

From Scarred To Scared: A Sacred Journey For The Women Of Meghalaya, India.

Author

Date of Submission: 03-06-2022

Date of Acceptance: 17-06-2022

I. {Introduction}

To begin with, let us re-visit and understand how the concept of man and woman as binaries actually started. In the Old Testament, it is written

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man{cite[Eichrodt 1961 theology]}

The Old Testament discloses a significant salutation that covertly opens up the very essence of woman-ness. The connotation second-sex is referred to woman and the first, is reserved for man. This essence is well depicted as an outcome of this verse. This discrepancy between man and woman shows that there has been an outright binary between the two sexes right from the genesis. This reference to the Old Testament is relevant here because it depicts and justifies the first half of the title of the article, 'SCARRED TO SCARED'. This is so because the very salutation as the second confirms that there is someone better, superior and richer before her. This societal construct has been given to the women right from birth. Many works on the 'other' have been penned down by powerful minds across globe, the prominent one is Simona de Beauvoir's 'Second Sex'. In this classic, de Beauvoir holds how woman is just a pale imitation for man. She wrote

Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as a relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being{cite[de2010second]}

This quotation from Second Sex amplifies the position of woman where de Beauvoir further states,

The curse which lies upon marriage is that too often the individuals are joined in their weakness rather than in their strength, each asking from the other instead of finding pleasure in giving.{cite[de2010second]}

Since time immemorial, women have been scarred for life. Her address as the 'second-sex' exponentially proves the status of her the day she sees the light of the day, for she is not the primary, not the first but, the 'second'. This depiction clearly speaks of the gender divide, the binary between men and women. By the time she is born, she is thrown into the world of everything 'secondary' and the words attached with secondary are subordinate, lesser, lower, non-essential, subservient, which in themselves are nothing celebratory in tone. In other words, this binary divide stems from the stigma that she is the 'other' and has to live with this stigma of being lowly or subservient and that is enough to scar her for life.

The woman now assigned a lowly status as compared to the man has to prove her mettle in every step of her waking life. Most of the things that come easily to her other half, the men. She struggles. She walks that extra mile. She lives that extra grieved life scarred and scared. She is born a the second-sex, scarred with this very address of her's and scared for she is 'shown' a place which should be her boundary, failing which she is out there in the wild and open ready to be pounced upon. When a girl is born, along with her, the birth of everything second, including her sex, the 'second-sex' and the twin emotions of scarred and scared too sees the light of the day. She shares a destiny together with the destiny of her twin invisible siblings: scarred life and the scared mind.

Concept of Stree in the Indian Context

After the glance of the status of women in the Christian parameter, we should now observe our thoughts on the Indian Context. It is absorbing to note that women in the Indian context are addressed as 'Stree'. Stree is of Sanskrit origin which is a combination of the three qualities, or, tri-guna, satvika(st),tamasika(ta),rajasika(ree). Satvika is that which is pious, holy, auspicious, light ,bright, benefic and its colour is white; tamasika is the contradiction of satvika and stands for everything which is dark, heavy, malefic and inauspicious and its colour is black. In between, satvika and tamasika comes rajasika which is the choice-activator and stands for the colour red. Since time immemorial, it has been observed in the Indian context that women have the hidden power to transform death to life(Sati-Savitri) or, life to death,when triggered (Durga and Asura).Some of the folk-lores of the Northeastern part of India unfold some gripping stories of the protagonists of the epic, Mahabharata. In these local anecdotes however, the central female leads are given a back-seat and instead, the local 'Stree' are marked as the prime mover.Hidimba, the remote part of Northeast, believe was their tribal princess.

She and her brother, Hidimb ruled over the place Hidimbapur, which was changed to Dimbapur, and in turn, to the present Dimapur. The child of Hidimba in union with Bhima was Ghotakuch and his progeny are believed to be the present Kachari community of the region. Hidimba is the rajasika for she activated her choice of bearing the child of Bhima(a Nada and definitely not a rakshasa) in an unwonted way.She is also a tamasika for she is a 'rakshasa' and stays in the forest, untrodden by the foot prints of man.

