” in a world of

constant flux. In other words, throughout time, the developing and maturing self creates a special relationship with the area in which they reside through telling and hearing tales about it. Because of the special link mentioned above, everyone who lives in the same area becomes acclimated to a common set of beliefs.

> Storied place is thus built place, providing humans an anchor to achieve a sense of "situatedness" in a world of perpetual motion. In other words, through telling and hearing stories about the locality in which one lives, the growing and maturing self develops a unique relationship with the locality in question over a period of time. Everyone residing in the same locality acculturates into a shared belief system resulting from the unique relationship described above. (Korom 32)

From all these perspectives, the art of story-telling can be thought of as a means of producing the kinds of interactions that lead to localization or to put it another way, the idea of localization is to examine how stories create common identities, knowledge, or emotions and how these processes connect with the spaces and places where they take place. Through the process of storytelling, sociability is constructed when the listener and hearer come into contact with each other. In *Legends of Pensam*, the stories narrated to Mona by the members of the community are re-lived by the teller as well as hearers, thereby they assert their belonging to places.

The four sections in the story *Legends of Pensam* represent four generations of Adi community. The title itself is connotative of the interplay between landscape and stories. These legends are exclusive to *Pensam*, as Dai says that in the language of Adis, this word means "in-between". This "in-betweenness" always has the significance of connectivity: as *Pensam i*s laden with stories and legends, linking

the mythical and the real, the past is connected to the future through the present. In *Pensam*, the lived realities of the present is crystallized for future generations through the stories and myths of the past. When Dai sketches the outlines of *Pensam,* she makes "a classic literary-geographic move: adding a nonexistent element to an existing territory to create a suitable setting for a fictional scene" (Piatti 46). Though Pensam in Dai's conception is the lived space "that is monosemanticized to the extent that it seems exclusively reserved for the theme" of Adi legends (Piatti 46). Moreover, in *Legends of Pensam* Dai sketches the geographical features of Arunachal Pradesh. This "greenest' state is bordered by Bhutan, China, and Myanmar, and is home to nearly twenty-six tribes with numerous sub-clans. This land is criss-crossed by rivers and mountain ranges dividing it into five river valleys. The Adi tribes who are subjects of this fictional work inhabit Siang valley. They practice an animistic faith, woven around forest ecology and co-existence with the natural world. In such a land interlaced with rivers and mountains, the mythical story of Biribik: the water serpent, is etched in the collective memory of the inhabitants. This myth narrated in the first story "the boy who fell from the sky" presents the image of the land called Arunachal Pradesh: the territory of Adis – Pensam "where anything can happen here, everything can be lived; …." The mysterious boy falling from the sky is inducted in the Ida clan as the son of Lutor, the chief of the clan but unquestionably imprinted in the cognitive domain of the villagers. When this boy Hoxo, first opened eyes he saw green. It was Lutor who carried him whom he later called father and after journeying through forests, on reaching a house on hills, Hoxo was handed over to a lovable, kind

woman. “Hoxo immediately sensed there were no other children in the house. He had no idea how old he was …” (*LOP* 8).

The first story “The Boy Who Fell from the Sky” alludes to cosmogonic myth: creation emerging from the sky. Further, this creation myth provides the structural pattern to the text. These stories happening at the in-between spaces of living, emerge out of the sky, like Hoxo’s falling and moves to the “nebulous zone” dividing illusion and reality, dividing men and spirits (*LOP*31). The theme of death is also introduced in the first story. As it goes, anyone who happens to see Biribik, the water serpent is doomed to die. Even, Lutor had the terrible vision and gets killed in a hunting incident, when his friend mistook him for a prey and shot him dead. The mythical story of Biribik is fixed in the collective memory of the community. Though the name of the first person, a fisherman, who had the vision of this serpent with horns on head had long been forgotten, the event remained indelible in everyone’s minds. As the story goes, the fisherman died of wasting illness, after one year (*LOP* 9). The “migluns” (the British) had enlisted Lutor and his friend to work on a vast road project across the Siang valley. Three years later, they came back with a boy in a basket. The villagers readily accepted his friend’s report, saying that, there was great noise and fire in the sky and the boy fell to earth. This boy named Hoxo, goes on to have an interesting life, contributing much to the stories that are told. In the final story, the elderly Hoxo is portrayed as interacting with his granddaughter while using an old set of binoculars. The in between stories transport the reader over a vast span of time and tribal beliefs, from the mythology of the creation to the modern times of development.

The four sections in *Legends of Pensam* trace the development and expansion of Arunachal Pradesh and the inhabitants there across time. The generation that existed before the arrival of the colonisers is covered in the first section titled 'A Diary of the World'. The second section 'songs of the rhapsodist' describes the arrival of the colonisers and the changes that resulted from this. The next section 'Daughters of the Village' describes the experiences and lives of the miglun-era generation as their world broadens and they have, including daughters of the village, access to both education and better employment options. The final section is definitely 'A Matter of Time' that describes the impact of modernism on current society.

In the "Prologue" the helicopter flying above the big river carries the narrator and friends, six of them, to the narrator's native village. The description of the ageing, struggling machine racing with clouds, with its silent or sleeping passengers presents the stark contrast of nature and culture, of tradition and modernity, symbolizing 'long journeys. In the first story the practice of hunting is detailed: how the men following the rules of kiruk beat an area while another team waited in ambush and how they sighted a group of screeching monkeys across the stream that marked the boundaries of hunting area. At the same time, hunting accidents were quite common and the number of widows in the village kept on increasing but the village was resilient in an unconscious way, as if programmed to be so. Such indigenous practices define the lives of the members of the tribe. Those who were left behind learned to live without them. They too were remembered in songs and stories like the dead (*LOP* 16).

In the "Prologue" of *Legends of Pensam* Dai introduces Mona, the editor of the glossy magazine "Diary of the World". She is of Arab Greek origin whereas her husband Jules is a French man. They have a "mobile lifestyle" (*LOP* 18). As Mona was interested in hearing stories, she accompanied the narrator first to Gurdum town and from there they move to Duyang. The situation of telling stories is an interactive space that established a kind of linkage between narrator and Mona as they share experiences and stay connected. The narrator was in Gurdum town before she moved to "big city". Then she, along with Mona moves to Duyang town. The narrator's coming back to hometown after being in city along with an 'outsider' harbingers re-rooting in the face of changes to be brought in by interaction with outsiders. It is Mona's search for "true-life stories'' that landed both of them in Duyang town: village of widows. Further, as Dai has placed an 'outsider' in the narrative space unhinges the rhetoric of cultural specificities. The stories and legends of Adis are transmitted orally from their cultural locations to the outside.

The first section "Diary of the World" includes five small stories emerging from the story of Hoxo. From there the story moves to "the strange case of Kalen, the Hunter". In this section the narrator and Mona reaches Duyang, the place where Hoxo and his family lived, also it is narrator's mother's ancestral village. When Mona, Jules and the narrator reach Duyang, they meet Losi, Hoxo's wife, a village girl, who was born to a river woman. Mona enjoys Losi's hospitality, and a strange bond grows between them. When Hoxo's mother knew Mona's interest to hear stories, she tells her grandson, Bodak, to narrate the strange tale of Kalen, the hunter. He narrates the story of Kalen, who was down with malaria for weeks, but he joined an ill-fated hunting group and like Lutor, Hoxo' s father, Kalen was also shot

dead by a member of the group mistaking him to be a monkey. All these stories have been transmitted orally to coming generations as it is Bodak, the grandson, belonging to third generation who tells most of the stories. After listening to Kalen's story Mona narrates her own life story: how they had to come to terms with their fate upon realising the truth about her child's autism. She also craves to be a mother again; it was then Hoxo narrates the story of Kepi, Togum's son who was also struck with some mysterious illness. Though shamans were consulted and Hoxo performed snake ritual, nothing could recover the child from his illness. It was believed that Togum had killed a python, and the spirit of the snake coiled around the child's body. After hearing the story of Kepi, Mona hears the story of Pinyar, the widow. She became the mother of a child before marriage and the man whom she was in love with, Orka, took the child with him. Later she married Lekon, but he was also killed in a hunting accident. When her house caught fire, she was banished from her village as was the custom of the tribesmen.

Analysing Dai's literary works show the insider's encounter and engagements with 'outsiders' produce changes in the social spectrum. This context of encounter shapes the events and lived experiences of individual as well as collectivities. Though they are outsiders, Jules and Mona reiterates the settler/newcomer dichotomy, but they are inducted in the communicative space of storytelling. When Jules comes to the unmapped village in the hills, he marvelled at his own enterprise in having found the village. He was there to enjoy nature by being a part of it. Jules alarms Hoxo of indigenous people's delinquency in preserving forests and he also has a hankering to work out grassroot strategies for forest management. As outsiders Jules and Mona are more likely to coalesce into

such localised spaces. Such interferences and influences from outsiders set up resonances in the native's embodied memory. As Jules' remarks on the insiders' design to decimate forests for money, a temporal linkage is effectuated and Hoxo narrates the history and tradition of the clan. The clan, a green and virgin land, ruled by chieftains akin to gods. The abode of chieftains protected from all dangers and in a dispute, the chief would look up to the sky, consult the sacred fire and spirits to mete out justice. But the spirits fell when the trees were cut down and being homeless, they fled. Everything changed since then, as tradition gave way to modernity. It is the meeting with Jules and Mona that the members of the community or local actors have the potential to link their own stories to spatial and temporal coordinates.

