



Shaping a Bright Future with Hope and Education - An Analysis of Easterine Kire's *Bitter*

Wormwood

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Abstract

This research study focuses on bringing out Easterine Kire's views on education, particularly in her literary works, and platforms the importance of education in the process of amelioration, especially in marginalized communities. It also highlights how poverty should never be a barrier to access. Education is seen not just as a tool for personal growth, but also as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty. Similarly, the paper emphasizes that children must not be denied their right to education due to war or conflict. Kire advocates for the resilience of education systems, even in the face of adversity, suggesting that education is an essential right that transcends any socio-political or economic challenges. Regardless of the situation, education must be provided to young children, as it plays a crucial role in the development of both the individual and nation. This study explores how education fosters critical thinking, empowers future generations, and contributes to the advancement of a country's economy and social stability. Kire's work reinforces the notion that education is foundational to building stronger, more inclusive societies and shaping the future of nations.

Keywords: education, war, children, future, poverty



Introduction

Hope is a powerful motivator compelling an individual to envision a better future. Hope can reignite passions and dreams even when circumstances seem bleak. Confucius, the treasured educator, philosopher, and political theorist of China, stated that “Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds Peace” (BAI). It is a common element that a sturdy mind and the wisdom of practical thinking are products of hope and education. Confidence acts as a bridge between education and hope. Preethi Shenoy, in her novel, *The Castle*, explains how hope transformed into willpower, helping the protagonist Peta to reach her destiny and find her father.

Education

Education is the only factor that benefits both the giver and receiver. However, education has become a business in modern times. In Japan, nuclear bomb blasts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused great destruction during World War II. However, within a few years they were able to overcome this destruction. They had great hopes, moved to various parts of the country, and educated themselves. Thus, they were able to rebuild their own countries. Unlike others, they looked forward towards the future, selected the right path, and proceeded towards the next step. This is a secret to their success. Whatever they do, education helps them overcome their situation. Education helped them survive, even during the worst periods of their lives.

Review of Literature

Dr. Gupta in his article “Empowerment through Learning: Kire’s Innovation in Modern Literature” focuses on how Kire’s portrayal of education as a transformative force invites readers to reconsider its role in contemporary Naga society. Kire states, “Mose is not just a character but a symbol of resilience, demonstrating that education can be a beacon of light in the face of adversity”. Prof. Sharma in his review “Hope as a catalyst in Kire’s Narrative” highlights the



theme of hope woven throughout the narrative. He praises the author's ability to intertwine personal struggles with broader societal challenges, and calls for a re-examination of educational priorities within marginalized communities. Dr. Malik in his "Cultural Identity in the Pursuit of Knowledge" reviews the cultural implications of Kire's Mose stating, "Kire's narrative not only addresses educational issues but also bravely confronts questions of cultural identity." Dr. Malik asserts that Kire's work serves as crucial commentary on the importance of preserving cultural identity through education.

Easterine Kire

Literary writing provides a variety of opinions on writing, and also highlights the need for education in everyday life. Writers highlight the necessity of education to the world through the life of their protagonists. Easterine Kire is a writer who, through her writings pictures the importance of human beings in their day to day life. Easterine Kire who is a Kohima born novelist, poet, short story writer and writer of children's literature is the first poet and novelist from Nagaland to publish her poems and novels in English. She opens up her Naga tradition and culture throughout the world using literary works as a tool. Her works include *Journey of the Stone*, *A Respectable Woman*, *Son of the Thundercloud*, *Don't Run My Love*, *When the River Sleeps*, *Bitter Wormwood*, *Life on Hold*, *Mari*, *A Terrible Matriarchy*, *A Naga Village Remembered*, *The Rain Maiden and the Bear Man*, *Forest Song*, *Jazz poetry and other Poems*, *A Slice of Stavanger*, *The Windhover Collection*, *Kelhoukevira*, *Walking the Roadless Road* and *Ah People of Tromso*. She was awarded Governor's Medal for Excellence in Naga Literature in 2011.