In a similar fabel, Arjun(a Pandava) was believed to have traveled to the far east and have met the serpent princess, Ulupi. Together they had a son called Iravaan and his scions are known as the Nagas. That Ulupi (serpent) married Arjun(a nara and a Pandava) and chose to deliver and rear her son in her own kingdom without the support of her Pandava husband does make Ulupi both outrageous and mutinous, easily imprinting her as tamasic and rajasic. Tamasic because she is after all a serpent who stays underneath Mother Earth where it is dark and difficult to access. She is Rajasika because she activated her choice of marrying an off the beaten husband in an unwonted manner and rearing her child up unconventionally, or, independently without the spouse's support.This elaboration speaks volume of the nature of women in the Indian context. As much as a woman can be pious and pure like Sati Savitri or Parvati, when provoked she can also be Durga or Kali. In between, these two extremes, there is the activator of being what one wants to be, like Hidimba(rakshasa) choosing Bhima (nada),or, Ulupi(serpent/Naga)activating her choice of marrying Arjuna(nada).

Statement of the Research Problem

The social context restrained the usages of 'tamasika' and 'rajasika' and limited womanhood to 'satvika' alone with negligible importance to 'tamasika' and 'rajasika'. This negligence is the prime reason how the statement of the research problem comes up, gender and violence: 'whose' problem, 'what' problem?. Firstly, we have to take cognisance of the fact that the problem of violence outside is basically an extension of the problem of violence within. What is violence? Let me at the onset, divide violence into two categories:Internal/inner violence and external/exterior violence.Violence has been largely defined as the use of force, vehemence, savagery to injure, restrict or suppress the other. Violence in this context, emanates from the grassroot-level, the self,woman.This is the level of internal or, inner violence. When the girl child is asked to repress the quintessential identity of herStree'ness, what emerges is an interesting narrative of womanhood seen only as satvika or 'good' and 'serving' and not as 'served' or tamasic and, or rajasika. This creates a psychological imbalance for one should take note that everything that is a part of this universe, including women is a part of the tri-guna. To favor one guna over the rest only leads to step-motherly rearing of the girl child as a totality. Genesis of violence starts from there. The girl child should be trained that as much as she should be satvika, she can also be tamasika and rajasika .This comes close to the effect in what psychologists call the principle of 'Suppressed Emotions'. Emotions which are uncomfortable when asked to be suppressed and, further, repressed only creates a chasm between the self and her own existence. This only alienates the self(girl) from her complete identity.This principle of suppressed emotions resonates to certain extent with the principle of tri-guna. A complete woman who identifies with all the three components and makes cognisance of their existence within herself, can be better equipped and empowered to adapt to the outside world. She need not be scarred for life for being born into the three-fold classification of satvika, tamasika and rajasika nor should she be scared that she possesses these qualities innately. She has to make peace with her own identity first,and how ,with the good, bad and the activator is complete and settled in herself.Focusing on one of the attributes, while royally ignoring the other two leads to a half-baked identity shaping of a Stree.

She has to be introduced with the tri-guna and not let her astray by getting alienated from her own self. When the better and the brighter one is spot-lighted and the latter two are bracketed, it only leads to a camouflaging of the layers of self, which hitherto she had been unfamiliar with. When these layers are peeled off,it makes the self (Stree) alienated from her own complete identity.Externally,the violence of women is more 'visible' and 'tell-tale and has been a raging concern across all genres,legal, psychological, scientific,

philosophical, anthropological, historical, economical, and more. A major component of this part on external-violence will be dealt at length, in the following sections. This journey of survival which the girl child goes through both internally and externally is a narrative of merging from Scarred-Scared to Sacredness.

Meghalaya is one of the eight states of Northeast India, and was carved out of the then Greater Assam and attained full statehood in 1972. Meghalaya covers an area of 22,430 square kilometers. As per the 2016 population index, the density of her population is 3,211,474. The literal meaning of Meghalaya, is derived from the Sanskrit word, 'Megh'(clouds)-'Alay'(Abode) or, the Abode of clouds. The scenic beauty of the state is so enchanting that it has been called the Switzerland of the East. The state's natural and herbal produce from horticulture to bio-diversity needs no introduction. It is said that in Meghalaya everyone is educated for nature as their library. The shallow walls of the concrete buildings can be a barrier for someone who is inquisitive of knowledge but does not have enough infrastructural resources to access it. Nature is the finest teacher that the Khasis pick up their lessons from. From the petals, to the leaves; the seeds to the process of germination educates every learner willing to take lessons in the natural discourse of Meghalaya. Let me bring in the famous Khasi poet, U Soso Tham whose verse depicts and reveals the tell-tale picture of mankind today.