In *Legends of Pensam* co-presence of an outsider obligates the insider to narrate stories. The process of storytelling itself forms a kind of interaction, engendering kindred relationship between the teller and listener and Mona shares her own life story: travails of a mother, when her daughter was identified with autism. The story of Adela, Mona's daughter finds parallel in Kepi's misfortune. Kepi, the two-year old son of Togum was struck with a strange illness. Though the snake ritual was performed to alleviate his suffering, it was of no use. Through the act of story telling the physicality of spaces are transcended, as far away in the city at the centre for autistic children, stood Mona and Jules, here in village lay Togum's son, surrounded by sisters and friends. Even while being rooted in the communicative space, the narrative spectrum is the caulking material among the members of the community and engenders a rapport among them which extends their emotional relationship beyond the scope of normal life bindings. As Dai

claims, “Perhaps it was the spirit of the place, I don’t know, but every time I came back, I noticed that the village had this quality of absorbing visitors into a forgotten newness of things” (*LOP* 37).

The second section of *Legends of Pensam* documents the arrival of the migluns in the territory of Adis. Rakut takes Jules and Mona to “The village where the migluns had gone’’. In 1911, the remote hills of Adis were opened to the world. Noel Williamson, the British political officer, set out on a mission from Assam plains to explore the course of the river Siang. Though he was popular among Adi tribesmen, he was killed by an Adi member in Komsing. There were many conjectures about his death; some feared that he would bring troops to the village. Another version of the story assumes that it was a retaliatory measure of Adis for the seduction and romance between a white man and a local woman. Along with Williamson, a tea-garden doctor named Dr. Gregorson, forty-seven sepoys, and coolies were also killed. As this incident sent shock waves across colonial India which resulted in the punitive expedition of 1912, the Abor Expeditionary Field Force (*LOP* 48). The entry of colonial officer into the Adi territory is met with stiff resistance from insiders. This narrative of colonial political encounter unleashed changes within indigenous social space, making the community mutinous. This narrative is inscribed in this specific location and passed on to future generations through the memorial of Williamson, placed in Komsing. The villagers readily carried out the headman’s directions and stood in line to pass stones from one to another and raised a tall cairn to the memory of the slain officer. It was for the first time they heard the sound of bugles as the migluns presented arms and honoured the dead. The villagers are also instructed by the British to take care of the stone.

Moreover, as the headman believes, the village is left without road due to this massacre. This is one way when space and narrative interact: "spatializing narrative" or space as the setting in which story is physically presented. Street names, museum exhibits, historical/heritage sites, and technology-enabled locative narratives are a few examples of how narrative is inscribed in actual space. (Ryan 4) The context of punitive expedition or spatial aggression by outsiders result in rearranging spatial designs. Thus, an act of spatial aggression that explores, maps, and ultimately subjugates natives and the loss of locality to an outsider marks the trajectory of colonialism; one must then look for and somehow redefine one's geographic identity through imagination.

Here, colonial intervention is the context for the creation or re-creation of locality through the possibilities and performances of social imaginings. The encounter of natives with outsiders, either individual or at an institutional level creates the possibilities of restoring geographical identity through myths and beliefs particular to situated community. By integrating landscape to folk tales, myths and other belief systems communities organize themselves as social collectivities to legitimize their sense of belonging to a specific territory. All myths and folktales abound in spatial identifiers, and it is these stories and myths, that contextualize and interpret the processes of socialization of space. While considering spatiality as socially constructed, through myths and stories a network of relationships between individual and groups is formed and they also serve as "embodiment" of social activity in general (Soja, *Socio- spatial Dialectic* 210).

As a socially homogenized group, Adis have built upon narratives generated from within their spatial and communal boundaries to frame their collective identity

and to claim the sense of belonging. The unquestioned story of Hoxo's emergence from the sky, the mythical story of water-serpent, Biribik, invoking of shamans to perform rituals to cast off spirits, hunting expeditions and incidents of death are narratives defining the collective identity of Adis. To define spatial locality and to set boundaries, not political, that determine insiders, the rhetoric of belonging is predicated on such beliefs and social practices. Dai records poetically in "Songs of the Rhapsodist'':

> The man had come to map the wilderness and trace the source of a river. He was a political agent on a survey mission, and all he had discovered was that the river was a woman and that his soul was now forever drowned in the jade heart of water. (*LOP* 54)

The experiences of native-outsider encounter and interpenetration of media technology have always created a "hybrid sense of local subjectivity" (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 197). The third section is dedicated to the "Daughters of the Village" to focus on women's perception of social change. Dai turns our attention to "words of women" living in the ages of colonial conquest. Arsi thinks that she and her people to be "outcasts dumped in the bone and knuckle part of the world" (*LOP* 74). She wonders why her forefathers chose such a place to live in. The women had to be in the forest all morning, cutting wood, cracking dry bamboo and piling stray branches into stacks and take them to their villages, moving up and down the steep slope. The villages ran into each other with only a tree or a small river or a rock marking the boundary. Either dry wind with dust swivelling around or unrelenting rain made lives miserable. Such was their daily chores and hard work. When the narrator resolves to settle in Gurdum town, she hopes to situate herself in

an in-between place: between village and town- "… half a day's journey by road from the village where my mother was buried; yet far enough to still hope for a life of my own" (*LOP* 79). Here, the narrator feels the insider's in-betweenness of, simultaneously being rooted and up-rooted of tradition and situated in between tradition and modernity. This sort of adjustment and negotiation itself is an attempt for local re-rooting.

In the next story "homecoming" the narrator meets her friend after twelve years, the two girls of Duyang village: the narrator was sent to the town and then to distant cities to study. The friend, on the other hand was a travelling saleswoman, who flew to big cities, alone in night buses, shopped eagerly, did her business officially and energetically. When she came to Pigo or Gurdum in new bright clothes, and cosmetics and herbal remedies, women succumbed to her persuasions. The narrator's mother also enjoyed her presence as they had many things in common. When the narrator is back in her hometown, she reminisces about her mother who knew all about rites of exorcism. Shamans were called to cast off ghosts and spirits from the bodies of those haunted. It was a ceremony with ritual chanting, then the spirits would be called and asked what they wanted; it was like a dialogue of exchange (*LOP* 85). Though she had shielded herself from her mother's gaze and engaged herself in books and words, after her death, the narrator feels an indescribable pain at her loss and thought about the love and care that the mother had shown to her. "I remembered the stories of creation, of our village and our people that she had told me before I grew up to expect happiness far away from her. I remembered the quiet routine of the house and fire-lit in the evenings'' (*LOP* 87).

As was the custom, death rituals were performed, and songs of lamentation were sung.

In the last section, Dai eloquently chronicles the events and changes brought in by colonial conquest, which concomitantly develops a sense of loss of ethnic mores, and the way the community attempts to resist and negotiate changes. Being an insider, she knows, lines would be drawn on paper and a new picture with words written on it would emerge. Along with it, a new story would be lived out in song and shining ink replacing the other original secret, tender whispers spoken at first light (*LOP* 54-55). But it is in the second section, the beginning of colonialism is documented. The title of the first story in this section "Travel the Road", correlates with colonial officials' journey to the unmapped territories that ensued from accessing territories by making roads, whereas the last section "Matter of Time" is remindful of the temporal dimension of the lived experiences of the Adi people and the story "The Road" in this section is metaphorically opened up for the natives. Though they foresee immense potentialities, the construction of road is also a sacrilegious act erasing their solidarity and ethnicity. Dai, in this story powerfully presents dichotomies of ethnicity-modernity, settler-invader, orature-words. When Duan, son of Kedu speaks the language of progress as he had moved to town for his studies, and he is hopeful of transforming his village to a model village. He reassures Mayum's father, "Once there is transport and communication everything will open up and then we will see what potential we have" (*LOP* 157). He also smacks violence and tells Mayum's father to be cautious of the youth who might protest against progress. Though Duan is mindful of his roots with a sense of belonging to his village, he exhorts his people to stand together to bring progress to

the village Dai also presents another character, Larik, son of Togla and 'the master strategist' who ventures to lead the battle against progress.

At the very outset of the story, "The Road" Dai details the origin of Pigo settlement. To this town in Duyang, the first men and women proceeded their journey from mountains, walked through forests with bamboo flares. The road that led them to this town was the course of the river. They crossed the river with a raft made of plantain stems, to settle in this level and fertile land. Later the colonizers spotted this town with tarred roads, bazaars and electricity and concrete buildings. The other remote villages in the Duyang cluster remained inaccessible to the British and were not connected to Pigo till the road came (*LOP* 146-147).

Meanwhile there were also whispers that the road was inauspicious and very few locals took the ragged road. They believed in the story of the red pool and the mad woman driving men to violence. Though Duan, the elected member promised the people of his village a road by year end, people remained sceptical about progress. Their village which had exerted its presence in a dubious way when eight children died of measles brought to their village by outsiders from town (*LOP* 149). In spite of the reputed old school, Duan promises new school and he is mesmerized by modernity discourses – road, vehicles, electricity, new school. Larik, on the other hand, succinctly remarks, "This one terrible road is all they have managed for us in fifty years! And what does it bring to us? Outsiders. Thieves. Disease" (*LOP* 156). After surrendering their ancestral land to the government, the road and other modernities seemed to be strangling them and threatening to steal their identity like a thief creeping into their villages and fields (*LOP* 157). The road changed the rhythm of movement of even the last village in the administrative map. The old

certainties and beliefs of the village were mutated by the road which ran up the mountain like a broken ladder (*LOP* 148). There was also theft in the granary buildings, it was evident that Issam's fears were not unfounded "The road was bad news" (*LOP* 151). There is also dubiousness about the falsity of "words''. As the Old man reminds Duan that his father was a great "orator" and his clan root itself was "oratory". He also believes that words have the power to transform life since words are used to influence man's thoughts (*LOP* 158). So, there are young men in the village who are not ready to welcome strangers, to join hands with government. As they admit, they are not seekers of words, fortune, or new identity.