Bitter Wormwood

In 2013, Kire's novel, *Bitter Wormwood* was shortlisted in the Hindu Lit for Life Prize. Her *Bitter Wormwood* traces the story of Mose's life from 1937 to the present. The small incidents in Mose's childhood, his family, and the routines and rituals of traditional village life paint an evocative picture of a peaceful way of life. Mose and his friends become involved in the Naga struggle for Independence. They are caught in storms of violence, protests, repression, attacks, and reprisals. *Bitter Wormwood* gives poignant insight into the human costs behind the political headlines from one of India's most beautiful and misunderstood regions. Kire in her novel *Bitter Wormwood* brings out how education gives hope to Mose through wisdom during his toughest journey of life. Kire brings out different aspect of education through Mose and his grandson Nebou. In this novel, one can identify that, hope and education are interconnected. Without hope, there is no education and without education, there is no hope. Without either, no success can be achieved.

Hope as a Catalyst for Change

The protagonist Mose who has been educated in this novel brings light to his mother and grandmother through his education. He teaches them English and helps them understand the news they listen to on the radio. Only through this news, they would know what is happening around them. Mose is the one who explained them regarding the importance of announcing Nagaland as a separate nation. They also learned the steps taken by their leaders to convince the Indian Army. This gave them hope every time their suffering ended. As Mose has been educated, he could explain the situation around them and reduce their fear of death. Mose, navigates a world filled with challenges, yet it is through education that he discovers the means to uplift not



only himself but also his community. Kire in her *When the River Sleeps* states, “Education is like water; it quenches the thirst of a mind yearning for knowledge and liberation” (76).

The Role of Education in Empowering Individuals

Mose’s education emerges as a primary vehicle for his empowerment. Kire’s characters are depicted as seekers of knowledge, striving to break free from the shackles of ignorance and poverty. The author presents education as a multifaceted tool that transcends formal education. It encompasses lessons learned from life experiences and the wisdom passed down through generations. Kire writes, “In every book read and every lesson learned, there lies the promise of a better tomorrow” (*Bitter Wormwood* 58). This highlights the essence of education as an avenue for personal development.

The Interplay Between Education and Community

Kire weaves a narrative that highlights the communal aspect of education. Mose’s knowledge is not solely an individual pursuit; it resonates through the very fabric of the community. The author emphasizes individuals’ interconnectedness and illustrates how collective enlightenment contributes to societal progress. “The strength of a community lies in the wisdom shared and the dreams knitted together” (*Bitter Wormwood* 82). When individuals invest in their education, they inevitably uplift their communities.

Education as Business

Education has become a business today due to privatization. In ancient times, educated people knew the tactics to face the world, as well as their lives and fates. People seek advice from wise men when deciding on a serious situation. However, these days, learned people are unaware of the curves and ridges of life. Their problems, which are actually ants, seem to be elephants for those educated only for the sake of their degree. They find it difficult to survive in



this world because of their fear of facing troubles. In those days, schools were considered holy places, and people were educated to face situations other than just for the sake of holding a degree. But now, it is a place where money is valued more than knowledge.

In 2010, Auditor General slammed 25 well-known private schools in Delhi for arbitrary fee hikes. According to the report, money was collected from parents under false heads, while at the same time, teachers were underpaid, and accounts were misrepresented.

Existing legislative efforts have made an incomplete assessment of the deeper problems with financial management and ... adopted by private schools (Gaur 10).

This was the case in private schools in Delhi in 2010. The condition in 2018 seemed to be worse than that in previous years. However, everyone educates their children in the hope of attaining the knowledge necessary to survive in this world.

The Struggles of Mose

Mose's journey of life is filled with obstacles, as he grapples with societal expectations and personal limitations. However, his unwavering hope propels him towards success. Kire writes, "In the depths of despair, hope shines the brightest, illuminating the path toward change" (*Bitter Wormwood* 176). Mose confronts adversity with courage and optimism in his life. Mose's struggles are representative of the broader challenges faced by individuals in his society. Kire's portrayal of his character invites readers to reflect on the systemic barriers that hinder access to education and opportunities. Through Mose, Kire raises questions about societal structures and emphasizes the need for change.

The Transformative Power of Education

Mose, unlike his friend Neituo loved to learn every day, and was at the top of both groups. Owing to his thirst for education, he worked hard and learned with the help of scholarship. Kire



brings out the two children approaching education differently. One quenches his thirst of education by learning and sending his grandson Neibou to Delhi for his higher studies. The other had no interest in learning, but made his children learn. “Mose liked school and was a quick learner which pleased his teacher a lot. “This boy will go far,” predicted one of the male teachers. Mose was always accompanied by Neituo. Of these, Mose was the most diligent. Neituo was not unintelligent, but lazy. School seemed tedious to him after the initial excitement of the first two months rubbed off” (Kire 24). Mose who was an underground once, towards the end of the novel, think to himself that if they have accepted to be a state of India, many lives would be saved.

