

Beyond Human Potence: Transformation of Vilie Through Faith in Easterine Kire's *When the River Sleeps* and *Journey of the Stone*

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Abstract

The intention of the paper is to prove how faith and belief work in human life to achieve peace and harmony in the present world and to move to a higher goal in the journey of spiritual quest, that still holds value in the other world too. The magically realistic folk tales *When the River Sleeps* and *Journey of the Stone* provide intensive knowledge of human ecology and offers cleansing to the mind and soul of the readers. The article aims to bring out the native wisdom and the intense belief of the Angami Nagas through Nagaland writer Easterine Kire's chosen works. In the two novels, human beings attain superhuman qualities just by being humane. Seemingly a mystic folk tale styled plot; the narrative has layered meanings that would teach the essence of human life and survival under impossible conditions. The novels instill faith in the supreme deity and in humanity as well. They are analysed with Vladimir Propp's 'Functions of a Folk Tale', so as to gain deeper understanding of the narrative function. The novels are testimony that Nagaland is more than a land of conflicts and it has a rich and serene culture to be proud of.

Key Words: Spiritual Quest, Faith, Rich Traditional Wisdom and Strong Human Capacities.

Introduction

Dr. Easterine Kire, the conscience keeper of the Naga oral tradition is taking all her best efforts to sustain the oral tradition and take it to the future generations by putting it in print and safeguard it. For this reason she has started a publish house called Barkweaver, that collects and publishes the Naga tales. K. B. Veio Pou, in his book, *Literary and Cultural Traditions of India's Northeast: Naga Writings in English*, notes that she Kire has wanted to **"...encourage collecting folktales as a way to preserve that fast disappearing traditional culture among Nagas..."** (Pou, 2018, P.41) Kire asserts the importance of storytelling in her novel *The Son of the Thundercloud*, by stating that, **"So long as the storytellers are alive, there was hope and compassion in people's heart, and their minds received accepted that."** (Kire, 2016, p.64) When read from the folk traditions of archetypal views, the reading deepens the interpretation from which one gains a wider scope of a literary work more than just being a folk narrative. About seven articles that have been published so far on the novel *When the River Sleeps*; four focuses on analyzing the varied dimensions of the protagonist as a Quest Hero, Archetypal Hero, as a divergent Wedded Mystic and on the Ethno philosophies of the Angami Culture. Three more articles that are read along with other novels of Kire, such as *Sky is My Father* and *Son of the Thundercloud*, concentrate on studying the Eco Critical and the nature bound life of the protagonist.

As any native populace around the globe, the people in the land of Seven Sisters are rich in their ancient wisdom of human life and their ecology. Their knowledge is rooted in their lifestyle and is been imparted to generation after generation orally through tales, fables and customs, with each state and every tribe having their own tradition and varied cultural practices to inculcate those to its people. Nagaland is one such state having high ethnicity ratio to the extent, one can call the state as the king of tribal customs, with its great hornbill festival to its honor. ***“The North East has best been described as Asia in miniature, place where the brown and the yellow races meet and mingle”*** (Hazarika, 2011, p. xlvii) recounts the historian Sanjoy Hazarika in his book, *Strangers of the Mist*. This unique place is a nest for more than 200 tribes who are different from each other in many ways. One of the exciting features of the tribal tradition is their rich oral narratives. Their Folk narratives are profusely ingrained of their communal wisdom from simple form of human kindness and understanding Nature to the extreme of gaining spiritual wisdom which is beyond normal human cognition. The Naga folk lore offers solutions to all the human sufferings from mundane everyday events to higher realm of social and psychological conflicts and the knowledge of supernatural as well. They are great story tellers, and in the contemporary times the authors who meticulously take all the effort to put all the wisdom in print feel that they should be ‘heard’. By this they mean, to listen to the ‘authentic native voices’ that have emerged from the land in the last two decades.

Easterine Kire from Nagaland is one such author who wishes to record the native wisdom through her writings before it vanishes in the globalized space. In an interview to the *Naga Republic*, she insists on the importance of having an authentic representation from an insider. She feels that, ***“We should value and encourage insider perspectives, insider research, insider narratives. I believe that when I write from my heart, my readers receive from their hearts. It is a beautiful connection.”*** (Sentiya, 2018) and it does happen to a large extent with her works, one could feel her writings. They are soaked with natural wisdom which she has sincerely collected in person from previous generations and showcase their rich culture to the global audience and prove that the land is more than insurgencies and political turmoil. Kire in the introduction to her first novel *Sky is my Father*, notes the importance of passing on the wisdom to the next generation by stating that,

“Its people still congregate around evening fires to tell and retell the proud history of their village, passing down these stories to a new generation in much the same way that a more sophisticated nation would bequeath its younger generations with material evidence of a brave, indelible past.” (Kire, 2018, p. xv)

Kire in her interviews states that, the Nagas are underrepresented and misrepresented to the outside world and she strives to portray the real ‘insider perspective’ of her people through her works. In her interview to Namratha Kolachalam, she tells that, ***“I see the role of Naga writers as one of chronicling our history and our socio cultural reality in the form of written literature.”*** (2019) Thus in her novels with folk lore based plot and historical novels as well; Kire magically threads the traditional wisdom to fit into the contemporary times and terms them as “People stories” that which brings out the reality of the Naga realities through native characters and situations.