It is evident that the context produced by such discourses of progress and modernity have brought terrible and drastic changes in the social ethos of Adis. The technologies of colonial developmentalism and their means of access into the spatial settings of Adis have seriously impinged on the social spaces of the natives. For the first time voices of dissent were raised in social gatherings, questioning Duan's promises to bring water and electricity to the village. The elders and the young men were engaged in arguments (*LOP* 153). Luda the senior member could silence the clashing groups by reminiscing their ancient way of life; their solidarity in farming and harvesting. He also, was tapping with his stick all the time. It was also believed that the stick, an indispensable prop in kebang, the traditional judiciary system, was imbued with special powers to aid the oratory of the speaker and village elder possessed this ancestral property. But contrastingly with the advent of modernity, even kebangs were losing powers and giving way to the modern legal system, and all its failings (*LOP* 160).

It is the story, "The Road" that sums up the theme of the story: how the new world created by the context of colonial modernities is attractive, mesmerizing as well as transient, transformative and threatening also. Nevertheless, the brave, old and patient few attempts to preserve the ancient ways and tries to negotiate change with memory and remembrance. Towards the end of this story, Larik unambiguously acknowledges that the bridge was breaking because he knows the dying villages must seek for a singular paradox to resolve itself. The very few who have migrated to towns to become officers and public leaders were caught up in the administrative system, fearing allegations of nepotism, studiously ignored their home villages. Larik perceives this bridge as the long crossing that had made these few natives, noted officers. They were quite immersed in official works and never tried to observe even a slight stirring on the other side of the river. In their hometown they did not come for rituals or ceremonies in proper custom. Though Larik recognizes the new fences made to mark old territories, he hopefully looks forward to a time when the bridge would be remade for a new crossing. For that he believes to follow ancestral path, and the fading generations would remember old stories so that the bridge for new crossing is remade.

The massive conversion of Gurdum settlement to an unfilthy town is shaped precisely by historical contingency. The town was awashed in debris. Plastic floated everywhere, in river, across hills and on trees. There were rows of labour shed, where the workmen lived. "With their labour the new settlements were straining to expand against the rocky earth and rearing upwards, challenging the broken land and the falling mountains" (*LOP* 165). Thus, colonial modernity paradigms have produced contexts for reconfiguring spatial patterns along with social othering or

heterogenous social collectivities. As depicted in “a portrait of sirsiri of gurdum”, playing cards was deemed to be the grandest pastime, Sirsiri was also the keenest gambler. People deserted homes, offices, and shops to play cards. There was a new kind of entertainment and a supreme sense of elation among people. Natives like Sirsiri and other ‘daughters of village’, feels alienated in their villages because they have migrated to towns.

Another thematic analysis of *Legends of Pensam* aims at an exploration of the context of technological mediation in locality production. Appadurai in his perceptions on the production of locality addresses the role of mass media and other electronic forms in creating new sorts of disjuncture between spatial and virtual neighborhoods (Appadurai, “Production of Locality” 194). Those types of mediated communication technologies provide immense strategies for new kinds of interaction and forms new relationships to produce virtual neighborhoods without territorial affinities and delimitations. New forms of social linkages are created via media which flow back to physical or situated neighborhoods which can bring about transformations in the lived experiences of individual and communities. In the last story “on stage’’, Dai presents a group of village youngsters watching the TV. On the screen Mimum saw a band of singers, smiling and singing. The screen presence of singers on the glittering stage, or such shows aired on TV, is an event which has ramifications outside the virtual space or neighborhood. Such virtual artefacts generate responses from the very localized spaces as Mimum and Omum talk about luck and happiness of those singers. This global dissemination of media images or “mediascapes”, in Appadurai’s conceptualisation, give local communities all over the world access to “large and complex repertoires” of pictures and stories that they

can use to construct their own local narratives and serve as metaphors for their daily lives (Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference" 35). It is through the new forms of electronically mediated communication which creates virtual neighborhood and "Information and opinion flow concurrently through these circuits, and while the social morphology of these electronic neighborhoods is hard to classify and their longevity difficult to predict, clearly they are communities of some sort, trading information and building links that affect many areas of life, from philanthropy to marriage" (Appadurai, "Production of Locality" 195).

In the last part of the story, Mona telephones the narrator to inform that a very famous documentary filmmaker wishes to make a film on Duyang village and its people. Even in the absence of face-to-face links and spatial contiguity, there is social interaction, information transactions over phone. Moreover, the existence of such virtual neighborhoods is antithetical to actual lived spaces in that the physical spaces are bounded territories having accessibility restrictions. Here, the film crew had already worked out logistics and applied for Inner Line Permits and other formalities. Quite contrary, with such regulatory mechanisms for entering actual spaces, the film on Duyang and its people can get global viewership over media and electronic communication platforms. The last story in *Legends of Pensam* "On Stage", the narrator unpacks the stories of her community to Mona and her film maker friend, so that these stories are rearticulated in media. Dai, then nudges us onto the domain of rituals and beliefs associated with farming. As it was sowing time, the villagers were out for preparing the fields. It was a difficult task as the jungle had to be cleared first, then bamboo and grass were set ablaze: flames rose up for days and nights as was the excitement of villagers. Young men fenced the fields

with wood and bamboo stakes to prevent entry of animals and they made a line of demarcation which ran up for miles. When the work ended, there were fairs and festivities. In the evening, after setting the fence, young men performed *tapu* dance which was originally performed to dispel the spirit of fear. They wore the traditional costumes of warriors and their friends and elders carrying shields and spears, made frightening sound and gestures to scare off the invisible enemy. At night, the men danced in longhouse for three nights and then make their way to houses, where they received food and drink (*LOP*183). Thus, the reading of this elaborate rhetoric of rituals and practices is designed as a rejoinder to the next section of the story which details the celebrations in Pigo town. The fields thus prepared in earlier times were now filled with people sitting in rows of plastic chairs. Here, Dai makes a clear analysis of the subtle variances that frame the volatility of traditional cultural patterns. "A number of important visitors had arrived, and the stage was being set to showcase traditional culture through the festival that would go on for three days. Yesterday and today would be presented on the same platform; a mingling of old-style presentations and new, modern talent" (*LOP* 184).

To understand more about this new cultural and social mosaic of Adi community, Dai also illustrates the performance of Sirsiri and Menga X. Sirsiri, the great singer came from Gurdum, a crowd was waiting for her. She came "… swinging her hips and shimmering in the glare of the floodlights. So bold! So confident! She was the one, the woman who knew what she wanted, and how to get it" (*LOP* 185). "The texture and speed of change'' is visible in the performance of Menga X, the legendary performer of yesteryear. Thousands of people were waiting for his performance. His famed lightning energy seemed to be failing him. The stage

was flooded with light. But the microphone seemed to him an alien object, he doubted whether he could communicate true emotion through the cold metal with holes and connected wires. As he laments, "But I want the old days back" (*LOP* 187). His soul sang at its saddest and loudest when he was poor and unknown. All across the land, there were drastic changes. Though anyone could see the green river, green hills and green bamboo, young motorcyclists roared across the land, young picnikers wearing fake fur and woollen caps waved at passers-by (*LOP* 188).

Despite all these changes, Rakut was seen listing the names of his ancestors, of all legendary forefathers, and blood line of all the men of Duyang group right down to the present time. "He believes that if a person forgets, he loses his soul" *(LOP*189). Here narrator also confirms that no one could do to keep or change anything and even when she feels like a stranger in her own village, "… I felt certain that no matter what happened to it, if I were granted a visit after an absence of a hundred years, I would recognize it again even if no record of it had survived" (*LOP* 189). In Rakut's words change is not to be feared, it is just a matter of rearrangement, a moment of great possibilities. Dai has summed up the lives of Adis using the metaphor of binoculars. To have a look into the lives of peripheral people through binoculars, the first sight is a smoky dimness, alluding to the ethereality of creation, a little twist of the binoculars, the old lens clearly shows a canopy of green trees and the flowing river with silvery surface, referring to the primordial, ethnic living spaces. Again, a slight turning of the ring of binoculars, far away in the distance narrow apartment blocks, grubby streets and bamboo scaffolding can be sighted which reflects the onslaught of modernity. Beyond the horizon, the narrator views a bright harbour, and sail boats (*LOP* 192).

Mamang Dai's another remarkable work *The Black Hill* is a historical narrative documenting unwritten history of a community inhabiting the hills and valleys of pre-colonial Northeast India. Obviously, Dai's function as a creative writer, engaged in a dialogue with the past, is not to approach history in terms of a committed protest to the process of colonization nor a withdrawal to the position of cynicism towards her own people (Dash 66). The writer's engagement with past "goes beyond the documented privations of slavery and colonization to a more speculative vision of history in which the consciousness of the dominated culture would predominate" (Dash 65-66). But Dai's treatment of history is remarkable in the way she moulds past incidents. In her communicative space she has expressed the consciousness of both the dominated and the dominant: having a "narcissistic fascination with the 'anatomizing' of the past" (Dash 60). Hence Dai writes, it was the unexplored mountains of high Himalaya that drew the gaze of the European church leaders most and they were ready to leave everything, to submit and or even perish in their struggle to find a route through the glittering pinnacles of ice into the secret heart of the world (*TBH* 14). Dai's literary technique of presenting reality through the consciousness of the colonizer enable the colonized to fine tune their own cultural sensibilities. When Father Krick saw the mountains of mica just as Gimur had seen them, he feels the gardens of Paris, Saint Cloud, the art of Versailles – nothing can be compared to the beauty of God's work in those mountains. What he saw there was indescribable, and he feels the Himalayas were frozen waves of ocean dominating the world (*TBH* 94). Every time Krick saw Gimur, he thought of Bellona, the Roman goddess of war. Gimur's aloof nature and posture intrigued him.