The Influence of Education

The plight of the Naga people was brought out in *Bitter Wormwood*. Mose being educated valued education and he educated his children and grandchildren. Kire states “Education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is about finding oneself amidst the chaos of the world” (*Bitter Wormwood* 44). Mose loved to learn and reach the next step in his life. The war between the Indian military and the undergrounds of Nagaland created a break in Mose’s education . However, he used every opportunity to teach himself in life lessons. As there were curfews, people never came out of their houses after 6 p.m. The people of Nagaland in *Bitter Wormwood* wanted to be on their own land as a separate country certainly not a state in India. The struggles faced by them made their minds think in another way. They began to educate themselves. Education helps people boldly face ups and downs and live their lives to the brim. It is the knowledge he gains through education that helps Mose survive the storms of life.



Education and Struggles of Life

Mose highlights the struggles faced by the people of Nagaland during Indian Independence. The Indian military was observed in Nagaland on condition to be freed only if they accepted being part of India as a state. As problems arose daily, people were not allowed to leave their houses. During this period, Mose and his family listened to radio news, and gained knowledge about their surroundings. The information gathered from the news would help him and his family to come out of the current situation in which he has been struck.

Ancient and Modern Education

In ancient times, students taught by teachers whole heartedly with the only aim of expecting a bright future for their children. However, nowadays, teachers are not given peace or respect. They are questioned by higher officials who expected the centum results. Importance is given only to student marks whereas development of their knowledge is ignored. Although certain teachers are concerned about the students, they are suppressed by business-minded high officials, who make them concentrate only on marks.

Poverty and Education

When poor people are taken into consideration, many children lose the happiness of their lives due to the lack of opportunity to study and endurance of poverty. As money plays a major role in the education especially higher studies such as MBBS and Engineering, poor students though talented, they are unable to educate themselves due to lack of money. This leads to lack of hope in their mind. They live a mechanical life and work daily for their basic needs. Children are pushed out of these opportunities owing to lack of money. Here, education becomes a product when one needs to pay for it and buy it. Thus, education has lost its savor in providing knowledge to those who approach it. Skilled or unskilled, rich or poor, it is the right of every



child to have education in their lives. Because they have the right to live in this world, they also have the right to educate themselves.

Education and Mind

Education acts indirectly as a bridge connecting people's minds. This connects the minds of Rakesh and Neibou. Both belong to two different poles: one from India and the other from Nagaland. However, despite marginalization, they are close friends. Education helps them learn that love, not any other quality, is the necessary qualification to live in this world. At the same time, Rakesh's grandfather, who is a retired military man in India, and Mose, who was a member of the underground, also became friends. Thus, when all people are educated, there seems to be some possibility of getting rid of war. Kire states that, "A well-educated mind is a garden that yields countless fruits" (*When the River Sleeps* 58).

Hope is a basic requirement of the human mind. This fills the mind with a positive energy. If someone lacks hope, they appear as if nothing is left in their lives. They suffered without peace. To a mind, in order to find success, hope and education are indispensable as proven by the protagonist through his immense hope and success through education. He thinks that when every individual begins to work on providing education to the poor, it serves as a ray of hope and peace that fill the entire universe.

Education and Development of Country

Education is a major field that helps in the development of a country. Only when the people in the country are educated, there are chances for new inventions and new ideas which help in facing threats against the country. Abdul Kalam says that the world is in the hands of the youngsters. Thus, if only the youngsters are educated, the world remains in peace and moves towards positive development.



Conclusion

Education and hope are necessary for human survival. Education has the power to shape the mind as well as learners's brains. However, in this modern world, acquiring quality education is a difficult task. Kire represents how education plays a major role in the life of a common man. Kire's novel is filled with hope and it squeezes out the desire from every heart to educate their children. Every character holds hope in their mind in one way or the other. In India, both central and state governments take necessary steps to educate people all over the country. Many beneficiary schemes have been introduced by the Tamil Nadu government. However, there are still people in India who lack education. Most people in India receive a basic education, but due to poverty, higher studies are not accessible to them. Some people lack awareness on the importance of education and some stop learning because of unemployment. When people become aware of education and the various schemes of the government, the population of educated people in the country improves leading to the economic development of the country, allowing everyone to reap the fruit of education in the world filled with peace.



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