Sa shisie pat kin win ki khlaw Sa shisien pat kin khiih ki maw. (Once more the forests will clamour ;Once more the stones will tremor).

Jingshai ngi wad sawdong pyrthei Jingshai ka ri ngim tip ei ei. (We search for light around the world Knowledge of our own land, we know nothing at all). \cite{diengdoh2017study}

In the deranged context of general gender violence and its impact on the psyche of women, the visible and the invisible scars and the many untold and unheard scared and fearful narratives of violence, Meghalaya comes as the fresh case-study in this parameter. Meghalaya is one of the few minority states of India besides the Nair community of Kerala that follows 'matrilineal' practices. One needs to differentiate between matrilineal and matriarchal practices here. Meghalaya is matrilineal but not matriarchal. Matrilineal traces its lineage to the maternal side and so social customs like weddings, the groom goes to the bride's abode. The property inheritance is inherited by the youngest daughter, called Kah-duh. However, the presence of man is very much there and mostly, the man or the maternal-uncle, Mama is the custodian of all the legal rights in Meghalaya. Under the matriarchal system, unlike matrilineal, the woman here is not the all in all. She is the decision maker in consultation with her husband but in most cases is the sole bread earner.

Only the lineage is traced to her and her fore-mother or 'Mei'(the powerful feature to show her devotion to Goddess Kamakhya). The state of Meghalaya is dominated by three major tribes viz., the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos. The common thread that ties them together is the fabric of a matrilineal society and they belong to the Austro-Mongoloid races. The fabric of these tribes centre around the concept of 'Kur'. Kur or, the tribes men, the Khasis believe are the progeny of the 'Ki Hyntrweip' or, the seven huts of God. However, some scholars are of the view that Ki Hyntrweip depicts the seven habits that should be inculcated young by a child when born into a family. These habits are usually about obeying rules, remembering and thanking God performing rituals such as marriage, last rites and so on. \cite{myrthong2004ka}

These rites also fall under the concept of *Ka Niam* as per the Khasis. It is interesting to note that certain concepts found in other mainland, languages like Sanskrit are found in the tribes of locals too. To give an example, 'Atithi Dev Bhava' is a popular way of paying obeisance to guests who are god-like to the visitor. This concept is deep rooted not just in the plains of India but also in the hills. For instance, when the Khasis speak about this relationship they say 'Khublei' which means a note of gratitude and when we break this note we realise it is a combination of Kh + Ublei. Ublei for the Khasis is male God and by prefixing Kh, the notions of exchanging and accommodating the other as God-like and thanking him for his visit to the host's abode.

Relationship Between the Khasis and Nature: Their Philosophy

To begin with the genesis of the Khasi tribe, I am quoting from Sujata Miri from *The Khasi Milieu*:

*It is generally claimed that tribal religions do not have any literature of interpretation which could articulate the significance of their religion in the life of the tribal people. This may generally be the case; but the Khasis are a remarkable exception to this rule.... The Seng Khasi Organization founded first on 23 August 1899, has been active in making this literature available to its members and others who are interested. Among the creative writings coming from this organization, Mr.H.O. Mawrie's *Ka Pyrkhath U Khasi* \cite{miri1988khasi} deserves a special place.*

This passage amply shows that the Khasis not only have a rich verbal civilization but also, their close proximity to nature can be well-made out through the several interpretative deliberations of the Seng Khasi Organization.

This Organization deserves special reference for being the first to maidenly work out to make the oral stories available in the form of written documents.