Also, Father Krick realized that Abor women possessed great spirit and vigour (*TBH* 181).

Dai has also juxtaposed the myths, legends and superstitions of the folk along with past incidents to trace the complex culture of survival, which was in a way, the response of the dominated to their oppressors. This in turn would help the oppressed people to reorder their present reality when they acquire a new re-creative sensibility, developed in their consciousness by the writer's attempt to reconstruct history in a positive, imaginative way.

The Black Hill underlines the motif of journey — from and to particular regions — having a wide array of meanings. It is the journey of Father Nicolas Krick from an institutional space through the unexplored, unmapped ethnic terrains that has historicized space. Dai's rendering of this historical event is an attempt to map out such invisible spaces. In this novel, there are nine sections, not having titles but with years as referencing points to show the temporal trajectories of colonialism. The events recorded in the novel spans a period of less than a decade, beginning from the first section 1847 and ending in 1855. In the Prologue Dai reminds the readers:

> There is another story from an unwritten past hidden beyond the mountain wall. I journey for many days to find it, and one day I come upon a black hill. It is a deserted site, so bleak and sad, and it is here that my eyes fall on an abandoned hut, half burnt, where shafts of light pierce through the roof like golden arrows. (ix)

Dai has attempted to engage with the past from the present for an insightful journey beyond the temporal and geographical bounds of her community. Moreover, being

an insider, she has the privileged access to travel beyond mountains and hills. This metaphorical journey to the past alludes to the journey of the young French Jesuit priest Nicholas Krick to Tibet to set up a mission there. *The Black Hill* is the story of this man appointed by gods to go to the place where no man had gone before. It is also the story of Gimur, a 17-year-old girl of Mebo village and Kajinsha, a young man from the east, journeying across mountains to reach Abor village of Mebo.

David Malouf and Paul Carter relate maps to pre-history of space. They state that there are places on maps which are unnamed, unoccupied, places where nothing can happen, historically speaking. Further, they accept language as the medium for articulating of spaces. Carter and Malouf also underline the significance of language in giving meaning to space. They have written:

> A very important part of the language act was the creation of a space where one could move on to somewhere else. It was not that there was a stage, an already existing place where events could unfold in time – the significant early events in the European occupation of Australia have to do with creating an 'Australia', a named network through which, and in terms of which, certain historical events might begin to occur. (173)

Again, Malouf categorically states that there are no pre-existing spaces or stages but what we do is just make spaces. As Malouf explains:

> There is a space in which you arrive and come ashore. You clear a bit of it and *then* something happens. The coming ashore is an act, the clearing is an act, but *only* then does history begin to happen (173).

This journey of the priest through the unmapped spaces is a historical event in its true sense and Dai has attempted to map the spaces of her ethnicity through the medium of language by revisiting the past.

In the second section of *The Black Hill*, "1848" Dai proceeds to narrate the history of missionary enterprise during colonial age. Britain had an important role in establishing Christianity in China. The Treaty of Whampoa gave France free access to ports in China and setting up of missions in China. After securing an edict of tolerance from the Chinese emperor, Church leaders travelled to the east to the unexplored mountains of Himalayas and the Kingdom of Tibet or "the land of reincarnate god kings., the source of great rivers, the destination of caravans, immense riches, magic and miracles" (*TBH* 14). This land attracted merchants, priests and explorers alike. After a brief cessation of evangelical and apostolic activities in the distant corners of Asia, there was a change in the spiritual atmosphere of Europe which reflected in Asia and the Far East. The mysterious kingdom of Tibet surrounded by unexplored Himalayan Mountains lured missionaries. In an age of Christian martyrs, priests heard the call of far-flung mysterious land of the East and they did nothing than to submit, set sail and struggle to reach the remotest corners of the world or perish in their attempts. Father Nicolas Krick also had such a mystical vision and he wished to move out of the cloistered comfort of being a parishioner in a peaceful countryside. Regardless of the love that he received and his dedication and service, he plans to set out as he was not interested in the mechanisms and processes of traditional apostolate. His parishioners, also peacefully settled, so much so that Krick did not find meaning in church attendance or other rituals or oratory. He longed to speak to flock in the

language of the heart. He was anticipating the challenge of spreading the gospel to unknown parts of the world and to seek the experience of the passionate union with the divine. To transcend beyond the self, he was committed to leave his safe habitat, to reach the utmost ends of the earth and into the belly of the darkest and bleakest mountains of the world (*TBH* 16).

Father Nicolas Krick who belonged to a Paris Mission was entrusted the duty of preaching the Gospel in Tibet. The Directors of the mission, lacking geographical knowledge, sent Charles Alexis Renou to Szechwan to analyse the situation to prepare for establishing Mission at Tibet. Though Renou suggested entry to Tibet by western route from China, the Directors decided to proceed via southern route across Himalaya through British ruled India. Another significant step in missionary enterprise was adding Assam to their mission in Lassa, suggested by Bishop Patrick Joseph Carew and Oliffe. Nicolas Krick, Julien Rabin, Louis Bernard were selected to take up this mission. They were also advised to spread knowledge of medicine and vaccines to the ethnic communities and they understood the need to learn Tibetan language.

The journey of the priest Krick is an institutionally initiated travel to an unfamiliar trope with toughest conditionalities. His path was twice blocked when mountains collapsed. His journey through forest became all the more worse when it rained, unable to find way in darkness and to endure biting cold. He might have returned had he not been a missionary. In addition to all these there was also the threat of attack by warlike tribals. On his way to Mishmee Hills with Hamilton Vetch, they encountered armed Abor warriors wearing war helmets Krick was surprised to see Maltese and Lorrain cross tattoos on them. They also knew that

Europeans were not able to establish a mark of their own in Tibet, they were all speedily expelled and explorers reached Lassa either stealthily or with armed escort. Moreover, in Tibet, it was impossible to travel incognito, one needs to be dressed in Tibetan robes or disguise as a monk or an oriental merchant. After a sail of nearly hundred days, they reached Madras, from there they proceeded to Calcutta. When they reached Gowhattee, after sailing along Burhampooter river, they understood they were within reachable limits of Tibet. They felt the need to learn Assamese, as the helpers, houseboys and all the people they met spoke in different languages and dialects. Tibet and the surrounding hills remained terra incognita and a land of "savage mountaineers" and they were advised not to venture out (*TBH* 42). Nicolas Krick then came to Gowhattee, the headquarters of Kamroop district, surrounded by low hills around which river Burhampooter flowed. Krick settled in a rented house and started his expedition to unknown territory of jungle, rivers and scattered villages. It was a challenging and adventurous journey into the wilderness of tribal communities, both literally and geographically. The landscape as well as the lived spaces of the inhabitants remained inaccessible. English language was slowly beginning to dominate the academic spaces and in the communicative spheres, Assamese or Bengali prevailed. Later, Krick left Gowhattee to reach Saikwa Ghat, and his destination was Tibet. Hamilton Vetch, the political Agent of Upper Assam suggested to make peace with Abor tribes so as to find a route through Mishmee Hills.

This novel is not only about Nicolas Krick, the priest who decides to set out from a distant land, peregrinating around the unexplored mountains of the far East. *The Black Hill* is also the story of Kajinsha of Mishmee tribe and Gimur belonging

to Adi tribe. Kajinsha attempts to resist the entry of the "white men" or migluns, the outsiders to their land. The novel also traces the unrest and unsettling of different rival clans of Mishmee Hills as they were always engaged in war and killings. At night, Gimur and another young man Lendem, hear the voices of white men nearing the foot of the hill. It is decided by village elders to encounter the strangers at dawn to have one look at them to determine their identity. The white men wanted to establish a trading post but Lendem's father surmises that they wanted to protect the fishermen and gold washers who have fled to Assam plains. He also knows that they have come to make peace with the villagers because they consider it to be their territory and they want gold (*TBH* 3). Captain Hamilton Vetch, the Political Agent of Upper Assam was sent to protect British interests by controlling restless tribes. In this section, Dai mentions the villagers meeting with the British and details the inter-tribal feuds and riotous tribes engaged in wars and killings. This section sets the political context of colonial power regime in Mishmee and Abor settlements.

Kajinsha was a simple tribal man from the east who reached Abor village of Mebo, following the route of white men, heading towards their territories. Kajinsha grew up amidst intra-communal feud and such tribal rivalries ended up in burning of villages creating geographically displaced communities. He was born in a village in Mishmee Hills. It was a nameless, unmapped settlement with only three clans of Mishmee tribe calling themselves the Kmaan, Taraon and Idu lived and the term Mishmee was alien to them. These tribes lived in mutual suspicion and dread. "Claims over land, possession of rivers and streams and ownership rights to hunt and fish, regularly erupted into bloody inter-tribal feuds and no one knew when the fighting would end" (*TBH* 7). His father performed some rituals for a peaceful co-

existence of the tribes but gods did not answer. From his father, Kajinsha knew that British had already conquered the Ahom Kings of Assam and they were compelled to move North to the Dagum mountain range on the borders of Tibet. Soon, the British advanced to their territory with the help of rival clan members and some plainsmen. Already the British from Assam were crept to the hills carrying gifts of salt, iron, tobacco and opium. Kajinsha's father attempted to thwart British encroachment with the help of Tibetans of Zayul valley but it turned futile. Later in 1839, Kanjinsha's father readily accepted Khampti clan chief's request for help in fighting British invasion. This Khampti clan of Suddya in Assam having the title Suddya Khawa Gohain was removed from his position by the British and he sought help of Mishmee tribes. In that mutiny Kajinsha's father was killed along with the British Political Agent Colonel Adam White and nearly eighty soldiers were also killed.