Interpretation

This paper, worked upon the novels, *When the River Sleeps* and its sequel *Journey of the Stone*, aims to bring out the effects of folk belief on elevating humans to the higher order that the folk tales are devised for. The paper reads the journey of Vilie, the protagonist of both the novels from a normal human, to becoming one with the world of spirits upon having mastered the knowledge of the spiritual world which is beyond common human capacity which needs conscious and tough training. The concern of this paper is to bring out the hard realities behind such transition and the motives of the plot in inculcating wisdom to the contemporary society that has to be adhered to and carried forward to the future generation for their well being. Kire in every possible way wants to instill faith in humanity and God and directs the readers towards leading a wise life. ***“Teach them faith. Teach them the way of love. Nothing protects you as well as love. Nothing puts you in danger as easily as hatred and jealousy.” (Kire, 2021, p. 182)*** these are the parting advice of Vilie to his foster daughter Ate, just before his soul becomes one with in the spirit world.

As Babli Mallick observers in an interview with Kire, that she is the treasure keeper and rejuvenator of the Naga oral tradition. The structuring of the fiction preserves the folk narratives and its ***“values that are eternal” (2015)***, as Kire implores during the book launch of *Journey of the Stone*. The novels explore the range of human possibilities and informs the readers, how well to overcome a difficult conditions with courage, patience and utmost faith in the creator deity as well as with oneself. Both the novels speak about these life lessons and impart them through the protagonist Vile, in an interesting way that the readers will feel that they are virtually travelling along with him and are imbibing the wisdom in person from him. This proves that the motive of the folk tale is effectively carried out by the efficient narration and treatment of the plot; i.e. to teach the essence of life- acquiring eternal wisdom.

Vilie, the 48 year old lone hunter, and the guardian of the forest area in Zeliang, constantly dreams of catching a river while it is asleep and taking the heart stone from it. This dream is recurring to him every month for the past two years. Having spent many sleepless nights, he is fascinated by the charm of the river and wants to plunge on the journey of ‘catching’ it to find its treasure. Thus starts his peregrination and he chances upon diverse encounters of men and spirits; both good and bad, that teaches and strengthen the faith in him and in God. Vilie could well be defined as a symbol, a representation of what humans can achieve by following the path of faith with knowledge. The finding of heart stone in itself is an act of knowing and utilizing his inner strength and probation of his faith which turns true. When he sets off on his journey, Vilie did not completely believe in the magic of the stone. Yet he is sure that it could provide its owner, more than material wishes and should be used to gain spiritual knowledge.

“When the river is asleep, it is completely still. Yet the enchantment of those minutes or hours when it sleeps is so powerful, that it turns the stones in the middle of the riverbed into a charm. ... it is empowered to grant you.... Cattle, women, prowess in war, or success in the hunt. ... That way you can make its magic yours. The retrieved stone is a powerful charm called heart - stone.” (Kire, 2015, p.03)

The journey of acquiring the heart stone is not an easy task as such. Vilie comes across various troubles before he finds the mythical river and also on his way back home, after retrieving the stone. The stone is an object of contention and many men, and even spirits wish to possess it for its innumerable powers. Vilie’s journey has become doable only because of the faith

he had in *Kepenuopfu*, the creator deity. He could also make through it by the knowledge of nature he has acquired as a responsible hunter and by being considerate and respectful towards all forms of life. These are traditional instructions learnt by every young lad growing in the community dorm or what they call as 'age group houses', and Vilie adheres to it meticulously.

His entire travel is through the dense forests and on the second night Vilie encounters a were tiger (tiger with soul of a man) while resting in a shelter. The moment when he realized it is a were tiger, as the tiger returned even after being threatened by his gun shot, he immediately pronounced the words of his village men who has become were tigers with the utmost belief that the person within the soul of the tiger is tend to listen to and will heed his words. **"Kuovi! Menuolhoulie! Wetsho! Is this the way you treat your clansman. ... I am not here to do you harm. Why are you treating me as a stranger? I come in peace. You owe me hospitality. I am your guest."** (*ibid*, p.26) When Vilie uttered these words with faith, the tiger retreated surrendering to his words without failing his faith.