The Khasi tribe by and large is known for their God-fearing stature and their supreme faith of linking nature with God. For the Khasis, *The Supreme Power (Ka Ubleih)* can be either male or female. Nature for them is an expression of God, for instance, the famous Shillong –peak in Shillong is referred to as *I'lei Shillong*, the god of Shillong peak '*lei Muluk, the God of the State, U'lei Umtong, god of water etc.*

Being all in all God is above gender ,U Blei.In prayer they simply say A Blei or Ka Blei without using the masculine prefix U or the feminine Ka .\cite{nongsiej2002khasi}

The prominent line of thought here is that the deep connection of the khasis with nature can be understood when we see the various Proper Nouns .It is enthralling to note that Shillong and other parts of Meghalaya are referred to ,mostly, with an 'Um' which means jal or water like *Um-sning, Um-pling* and so on. The ethereal bond of nature with the life of the Khasis thus can be effortlessly noticed here.

A pantheist side to the Khasi's way of life can also be seen here. All the local gods are there but supreme God U Blei is above them. Miri further elaborates that for the Khasis, religion is the relationship between man and God. This relationship is governed by two factors, *Ka Niam and Ka Jutang* (reason and covenant). The principal reason for man is that he is a creature of God . Man belongs to God during his lifetime and also after his death. On the other hand, the covenant states that as long as man is alive in this world, he should abide by and execute the command (hukum) of God by earning righteousness. It is on the basis of "reason" and "covenant" that a Khasi upholds and establishes his religion. The covenant turns to be the law to mankind and as long as man abides by the law i.e., live in righteousness, do righteousness, earn for righteousness nothing can topple him down.For a *Khasi Ka Niam* (religion) necessarily compliments *Ka Rukom* (rites). *Ka Rukom* indicates the ceremonial aspect of religious observances, which must be according to the norms laid down in *Ka Niam*. Ceremonies may vary from one kin to another.

At this juncture, we need to pause and reflect on what makes Meghalaya , matrilineal?

Meghalaya is the state that stands out with this uniqueness as the bunch of the other seven states intertwined as Northeast(there are eight states of NE,including Sikkim in 2000 prior to which it was a Union Territory) are patrilineal.To know this, we need to trace back the genealogy of the state. Meghalaya prior to 1972, was a part of Greater Assam.Most of the present states of Northeast, like Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, except Manipur and Tripura as they have been the royal kingdoms(a part of tribal royalty still exist)had been carved out of the Greater Assam.

Genesis of Meghalaya being matri-lineal:Linking to Kamakhya Temple

Culturally, the Khasis are known to lead a matrilineal lifestyle. Matriliney as the concept suggests gives power to the female lineage, keeping the youngest daughter, *Ka-Duhh* as the inheritor of all property rights. Culturally, this lineage seems to be an exotic one as it is rare in a country like India where patriarchy seems to be the norm. Now the question is how or, when did Meghalaya or the Khasis, start with this exotic practice? Also, in Khasi the position of the women-folk is largely taken to be one which is filled with comfort, luxury and easy life. Though the brutal ills of the other parts of the country might be relatively less in Meghalaya, the natural and societal problems that Khasi women face cannot be brushed out. We can understand this when we realise that the youngest daughter, *Ka-duhh* is only a caretaker of the family wealth for she needs to consult her maternal uncle for everything(man) who acts as the real custodian. Further, if Khasi women were really over and beyond the societal ills of the state, their ultimate God would have been a *Ka-Blei (She-God)*. But what we see instead is their absolute *God is U- Blei Nong- Thaw Nong- Boh (The creator or the potter or, designer of creation is the masculine God, U-Blei).\cite{pariat 2014 shillong}* These and many other such silent contradictions mark the cultural space of Meghalaya.

However, what cannot be denied or forgotten is that the Khasis' deep rootedness to the mother or, mei in the form of nature cannot be ignored. This is why a lot of the places in their capital city, Shillong starts with the prefix U which stands for water or, nature like *U-miam, Umsning, Umpling* and so on. Also, the proper names in lines such as the erstwhile, Noghthaw-Mei speak volume that they try to give to Mother Nature. Mother Nature after all is the other form of Mei or, mother.

A Sacred Invocation In The Strife Between Scarred And Scared

No historical or anthropological narrative is considered complete if there is no reference to its folklore. The oral tradition comes up with a fascinating tale of how the temple of Kamakhya came into existence.