For Kajinsha and his people no boundary could divide his kinsmen, even when they are in Sommeu village of Zayul valley, he was not concerned by the boundaries set by authority. Kajinsha knows that the Zayul region was designated as a sub prefecture in the Manchu empire, and the events that happened in Rima and Sommeu came under the authority of the Amban. In Kajinsha's time, the valley was a beautiful stretch of land with clear streams, forests, and pine forests and no human settlements. Those entered the valley were nomadic Brokpa herdsmen who wandered across borders in search of grazing ground. Kajinsha was familiar with Brokpa camps in the hills around the valley but they always moved away in the spring. As more settlers arrived, there was a fight for land. Kajinsha's father often remarked that land is a place of ownership and rest, and that if a man owns land, he

owns rest. Kajinsha later knew his father has been running away from this land claim, as people vie each other with suspicion and fear. Kajinsha's father, attempted a compromise with the Tibetan settlers of Zayul, but could not succeed in ending inter-tribal feuds. The land had a heart of its own and invited men, but the white priest came to the area, travelling beyond mountains and rivers. The Mishmee people resisted entry of strangers like British explorers, but nothing could stop them. The alliance with the Tibetans had become a trap, as Kajinsha's people stood for the border defence for Tibetan territory. Kajinsha's father's death and the thought that he was losing power made him a staunch and angry, and feared chief. His pursuit of power led him to marry Marpa's niece, whose family had migrated from the interiors of Tibet to settle in the Zayul valley.

When Father Krick arrives in Sommeu, he explores the village and encounters an old man who offers him red rice and hard cheese, he saw young woman with a tattoo on her upper lip. Krick knew that the Tibetan he had learned in Paris is of little use as the people speak a local dialect. Norbu who accompanied him agrees to teach him Tibetan and they exchange gifts, such as food, nuts, raisins, and thread and needles. Krick was interrogated by a tall Tibetan official. He informs the official that he came to Sommeu because he believed the people there to be religious. And adds that he is a lama guru from France. Krick also informs the governor that he is committed to stay there till his death. He is assured governor's seal of protection.

Dai has represented the Abor tribe in this narrative in the fictional character Gimur of Mebo village. Her father, the greatest warrior of Lego clan, the best tracker in the land. He was the shaman who travelled into the areas of animals,

spoke their language. It was believed that the work of white devils caused him collapse one day and he died but the reason for the great warrior's sudden death remained unknown. It was commonly believed, ''Wherever the migluns go they bring death and outrage!" (*TBH* 19). Kajinsha was following the trail of Migluns and he reached Mebo village which led to his encounter with Gimur of Abor tribe. Mebo was the centre of feverish activity, the village with two hundred homes along the Siang river. This village was strategically positioned on a range of hills guarding the Abor villages in the mountains to the north. The word Abor meant 'barbarous' and 'independent' in Assamese and this term was applied to all the tribes occupying the Siang valley in the mountainous country between Assam and Tibet. The people of Mebo were the Padam and other Abor groups were known by names like Bori, Bokar Minyong, Pasi and so on (*TBH* 26). When the first tribesmen from mountains wandering in search of new land, found the clear space amidst dense forest, it was their desirable place and they settled there. Several clans lived together but they feared scarcity of water in future. Thus, those clans eventually dispersed to settle elsewhere. Gimur lived there, her house facing Siku stream and 'rasheng' the place where young unmarried girls assemble every evening to socialise and chat. Beyond that lay the vast expanse of the forest of Kumku, where no one dared to venture. Kajinsha was ready to take Gimur to his village Mishmee when he knew she was pregnant. He knew that to deal with such a situation was either war or abduction. Gimur wished to move beyond her village, for a life beyond. She knows Abor villages are secured enclaves following tradition and inter-tribal relationships were considered to be betrayal. A man taking away the daughter of a village usually had to give compensation or give customary bride price called a-re gelik. Also, Lendem ,

who was obliged to fend off strangers from their territory did not help Gimur in settling the issue. She thought of her aunt Moi, who had travelled to Suddya with her husband and stayed with a white lady and was presented books and the chance of a new life. Gimur decides to fly away from her village as an afterthought.

The British had some knowledge about the Abor clans of Mebo and they were surprised to see all the villagers crowded at moshup, discussing war and issues of runaway "slaves" who were the offsprings of men and women captured by the Abor in tribal wars and who performed domestic and agricultural services. They ran away from their masters and sought British help for protection. The British neither encouraged the deserters nor did they accepted Abors' demand for their return. At the same time, the British protected saniwals, beheeas, goldwashers and fishermen from the plains for profit and surrendered some payment in kind to the Abor and other original inhabitants of the hills which provoked some Abor men who raided a British garrison. In retaliation, the British burned the offending village (*TBH* 26).

The presence of Krick and other outsiders in the very localised spaces of Abor and Mishmee settlements also create unrest among inhabitants, making again contested spaces. Such villages or neighborhoods become incompatible spaces in the context of institutionalising religious and other social practices. When Krick was in Gowhattee, he did not find Buddhist monks or Christian converts there and his intention was to find a route to Tibet through Mishmee Hills. His fellow missionaries Rabin and Bernard were having tough times in a hostile climatic situation and Krick, after a brief spell at the Diocese of Calcutta, reached Mungledye. There he organized morning prayers, study, Mass and Catechism for children. He further proceeded to Saikwa Ghat but he was ignorant of the past lives

or activities of Shan missions there set up by American missionaries. Pingault informed him about the Suddya attack of 1836 when Mishmee, Khampti warriors attacked British troops and the subsequent burning of Khampti villages and deportation of population in retaliation. Krick also had all the priestly accoutrements: the missionary cross, a satchel containing Bible, the breviary along with a medicine box, sextant and ink and paper. But Abor people were aggressive and adamant, not at all willing to receive him to their village. Even Chowsa, the man appointed by Vetch intentionally delayed Krick's journey through Mishmee Hills, fearing Kajinsha's path crossed the priest's and Kajinsha was the most secretive and dangerous man (*TBH* 90). Chowsa agreed when he was convinced of the priest's intention and he thought, in the times of warring tribes, any other Mishmee chief would show him the way to Kajinsha's territory. Krick's first meeting with Mishmee was brief and furtive, when Chowsa as a warning fired gun into the air. Immediately two women and a man and their children came from the forest, they lived like animals because their homes were burnt down by a neighboring tribe. Later, Krick reached the village of Oualong, he hoped to talk to the people but was left alone so also, in Mishmee, people had argued, and surrounded him with threats of insults, attacks and robbery. His next destination was Sommeu village in Zayul valley. People there met him with laughter and applause.

Throughout the narrative, Dai has highlighted the precariousness of borderland existence. Since Abor, Mishmee villages are strategically positioned with its proximity to Tibet, there is always the uneasiness of cross-border infiltration. Hence the whole region always seems to be on a war footing. Chief Zumsha's words about Krick's presence in his area echo the collective distrust the tribes have of

strangers ‘‘He’s not a soldier. But we have to be alert. He is still a white foreigner- a kla- kamphlung! Who knows about these people? To us they are all strangers” (*TBH*, 78). Kanjinsha’s journey can be read as a counternarrative to Krick’s journey, echoing the aggressiveness of his clan. Kajinsha’s travel within his inner locations begins as an organizational effort to demonstrate his community’s disapproval of strangers’ entry to their terrains. His journey through the inside of his space is to mobilize support for resisting colonial intrusion to their territories. He was a visitor in Gimur’s village, he was shadowing the movement of migluns among Abor villages (*TBH* 48). He was a nomad, always on short journeys; hunting or fishing or trading mishmee titas, medicinal coptis and came back with Burmese knives, swords, tobacco and salt. The journey of Father Krick from the village of Mebo to his destination Tibet, through Mishmee Hills coincides with the elopement of Kajinsha and Gimur from her native village of Mebo to his Mishmee Hills. Gimur, undertakes the journey, to go with Kajinsha, to exceed the authoritarian limits- to go beyond the limits set by the established customs and norms of her clan. Dai’s use of this journey motif is set as the background for the events to follow, also, structuring the narratives. Thus, the journey of these individuals being the analytical framework can be contextualized in different situations.

