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**TABOO THEMES IN EASTERINE KIRE'S SKY IS MY FATHER  
A NAGA VILLAGE REMEMBERED**

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Abstract

The word taboo refers to a social or religious custom which prohibits and restricts a particular practice. It is an implicit prohibition and restriction of a particular practice. Taboo is evident in every society and the violation of taboo is usually considered as an objectionable thing in society. India is a vast country with varied cultural societies. Each society has a unique and peculiar culture. And each culture follows distinct taboo with strict guidelines.

Easterine Kire is the Nagaland poet and novelist. Her writings revolve around the people and environment of Nagaland. In the novel, Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered Easterine Kire has presented Nagaland people and its vibrant culture. It was the first novel published by a Naga writer in English in 2003. The Nagaland culture has so much unique social taboos and rituals. In the novel, Kire says that if we break the taboos, we break ourselves and bringing harm to ourselves. Throughout the novel, we can observe the interaction between human beings and their taboos in the Nagaland culture.

Keywords: *Taboos, social custom, and vibrant culture.*

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Easterine Kire is the Nagaland poet, novelist, short-story writer and a writer of children's books. Her novels include Son of the Thundercloud, Bitter Wormwood and When the River Sleeps. Easterine Kire's writings revolve around the people and environment of Nagaland. Kire's work has been translated into German, Croatian, Uzbek, Norwegian and Nepali.

Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered Kire says that Khonoma forms a naturally fortified place by the mountainous barrier. The people living in the Khonoma village had a deep connection with the land, their taboos and they took pride in fighting and toiling for it. The novel also centers on the battle between Britain and the little warrior village of Khonoma.

In the nineteenth century, Khonoma is a little village surrounded by mountains and it is seen in the northern Angami region between Merima and Chieswema.

In the first chapter, the themes of taboos are well expressed with the death of Kovi's wife. Kovi lives with his wife and a daughter in the village of Khonoma. His wife dies with the delivery of another baby. In the death of his wife, Kovi cannot express his emotions through the tears as it was the taboo.

"No, no mourning for a lashu death, it is taboo.... The strictest of taboos was upon the lashu death. No mourning of the dead." (Kire, 6)

The word lashu refers to the death of women during delivery. And the dead women are denied funeral rites as it was the strict taboo followed by Khonoma villagers in Nagaland. Kovi and his daughter deeply grieved over the death but they cannot express their grief in public as it was the taboo.

At the beginning of the novel, Kelevizo alias Levi, an avid wrestler was seventeen and a half years old. He was the first son of vicha and vipiano. Levi's younger brother was lato. Levi and his age group have started to earn money or grain through the work in other people's agricultural lands.

Vipiano knows that the taboos and all the rituals have to be followed strictly by the villagers. She remembers that her father has said that if we break the taboos from our life, then we are breaking ourselves from life.

"If you break the taboos, you break yourself...If you did not heed the taboos, you could live on unharmed for some years, but the day would soon come when the earth would open up to receive you before your time. And then, when that day struck, you went without the compassion of the village." (Kire, 14-15)

Here we can understand that the people of Khonoma are carefully observing the taboos as a part of life. The violation of taboos relates to the death of the individual and they do not receive compassion from the villagers.

The people of Khonoma believe that in the Khunuo lievi day, that is a genna day to prevent damage to crops by animals, work should not be done throughout the village. It was their belief that if people work on the day, their crops would be damaged by insects, birds, and animals. The genna day refers to the no-work days and it was a taboo to work on genna days.

"No one violates a genna day; so the genna was death to those who defied it but life to those who abided by it." (Kire, 52)

In the genna day, the villagers do not work in the agricultural fields and they take rest from fieldwork. The genna day would bring death to those who defy it and it gives life to the people who abide by it. Through the taboos, we observe the social unity of people without inequalities.

Kovi tells Levi that life was unpredictable and strange. So the careful observation of the taboos would be much more important to have a long and fulfilled life.

“Arrogance and pride kill. Be humble, heed the taboos and there is no reason why you should not have a full and long life.” (Kire, 53)

Kovi also tells that arrogance and pride are the vices of human beings and it kills us. Human beings should possess commiseration and humbleness in mind.

In analyzing the novel with taboo themes, we can understand that the people of Khonoma have a social obligation towards the protection of the village. Through following taboos, the people take responsibility to guard their village and to earn great names for the village. Thus we could understand that without arrogance and pride, the responsibility of manhood was to protect the social values and respect each other with cordiality. Some of the taboos may be meaningless to the modern people but the careful observation and the adherence of it would bring the sense of well being and social integration to the society.

#### Work Cited

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