King Daksha had organized a grand ceremonial Yajna (fire invocation) and had invited the entire kith and kin, except his youngest daughter, Sati also called as Dakshayani. This was so because Sati had married Shiva, an alien with weird beings as his companions who meditates up in the Himalayas and wears animal skin as his drape. By no means was Shiva the standard civilized son in law and to avoid embarrassment, King Daksha ignored Sati and her husband for the invitation. Sati being the beloved daughter gatecrashed the event and arrived unannounced and uninvited. When asked about the reason for ignoring her and her husband in the grand event and hearing the pejoratives against her husband, Sati self-immolates herself. Hearing the sad turn of events, Shiva starts his tandav nritya with the corpse of Sati flung around his neck. The tandav nritya of the dance of destruction shakes the three worlds as it is a harbinger for destruction. To this Lord Vishnu chips in and saves the imminent destruction. With his 'Sudarshan-Chakra' he wheeled out from his index finger and meticulously dissected the corpse into several parts. The various parts of the land where these parts of Sati's dead body descended are today known as the Shakti Peeth. The uterus fell in the Nilachal Hills of Assam and is known as the Kamakhya Devi. For withstree comes the power of tantra or tantric. And this tantrism is endowed in the temples of Kamakhya Devi, Ugratara etc in Assam. Kamakhya as the name suggests is the Goddess of wish fulfillment (Kamakhya) and Ugratara stands for Ugra (fearful) tara (deity). \cite{mcduie 2007 constraints}

Kamakhya Devi is the temple that gives birth to her children, her *garbha* (uterus) is worshiped. Worshippers claim that during the monsoon season, a red fluid oozes out from the garbha of the Mother, thereafter, for three days the mother is left to rest in the interior of garbha-griha (it is in the shape of uterus) which is shut down from the stressful public gaze which is accentuated in the form of a fair (mela) called the Ambubachi Mela. Scientists rebuff this as a special chemical reaction that happens during the rainy season when the rock particles get eroded with the underneath soil. Kamakhya Devi is the Bleeding Goddess. Here Devi-worship takes center stage. So, all that is considered mainstream is shun here. In tantrism, the practices of giving alcohol, blood, meat (tamasic and rajasic) to Goddesses becomes the center-stage. In this context, the natural ingredients (blood, meat) are taken as Satyam (valid), Shivam (powerful) and Sundaram (beautiful). So, *making Goddess (fertility and sexuality, women) the center-stage becomes the norm. The memoir of the veterans suggests that the Khasis could not but be matrilineal because if we give a closer look to the Khasis we find that in their dialect, 'Ka' refers to She, 'Mei' to Mother and 'Kha' to the process of birth. This they claim is nothing but the Ka+Mei+Kha, the temple Kamakhya which they claim is theirs. Thus, being the devotees of Kamakhya Temple they thought it would only be culturally ethical to put women over men, feminine power over masculine power to give the utmost honor to their temple of worship, the Kamakhya.*

It is spell-binding to rationalize why the youngest daughter, the *Kah-duh*, is the most preferred. To trace this, we must unearth the grand narrative of the past where matrilineality of Meghalaya is traced to Kamakhya Devi Temple who in turn was the Goddess Sati, in her previous form. Goddess Sati, the youngest daughter of King Prajapati Daksh and so, also called Dakshayani had chosen Shiva, as her rightful husband. Dakshayani however faced mental abuses, at the hands of her father, deep enough who left no stone unturned to use disparaging and derogatory remarks against her husband, which led Sati to be a victim of domestic violence. She was provoked to self-immolate. Sati's narrative comes to the center-stage when it is about gender and violence. That Meghalaya traced their genealogy to Goddess Kamakhya and in turn to Goddess Sati, is a clear expression that Kah-Duh or, the youngest daughter will be duly blessed in this life. That Sati, the youngest daughter of Daksha was abused and tortured in her past life, all the Kah-Duh or, the Dakshiyani will be blessed in this life in the state of Meghalaya. So, Kah-duh is rightly the inheritor of properties.