These journeys are not an ongoing process as it seems to have an end point or destination, namely, Tibet. When Krick journeys as an outsider, from the European political power centre to the ethnic margins, it serves to historicize space. As Paul Carter identifies “spatial history” (173) when people make spaces by travelling, and by describing them. Krick’s navigation through unexplored, unmapped regions of the eastern frontier of India was an event to be registered in the

unwritten history of the region. Dai writes, "According to accounts of travellers in the early nineteenth century the eastern frontier of India was a region that attracted few visitors and remained cut off from any outside influence. This was especially true of the Mishmee region in the extreme northeast corner of the country where the events of the narrative took place" (*TBH* 257). When Krick travels through the Abor, Mishmee settlements, he encounters and experiences spaces as an outsider. Krick's travel through a geographically hostile and challenging terrain can be taken as the signal of a transformative space in the making. At the same time navigating through those uninhabited, unnamed territories invest spaces with a historical legacy. Thus, the context of colonial missionary project facilitates Father Krick's journey whereas the journey of Kajinsha within the bounds of his geographical space is activated by the presence of white men in his territory. Father Krick's journey, apart from historicising space also can be seen as starting point of transforming spaces. Dai records that the day Krick reached Sommeu in Tibet on 29 July 1854 happened to be the day of Saint James, the apostle, the day of Saint Martha, also the day dedicated to Mary. Krick dedicated the mission to Mary. Krick requested his fellowmen to pray for the success of the mission. His friend Bourry also wrote letters to the spiritual director in France. Those letters clearly show the institutionalisation of social changes they were about to begin there. Krick was happy with the natives there who were to become his first flock especially when they were all pagan. In the letters that followed there were demands for a number of items including medicine. They had planned to set up a house, a vegetable garden, and planned to practise medicine to heal the sick. Moreover they also thought of building a standard mission with a chapel. Unfortunately Tibetans wanted the priest

to stay away from their land and Kajinsha was assigned the duty to ensure his safe return. On his way back, he was shot by a tribes man from Tibet but the British suspected Kajinsha to be the murderer. After the priest's murder, Kajinsha, Gimur and Awesa escaped and started to live somewhere high in a mountain. But the Tibetans betrayed by revealing their hide out to British Soldiers. There was again an armed mutiny in Kajinsha's village and he was taken to Debrooghur jail where he was sentenced to death. The first punitive expedition against Abor and Mishmee tribes, under the command of Lieutenant F G Eden reached Kajinsha's hideout either with the help of villagers due to local rivalry or under pressure (*TBH* 264). Finally as the death of the priest is lamented, "What did he come here for, so far away from all that was his? What did he know of their lands, their lives and thoughts? What had he gained?'' (*TBH* 279). Moreover, as Dai records, Kajinsha's death in Debroogurh jail was the beginning of war and turmoil as it provoked a series of attacks on settlements along the borders (*TBH* 287). In "Author's Note" of *The Black Hill*, Mamang Dai says that there is no one living who remembers the story of the priest but this narrative is inscribed in spatial forms. There is a Krick and Bourry Memorial School and in Tezu market a shop sign showed Krick and Bourry Cyber Café (*TBH* 294).

To sum up, analysing the dynamics of socio-spatial dialectics, in Mamang Dai's *Legends of Pensam* and *The Black Hill* helps to identify a general spatial problematic within the context of insider/outsider encounter. The introduction of colonial modernity paradigms like road and the advent of technology in the local spaces have not only reconfigured spatial patterns but impacted the social and cultural milieu of Adis. They have attempted to negotiate changes by resurrecting

past traditions like orality as the sense of belonging is asserted and communicated through stories embedded in the collective memory of the natives. In *The Black Hill* also, the context of European Missionary project advanced through journeys to remote settlements of Mishmee and Abor Hills has created contested spaces, once again opening up the frontiers to infiltration and war. The journey of the priest signifies the institutionalization of religious beliefs of tribal communities of Northeast India.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The concept of locality is elaborated in this study to understand the dimensions and properties of particular physical spaces. This thesis has explored the dimensional aspects and properties of space, in the context of local surroundings and conditions. Apart from studying the meaning and significance of spaces as they are manifested in a particular geographical setting, this study has illustrated the concept of locality as a socially constructed space. Here, the definition of a particular locality has been proposed by considering the geographical setting along with its character, demography and social life. All these factors are acknowledged as engaging with and altering the geographical surroundings. In this study, the different contexts that produce or reproduce a particular spatial locality are also analysed. It is also acknowledged that the actualities of physical spaces provide contexts for social formation and interaction of communities. This shows that, within the given geographical framework, demographic, social and cultural factors are always at work or in other words, individuals and social groups or communities do not exist passively in a specific geographical space, but they enter or engage with spaces as the context warrants. Furthermore, the interaction of individuals and communities with certain realities beyond the local settings which affect and intrude upon localities is also identified.

The focus of this study is on individual and collective relations to place by analyzing how such relationships have formed and undergone changes within the

contexts of colonial and post-colonial situations and how they have been impacted by political narratives of nation and the collective experiences of modernity. Therefore, this thesis views locality not in its essentializing feature as a micro geographical space of settlement but has linked it with the social conditions and patterns of its inhabitants. This approach is not a set of practical methods, but an analytical process with a targeted focus on spaces. This analytical perspective can be used as an effective research tool once data has been collected. It is particularly suited to examining places as sites of contestation or identifying spatial problematic.

This study has also analysed the social, geographical, and historical connections that exist between people and their places. With a targeted focus on certain locations, this study has explored the concept of the local in diverse macro contexts. The contexts analysed here includes micro social contexts ranging from familial spaces to clans and communities, and macro spatial contexts like nation. For this, it has focussed on fictional works of writers from India's Northeast to study the ways in which social and political interactions are historically and spatially contingent and discourses of tradition and localized practices are inevitable to sustain and reassert spatial relations.

The precise location of a region on a map ensures a high degree of geographical certainty and nations marked on maps legitimize sovereignty claims with the help of such cartographic presentations. At the same time, political discourses like territorial sovereignty and national integration are historically and socially discredited as they do not take into account the various ways in which the people of those regions encountered invaders and different power regimes. The narratives of conflict, resistance and adaptation have the potential to alter spatial

patterns of geographically located regions. This has always necessitated the re-ordering of spatial patterns. Such spatial reconfiguration is reflected in the production of dichotomies like insider/outsider, exile/migrant and native/other. Spatial organization is mainly predicated on political jurisdiction, administrative systems, economic zones, historical projects, social patterns, majority and minority cultures and identities, to be contained within national borders or not. Though regions are fundamentally recognized as politically bounded territories, defining that territory and analyzing its linkages to social and political traditions, practices and meanings differ among its inhabitants and among those who characterize them.

The study of micro village settlements has enabled to explore the notion of place by incorporating the process of producing a locality; the production of native local subjects through practices, rituals and other forms of collective action. It is also found that locality, rather than being a physical space is actualized by foregrounding the involvement of agency: the interactions and imaginings of agents or individuals and groups make localities an ever-shifting terrain of social practices. From this perspective, locality becomes an imagined, incompatible and contested space. Attempting to examine socio-spatial dynamics from a micro-analytical perspective has been useful in analyzing the role of social actors and agency in micro-spatial contexts and to investigate how such localized spaces are negotiated or recreated when juxtaposed with macro spatial co-ordinates like nation-state and the processes of urbanization. It has helped to analyze the means by which social space is contested, constructed and endowed with political significance. The literary texts are analyzed from the perspective of locality to identify how the given spatial locality interprets, alters, and materially creates the context that it has generated. Many

different ethnic communities, rooted in specific places, with active and dynamic everyday practices come under the pressure of spatial politics imposed upon by the power structures of the nation and the discourses of modernization.

Selected literary texts are examined from the perspective of socio-spatial dialectics, to find out how the physical spaces of communities of Northeast India existed as a primordially given space but the organization, use and meaning of spaces have been the product of social translation, transformation and lived experiences of individuals and groups. The spatial organization of those ethnic communities was also an evolving product of their actions, or social construction developing within this physical frame of ubiquitous, contextual space

The cultural geography of Northeast India has always been a dynamic terrain where the forces of changes have become an imperative. The writings in English emerged in contemporary times but the writers bear the burden of history with a vision on posterity. Though the geographical location, cultural practices and politics define the literature of Northeast, the writers have attempted to overcome linguistic barrier and the angst of being eclipsed by mainstream literature, especially Assamese literature. The writers, Mamang Dai and Temsula Ao have attempted to express the cultural singularity of their region. Their works communicate the agony of a lost tradition along with the anxiety of recovering the past. Temsula Ao has poignantly portrayed the life-worlds of Naga people, filled with dread of having to live in a politically disturbed space. Ao has also detailed in some of the stories the cultural ethos of the community.

A close reading of primary sources has enabled to find out textual evidence in writings that form the writers' creative stance on issues like power and

domination, control and subordination, conflict and resistance. Both Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai have expressed their stance through literary devices like motifs, symbols and other narrative techniques. Dai has skilfully blended past traditions — orality and storytelling to form the structural pattern of the text. *Legends of Pensam* clearly communicates the dynamics of oral lore providing knowledge of native traditions of Arunachalees and Dai's presentation gives insight into the transformations to modernity through global processes like travel and technological mediation.

First chapter of this study titled, "Framing the Region: Bordering and Territorialization in North East India", has highlighted the processes of post-colonial nation-building with respect to two states – Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Historical perspective has helped in comprehending the territorialization processes involved in the state formation of India's North East. The era of colonialism began with boundary creation and border line markings. Even the unexplored natural, primordial spaces of several hill communities were marked and demarcated to form bounded spaces. The context of British imperialism after the end of Anglo-Burmese war in the hills and plains surrounding undivided Assam inaugurated territorial politics in Northeast. Though the techniques used to build nation-states have changed greatly across time and space, they involve strategies and actions that unify the country but at the same time, excluding or integrating minorities into the majority.