If Meghalaya is matrilineal, why is it that their absolute god is a male '*U(he) Blei(God) Nongbuh Nongthaw(creator)*' and not a '*Ka (female) Blei(God)*'? *The Khasis stand of Khublei (thank you) is Kh(others)+Ublei(masculine God) meaning I thank You who is God-like.* The husbands of the Khasi ladies so-addressed need not be taken as something new. If we flip through the pages of our ancient culture, we come across names of Shiva as *Uma-Mahesh* and *Vishnu as Lakshmi-Narayan* which connote the idea of 'husbands of the goddess'. The question here is does this act of taking the mothers' surnames amongst the Khasi children a similar token of respect shown towards the female lot? Or, is the real picture far from the truth? \cite{ruskan1993emotional}

It is here that I come to the second part of domestic violence (external, or, visible). A state as envied or celebrated for being matrilineal is not far from being full proof against violence. It is a starkling revelation that a state where women are equally empowered or maybe even more than their male counterparts too are not left out from this common destiny of second-sex from their male counterparts. It is not only grim but alarming too that a state, as advanced with women's rights and powers as compared to the rest of the states, whispers a narrative that is largely unspoken or unheard. This lesser known narrative is the story from the other side where women

are actually not the ones who are the real boss as made out to be. Women in Meghalaya end up being a shadow of their male's decisions as most of the property talks are dealt in by the maternal uncle, a male. In this context, let us elucidate the violence meted out on the women of Meghalaya to feed a complete picture of this matrilineal state.

According to the Domestic Violence Act 2005, Domestic Violence means violence which cause harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse Domestic Violence includes violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and manifested through Physical Abuse-Such as slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon and murder. It also includes traditional practices harmful to women such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of a widow and her property, to her dead husband's brother).

Sexual Abuse-Such as coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others Psychological Abuse-which includes behavior that is intended to intimidate or persecute, and take the form threats of abandonment or abuse confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation. Economic Abuse-It include acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment. The kind of abuses detailed and discussed and the factors leading to domestic violence has been taken from A study on the Physical and Psychological Effects of Women Facing Domestic Violence. \cite{diengdoh2017study}

Even though the Khasi community is a matrilineal society, the women folk are not as privileged as a fellow woman from the non-matrilineal clan would enviously assume them to be. The women are barred from participating in the decision-making of the local governing institution (the Dorbar Shnong). This local governance is executed under the orders of the locality head-man called the Rangbah Shnong. Authority and power rests with the maternal uncle and the 'Ka-Duhh'(youngest daughter) acts only as the custodian. But though women have the right to property, it does not necessarily mean they are always better off. Traditional burdens like child rearing are still there and ills of a patriarchal society like domestic violence remain prevalent.

Although the term "feminism" is a Western import, the concept of "debate" on women is an old one and has its origin rooted in the soil of Asia. In this context, let me share a following verse from Manusmriti:

yatra nāryastu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ|
yatraitāstu na pūjyante sarvāstrāphalāḥ kriyāḥ Manusmriti,verse 56
The divine rejoice where women are respected ;where they are not, all actions (projects) are fruitless.
\cite{patwari2011status}

Will Durant lets us know Women enjoyed far greater freedom in the Vedic period than in later India. She had more to say in the choice of her mate than the forms of marriage might suggest. She appeared freely at feasts and dances, and joined with men in religious sacrifice. She could study, and like Gargi, engage in philosophical disputation. If she was left a widow there were no restrictions upon her remarriage. Although at a post Vedic era women's position deteriorated much also with the strong belief of the day that only a male heir could save his parents from the cycle of rebirth. Since a daughter left her parental home after marriage, it was the son who was left with the responsibility of caring for parents in their old age.

\paragraph{ }

This added further value to the sons. In the context of Meghalaya, in spite of being matrilineal and a privileged position than most of the other states of India, it too is not a haven for women. Cases of divorce as per the census of 2011 is second highest in Meghalaya only after Mizoram in the seven sister club. Cases of domestic violence are exploding with every passing day. As per the recent statistics, every third woman of Meghalaya is abused. The factors behind such large cases of domestic violence are attributed to the following: a) Substance Abuse by the husband; b) Broken families of the husband; c) Disturbed childhood; d) Unemployment; e) Marital problem and Adjustment can be some of the stark reasons.