The non- territorialized spaces were subjected to the forces of change, which altered spatial designs and ruptured the social patterns. The context of territorial politics that framed the regions of Northeast India, is identified as an externally

produced context, which was a hegemonic discourse that created severe constraints on the lived experiences of hill communities. The Inner Line Policy Regulations of colonial rule separated hill tribes and plainsmen, inducing a kind of 'othering'. This chapter is included in this study to offer a critical interpretation of how national identity of ethnic communities is constructed and contested from a cartographic perspective. Hence it is understood that imperial cartography has been integral to the formation, maintenance, and even challenge to the legitimacy and existence of nation-states. The Treaty of Yandaboo, which established the process of drawing boundaries and demarcating places, might be interpreted historically as a hegemonic discourse. The creation of territorial units in Northeast India was a result of numerous annexations and partitions that did not provide security for the discontented ethnic groups as territory existed as a purely political entity.

The four literary works analyzed in this study represent two states of Northeast India, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. While viewing locality from a historical perspective, it considers space not as a static entity but includes the contexts and processes encompassing its formation and its linkages to the outside. Hence the production of locality has its specific roots in particular spatial situations. Chapter Two included in this study is titled as "The Nationalized Space in the Literaryscape of Nagaland: Contexts and Contestations". An overview of the political narratives of insurgency and secessionism unique to the state of Nagaland is detailed in this chapter. In this chapter, some of the distinctive cultural traditions of the Naga people as well as the general layout of their social organisation has been examined. It is understood that the lived reality of the Naga people can be comprehended through the intersections of politics, history, and social experiences.

Critical reading of Temsula Ao's works shows how social spaces are contested and re-created by the political imaginaries of nation states.

Therefore, if locality is to be considered as the distinct property of social life, here, in the analysis of literary works, two major variables entailed in the processes of production of locality are identified. The first being the physical space, ranging from the home to a clan, from a community or village to the nation state. The second important component is the socialisation programmes attached with these spaces, which can make localised spaces either contentious or meaningful. The various contexts can be broken down into three main categories: national political discourses; modernity paradigms like urbanisation programmes; and, lastly, insider/outsider encounters and global processes such as travel and technological mediation

The stories examined here demonstrate how locality is produced in relation to the Naga community as it is portrayed in Ao's literary works. Using ritualised practices and participatory techniques, individual characters or "local subjects," as Appadurai refers to them, create contexts for their own meaningful activities. As individuals, rooted in micro spaces of family, clan, or community, these individuals identify the patterns and paradigms of belonging. In such a predetermined or existing neighbourhood as the context for social activities, it provides conditions for meaningful existence. The stories included in *Laburnum for My Head* represent the life-experiences of individuals. The characters portrayed in the stories, Lentina in "Laburnum for my Head", Imchanok in "Death of a Hunter" Imdongla in "A Simple Question", unnamed female character in "Sonny" are all situated in the familial

space. Being rooted in such micro spaces, they experience context-generating dimensions of locality production. In other words, these individuals through their social activities create contexts for meaningful actions for themselves and for others. Here also, locality is expressed in certain kinds of agency and sociality.

Lentina in “Laburnum for my Head,” Imchanok in “Death of A Hunter,” Pokenmong in “The Boy who sold an Airfield,” and Sentila in “The Pot-Maker” are characters in the stories selected for analysis: *Laburnum for My Head*. These characters are situated in micro spaces of family, and as local subjects rooted in micro spaces, they produce the social contexts within which their very localising activities—planting laburnum in gravestones, revitalising and sustaining traditional practice of hunting, pottery, etc.—acquire significance and historical potential. Being an individual or local subject, Lentina embodies locality and expresses a particular form of agency and sociality. Here, the intentional acts of a single person socialise and localise the cemetery and its reconstruction as a very local neighbourhood. Lentina, as an individual subject, is committed to maintain symmetry in her social relationships, and her practices, values, and belief systems form the basis of her micro-social space. With her social interaction technology, an individual like Lentina, who is positioned in the micro-space of domesticity, can script agency and create contexts for reimagining the cemetery's spatial designs.

In the story “Death of a Hunter”, Imchanok, as a nomadic subject, accepts the privilege to register his identity as a hunter by complying with official orders. Since hunting is interwoven in the social and cultural life of the community, it is an indigenous tradition. Their hunting-related customs and ceremonies emphasise the animistic faith of the natives and their reverence for the natural world. The social

position of hunters is also greatly influenced by these customs as they also safeguard the interests of the community by protecting fields and other productive spaces. Hunting is also associated with the tribe's religious life in addition to being an economic activity. Even though its old methods have declined, hunting, pot-making, and similar practices bind the community. Since they are deemed to be the hall mark of social cohesion, their socio-cultural and religious significance is important. The production of locality is contextualised by the intentional activities of an individual or local subject inside the micro spaces of domesticity. In addition, Imchanok possesses knowledge of hunting which Appadurai describes as "local knowledge" and it empowers him to produce and reproduce locality under conditions of social wear and flux. The other two female characters presented in the story "Sonny" and "A Simple Question" also settled in domestic spaces of family employ strategies to attain some degree of agency for negotiating and subverting power structures of political system. They represent the majority of women who are firmly embedded in the family and deprived of resources to negotiate power through formal methods or take legal action on their own. Also, those individuals, when they encounter contexts provided by the political structure of nation, they use their micro-social space as sites of resistance.

The stories selected for study which are included in *Laburnum for my Head* show that localities as the concrete manifestation of spatial concepts, memories and practices that simultaneously mould or impact social relationships and can be identified as loci for individual agency. Moreover, these stories also show how local communal boundaries and group-based identities are reconstructed and consolidated through the use of such localised traditional practices like hunting and pot making.

Hence in these stories, individuals or local subjects are designated to use the possibilities of creating contexts for the production of locality and they affirm and safeguard their spatial affinities and linkages. When they recreate contexts for their social and cultural idioms, they reassert their local subjectivities.

These micro-spaces existing as social form or neighborhood, though not identifiable on a geographical scale, provide the unproblematic setting or context for individuals to perform social activities. To a certain degree, these spaces also function as counter-spaces where local subjects use agency to subvert or oppose hegemonic discourses and power systems.

The second collection chosen for analysis discusses how the nation-state as the macro political entity impact people's lived experiences. The political intervention of the nation, a hierarchical macro geographic entity, creates contexts for administrative strategies that ruptures communities' social cohesion. The stories "The Jungle Major," "Soaba," "The Last Song," "The Curfew Man," "Shadows," and "An Old Man Remembers" from the collection *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* are among those chosen for study. These stories showcase the practices and controlling mechanisms of macro-spatial form or nation, such as military intervention and territorial sovereignty. State politics or power structures seem to be damaging to the production of localities and nation's schemes like militarization, political homogenization, and sovereignty claims contextualise shifts in spatial patterns and create new spaces. The Nagas were initiated to the process of reterritorialization as a result of post-colonial political restructuring and sovereignty claims of the nation. Therefore, the nation, existing as a larger geographical context,

Naga communities' attempts to recreate socio-spatial coherence at the local level or within the nation are challenged.

The Northeast region of India is clearly unique in terms of geographical location, and it has also been politically constructed by colonial cartography to impose and legitimise discourses of territorial politics. Unnatural borders and boundaries impacted social patterns of communities rather than granting them spatial mobility. Thus, the politically driven projects of colonialism came into conflict with the naturally sustained life-worlds of ethnic communities living on the periphery, where local interests and activities were meaningful. The actualities of the hills and mountains contextualized the social and life patterns of non-territorialized communities of pre-colonial era. The Naga people's way of life and indigenous practices, which primarily involved hunting, predatory warfare, relationships with plainsmen, intertribal alliances and conflicts, and governing patterns, can be understood as processes whereby each group established distinct neighbourhoods or spatial localities for themselves and one another. By using these actions and strategies, they created contexts that allowed for movement, interaction, and internal colonisation. They simultaneously addressed the conditions of territorial politics that colonial mapping operations brought up. When imperial rulers carefully manoeuvred the hills and mountains to construct a political foothold in the plains, the non-administered, uncharted spaces were converted to bounded spaces. Local subjects in Nagaland were forced to encounter political contexts such as territorialization of colonial times and post-colonial reterritorialization that have disqualified norms of belonging based on societal identities. In addition, the political homogenization and sovereignty policies of the nation have ended in militarization,

which in turn have created Foucauldian heterotopias and turned native populations into insurgent subjects. Therefore, contested spaces have been established within Nagaland's state space by the political contexts of nationalisation processes produced by the nation as a macro entity. The context of militarization produced by the nation has driven the people to create other politically charged, insurrectionary spaces to challenge the hegemonic political discourses of nation. In Nagaland, these spaces existing outside of normative social order have always been identified as threats to the state as well as community. Moreover, specific segments of the population identified as insurgents or threats to national order are incarcerated, imprisoned or detained, thereby causing real social suffering. When the nation attempts to uphold popular rhetoric of maintaining law and order, promoting national interests, and safeguarding national security through the techniques of militarization, it creates volatile spaces, unfit to be marked as peaceful habitat. Within such disturbed spaces localised activities of communities have become not only fragile but socially dysfunctional as well. In the case of Nagaland, before colonialism, spatial indicators or territorial markers were based on collective social identity, shared beliefs and customs. When such spatial markers existed within larger spatial indicators like political boundaries, it seemed to be non- contiguous. Hence, those micro units demarcated by communal boundaries need to be recognised as independent or intermediate organisational unit politically powerful within a larger structure like nation.

Fourth chapter of this thesis "Negotiating Modernities: Changes in the Social Milieu of Arunachal Pradesh'', offers a thorough examination of Mamang Dai's literary works. On a close reading of Mamang Dai's *Legends of Pensam* and *The*

Black Hill from a microanalytical perspective, it is understood that myths, folktales, rituals, and local practices of social collectivities reconfigure spatial patterns and form social relations. It is also acknowledged that the contextual mediation of local subjects reinforces or debilitates the logic of the spatial. Furthermore, myths and folklore are powerful interaction tools that, when located in a broader context, mediate people's relationships to their communities and encourage a sense of commitment to the community and to the individuals they interact with.

Mamang Dai's *Legends of Pensam* can be placed within the narrative framework of insider/outsider encounter, which helps to identify a general spatial problematic. Dai's literary work *Legends of Pensam* shows changing localised spatial patterns, brought in by colonial modernity concepts like roads and technology which have an effect on Adis's social and cultural environment. In an effort to assert and communicate a sense of belonging through stories ingrained in the collective memory of the original people, they have attempted to negotiate changes by resurrecting historical traditions such as orality.

The European Missionary Project developed through journeys is narrated in *The Black Hill*, which has created contested places by opening up localised spaces to 'others' through expeditions to the isolated communities of Mishmee and Abor Hills. Dai has incorporated mythology and tribal beliefs with historical events to show the individual and communities' affiliation to certain locations. The social dimension of a place, which is taken as the essence or value of a specific geographical area, is also validated when the individuals generate contexts for the socialisation process. Simultaneously, these localised spaces serve as sites of many social and cultural formations, where spatial arrangements are altered due to

interactions and relationships. The extent and patterns of such social and spatial changes is revealed by examining the collective social interactions of the indigenous communities and the myths and beliefs that shape their social life.

A close reading of the selected writings of Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai shows that contexts can be identified as a key determinant in the socialisation of spaces. It can also be counted that already existing 'given' spaces is valued and legitimised only through the process of socialisation. At the same time, if the social contexts are produced from outside spaces by any dominant power structure, such spaces remain contentious. The various modes of producing a locality demands a critical engagement with contexts. In this study, an examination of selected literary works has helped to identify the contexts for process of socialisation which facilitates to ascertain the value of spaces. The different contexts can be figured out as having three elements: political discourses of nation, the second being modernity paradigms and narratives of urbanization and finally insider/outsider encounter facilitated through global processes like travel and technological mediation.

With respect to the stories of Temsula Ao, the contexts analysed can be identified as political projects of nation. In Nagaland, political discourses of nation involve processes of territorialisation and its aftermath being post-colonial re-territorialisation. Before colonial rule, Nagas and other hill people of Northeast India were a group of non-territorialized tribal communities. Their way of life and socio-cultural practices were subjected to the unforeseen contingencies of nature. The local and particular actualities of hills and mountains surrounding the valleys of Assam plains dictated their living. To a certain extent, those communities led a nomadic, mobile lifestyle with a unique settlement pattern. Thus, the unbounded

spaces formed the conditions for the tribal groups to design spatial patterns. This spatial production of locality was valued or codified by the social practices of the group. Their administrative patterns, inter-tribal alliances and conflicts, indigenous practices like hunting were deemed to be requirements of an autonomous collectivity. With the advent of colonialism, the programme of territorialization started. Spatial indicators like boundaries and borders upgraded the communities from being non-territorialized to territorialized. Naga communities were geographically dispersed by the unnatural political boundaries. Nagas inhabiting the other side of border line were not socially and politically privileged as the Nagas inhabiting the re-territorialised post-colonial state spaces. Besides geographical segregation, colonial cartography created social stratification of hills-men as they considered themselves inferior to plains people. For establishing political control in the plains and to subjugate tribal groups, colonial rulers encroached into the unmapped territories of the hills.

Another significant aspect of territorial politics is the protection of borders for claiming sovereignty. Since sovereignty was a major challenge constituting the political imperative of post-colonial nation, the nation was committed to maintain unthreatened boundaries. The political project of nation to form nationalized spaces through re-territorialization have impacted social patterns of Nagaland. The narratives of conflict and violence are formed when heterogenous groups are contained in the political mould of the nation which reproduce certain volatile spaces. Since defence and sovereignty are national priorities, the communities are militarized, for subduing insurrectionary spaces. The context of militarization produced by the nation provides condition for the production of locality. The spatial

design itself is altered and problematized. This spatial problematic is manifested in the formation of "other" spaces in society. These other spaces often challenge the hegemonic power structure of nation.

The literary work of Mamang Dai, *Legends of Pensam,* reveals the context of modernity paradigms encountered by the communities of Arunachal Pradesh, bringing about changes in the social milieu of communities. For spatial access colonial officials launched the scheme of road building. Despite the connectivity feature of roads, they were transformative as well as threatening for the ethnic communities. Apart from roads and vehicles, the intrusion of technology into the experiential realm of Adis have created disjuncture between subjectivities and territory. The old native settlements were changed to towns with vehicles and electricity, obliterating traditional modes of life. Besides, this narrative of urbanisation, Dai's *Legends of Pensam* authenticates the encounter between insider and outsider as the context producer for socialization of spaces. The natives' meeting with outsiders creates an interactive space situated in the inside of community and it is through such interactive spaces that natives communicate their sense of belonging. They resurrect traditional cultural patterns through the art of storytelling. Such communicative spaces are also contexts for social integration, the spaces help them to re-root to their localised practices. Reading Dai's *The Black Hill* confirms the global practice of travel as a corollary of contextual production of locality. The journey of an individual representing an institutionalised space, from the dominant centre to the peripheries has the potential to transform the social milieu of tribal groups.

To sum up, an analysis of selected fictional works of writers from Northeast India unravels the specifications that can be set for the production of locality. Besides the spatial configuration or physical properties of space, the social dimension of spaces is also assimilated in the conceptualization of locality. One of the basic principles for proper belonging to places is local knowledge. Individuals as well as groups privileged with knowledge about local practices and informed about spatial patterns can connect themselves to spaces. The boundaries of socialisation scheme are regulated by contexts. From this study, based on literary analysis, it can be inferred that individuals rooted in micro-scale of belonging ranging from family to clan and community are privileged to create contexts for social interaction through which they re-root themselves in such spaces. Their social spaces remain well-founded and authentic. A critical evaluation of Temsula Ao's *Laburnum for my Head* justifies this point. The characters delineated in this collection have the proficiency to map legitimate spaces to which they can claim entitlement. On the contrary, Ao's next collection *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* substantiates the perception that political narratives of nation as the producer of contexts cause rupture in social ties. The nation as a massive political apparatus limits the possibilities of groups to generate contexts for meaningful social interaction. While analysing Mamang Dai's work *Legends of Pensam*, the technologies of urbanisation like road making and similar modernity enterprises can be considered as context producers for social interactivities of communities. Along with the mechanism of connectivity through roads, natives' encounter with outsiders as detailed in *Legends of Pensam* the possibilities of unfolding interactive spaces are widened. Hence the social dimension of locality is valued and articulated through a

resurrection of discursive practices like orality. Another contextual production of locality is visible in the global practice of travel. Dai's *The Black Hill* relates the context of travel, journey motif from the mainland to hidden or unmapped spaces as impacting social ethos of communities. When an outsider navigates the uncharted spaces of borderland communities, their spaces are in a state of constant flux. The other side of journey motif is insiders' travel to outside spaces which also produces hybrid kind of subjectivities. The narrator in *Legends of Pensam* after shifting to the town, experiences the pangs of geographical displacement and attempts to re-root by coming to settle in her native place. Finally, the context of technological mediation in the lived experiences of individuals and groups form disjuncture between subjectivities and territory. These contexts bring about paradigmatic shifts in the social system. Instead of real communicative spaces formed through travel, technology initiates borderless interactive spaces which are at once localised and socialised. Dai's *Legends of Pensam* illustrates the force of media in transforming everyday discourses. The influence of television as a "resource for experiment with self-making" (Appadurai, "Here and Now" 3) is exemplified in Dai's characters. The programme aired on TV, being watched by individuals like Mimum and Omum, give them chance to "script possible lives to be imbricated with glamour" of popular figures. (Appadurai, "Here and Now" 3). Hence, the social dimension of locality in a de-territorialized space, is valued as it transfigures the existing patterns of social integration and interaction.

Chapter 6
Recommendations

This study is an attempt to explore the concept of locality and neighborhood as illustrated by Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai which will help to examine spatial dynamics. The process of production of locality is identified as a two -dimensional aspect: the socio-spatial dialectics. This concept allows us to map the complex interactions between people and places so as to understand the dynamics of spaces. The physical places have a dual relationship with the production of locality. They form the setting or context for production of locality and they are also the object of that production. The physical dimension of spaces is the background for individuals and communities to act and interact and those actions and interactions give meaning or value to those spaces. The literary works selected for analysis are authored by prominent writers of Northeast India. These works have helped to identify the complexities of socio-spatial relationships. The works of Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai portray the lived experiences of the indigenous communities of Northeast India.

The scope of this research can be extended to an analysis of literary works representing similar ethnic or borderland communities to map the political strife and ethnic conflicts and to analyse how these have impacted cultural pluralities of this region. This study focusses on locality and its production as a social achievement but the political and historical contexts of the production of locality can be examined in detail. This study has attempted to penetrate into the social fabric of specific local or indigenous communities, in order to grasp the interconnectedness of space and social formations. The spatial methodology adopted in this study favours the notion

of geographical or physical space. The study of concrete spaces or virtual spaces with an interdisciplinary approach to locality can be adopted to identify the various dynamics of space. There is further scope in researching the traditional cultural patterns of indigenous communities to identify the changes brought out by the processes of globalization. There is also scope for examining the ecofeminist trends in the literary works of Mamang Dai and compare it with other feminist discourses in global literary landscape. Likewise, Temsula Ao's treatment of political intervention in the life- worlds of Naga communities can be compared to the works which represent the politics of secessionism.

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