Way Out:

The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) was constituted on 15th October, 2004, extending its jurisdiction to the whole state of Meghalaya, with an objective to improve the status of women and investigate violation of safeguards for women. It can examine all matters related to violation of the provisions of the Constitution of India and other laws enacted to protect women, such as distinction and exclusion made on the basis of sex, infringement of any right or benefit conferred on women, deprivation of constitutional or human rights, and physical torture or sexual excesses on women including adolescent girls and female children. Further, it seeks to achieve the objective of equality and evaluate the progress of advancement of women in the

state. [12] In a gesture of concern for the problem of crimes against women, the commission has organized programmes for medical officers and police personnel in different districts of the state. In a recent one-day orientation programme on gender sensitization, professionals from relevant departments, such as police, lawyers, government doctors and social workers deliberated on this important topic. However, the issue is a rather complex one which cannot be solved overnight, but requires a concerted effort by every conscious and concerned citizen over a period of time.

II. Conclusion

It is thought-provoking to reflect that if the Shiv Linga (phallus) is worshipped across gender as a pious and devotional form of divine energy, why is there then a discrimination or, abhorration towards the worship of the womb (uterus) of Mother Kamakhya? This despise is largely felt not only from the males alone but also from the females too. This is not surprising then that the fable of the bleeding Goddess to the bleeding hearts remains obscure. To end on an open-ended note does the concept of Stree-Shakti actually evoke power? The sacred journey of every woman in Meghalaya begins with scarred and scared but ends up being spiritual and holy in nature. This is so because in their destiny of shared belongingness, the women, the victims share the similar destiny of the other, and ceases to see the other woman as 'the alien' or 'the other'.

The women see each other as an extension from the womb of Mei and as such they are all daughters of the grand womb. Their journey of victimhood becomes a journey to be reckoned with celebration and applause. They rise for they have fallen, they smile for they have cried, they comfort the tribe of sisterhood for they know what it is to undergo pain. In this process, they emerge from a raw scared to scarred girl to a sacred woman for in the process they have imbibed the values of love, care, sympathy, tenderness, warmth and taking it further, to empathy and forgiveness. These values become the solid ingredients of their performatory acts, they truly emerge as the warriors, bold but devout; outstanding but humble; courageous but prayerful. In the 'other', they found the 'self'; in the individual struggle, they realize the collective victory. Their expedition truly becomes blessed and spiritual. They have indeed embarked on a sacred voyage.

References

- [1]. [De BeauvoirDe Beauvoir2010] De Beauvoir, S. (2010). *The second sex*. Knopf.
- [2]. [DiengdohDiengdoh2017] Diengdoh, N. (2017). *Study on the Physical and Psychological Effects of Women facing Domestic Violence East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya, Shillong*. Ph. D. thesis, Assam Bon Bosco University.
- [3]. [EichrodtEichrodt1961] Eichrodt, W. (1961). *Theology of the Old Testament, Volume One*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- [4]. [McDuie-RaMcDuie-Ra2007] McDuie-Ra, D. (2007). *The constraints on civil society beyond the state: Gender-based insecurity in meghalaya, india*. *Volutas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 18 (4), 359–384.
- [5]. [MiriMiri1988] Miri, S. (1988). *Khasi world-view: A conceptual exploration*.
- [6]. [MyrthongMyrthong2004] Myrthong, R. G. (2004). *Ka pyrthei (world) and kameiramew (mother earth) in traditional Khasi thought*. Ph. D. thesis.
- [7]. [NongsiejNongsiej2002] Nongsiej, T. (2002). *Khasi Cultural Theology:(tribal Theology)*. ISPCK.
- [8]. [PARIATPARIAT2014] PARIAT, A. (2014). *Shillong shining: The efforts of a new crop of young writers in meghalaya are sowing the seeds of what can be called a "shillong canon"*. *Economic and Political Weekly* 49 (6), 99–100.
- [9]. [PatwariPatwari2011] Patwari, H. N. (2011). *The status of women as depicted by manu in manusmriti. Nirmukta: Promoting Science, Free Thought and Secular Humanism in India*
- [10]. [RuskanRuskan1993] Ruskan, J. (1993). *Emotional Clearing: Releasing Negative Feelings and Awakening Unconditional Happiness*. Rider.