This is not just one instance that Vilie has used his faith in spirits and in *Kepenuopfuto* save his life and move forward in the journey. He is been tested time and again emotionally and physically during his trek to prove himself worthy of possessing the much coveted heart stone. On his escape from witnessing a murder of a hunting team, Vilie is been wounded by a missed bullet and he has to stay in *Rarhuria*, unclean forest, for three days. The unclean forest is a man forbidden, spirit infested place; where usually people and hunters avoid going through and would rather circumvent it to reach the adjourning villages. It is believed that persons who are afflicted with spirit sightings usually die or cannot lead a normal life. They will be gone once crossed over. But Vilie with his knowledge of how to handle the spirits and faith of overpowering them; could easily spend the nights in the forest. The village seer has advised him that one has to prove that his spirit is greater than that of the confronted. When he started his journey, his neighbor Krishna said, **"...the forest is dangerous to those who don't know it, but it can be kind to those who befriend it."** (*ibid*, p. 20) Thus he is also well informed psychologically to tackle alone the difficult terrains of the forest.

For Vilie, he has not only befriended it, but has accepted the forest as his wife. As a result, he could make a comfortable stay in the *Rarhuria* till his body gained strength for further trek after the murder encounter. To his surprise, Vilie found his stay in the unclean forest to be safe and soothing. He feels that, **"The forest was his wife indeed: providing him with sanctuary when he needed it... the forest has also protected him from the evil in the heart of man. He felt truly wedded to her at this moment."** (*ibid*, p. 51) It is with great courage and patience that Vilie has managed to come out of *Rarhuria*, unharmed and giving his mind and body much need rest. When he returns to the same place for the second time, the fear for the unclean forest eludes him. While seeing an image of beautiful female spirit on the pool, he remembers that there are many other creatures that have made the forest their home. Recollecting his mother's words he promptly thanked them before taking firewood and water for cooking. This is what makes Vilie distinct, being grateful to Nature and truthful to conscience.

His second stay in *Rarhuria* is not smooth as the early one, as Vilie wakes up startling and paralyzed from a dream only to find a real dark spirit sitting on him and making him immovable. Though his speech has stuck him in his throat, he is well aware that spirits could read thoughts and sent the thoughts purporting that, **"Mine is the greater spirit! I will never submit to you!"**,

(ibid, p. 83) as per the teachings of the seer. He knows well that the spirits will succumb to the authority of another spirit if asserted earnestly. Here, it an act of courage by making one's heart big and exercise what is right without harming the other. Vilie knows well that he has done the right thing and emerges out unharmed from the place. He continues his journey and reaches the Border Village, from where he will find the track of the sleeping river. He becomes the guest of fisherman Kani and he helps Vilie to catch the stone from the river.

Kani and his wife Subale, tryto impart all the knowledge that they know to attain the heart stone and to protect it. Their teachings are nothing but being truthful to one's conscience and simple in life with belief in God and humanity.They told him the importance having a clear heart and their teachings suggest that all the power of man is within him. They inform Vilie that,

“Only men with a definite purpose have come here.... There is no room for fear. If you harbor fear, you are a dead man. ... Any evil action of yours will weigh on your conscience. ... So your protection is your own good heart and your clear conscience. Harbor no evil against any man when you are going on this trip.” (ibid, p.92,93)

Thus armored mentally with 'knowledge', they reach the river and wait patiently for it to sleep. ***“Wait until you are more than ready, to be half ready is not enough.” (ibid. p 98)*** told Kani. At the prompt moment when the river has become still, Vilie plunged and caught the river stone. Emerging out victorious has not been an easy task as the river itself is a spirit and has started flowing pushing Vilie down as has happened in his dream. But he fights with courage and faith by making his spirit larger than that of the river. This is the only way that Vilie could come out of the grip of the spirits; by asserting that his spirit is grater, in the name of *Kepenuopfu*. With this he could even deny death by fighting it hard with supreme faith and he really is rewarded every time and comes out unharmed,enriching his strength with each encounter. Vilie safely comes out of the river by uttering, ***“Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, stand aside death. Kepenuopfu fights for me, ... to him who has the greater spirit belongs the stone.” (ibid, p. 103)***

On his way back after retrieving the stone and gaining many practical wisdom from the journey, Vilie feels to be a renewed person who has come across so much in a fortnight's time. The difficulties that Vilie has faced on his onward journey are for testing his capabilities and his faith and courage for possessing the stone. On his return too Vilie encounters different set of situations that will rather prove that the heart stone is just a symbol of bounty and power, but the real power lies within the heart of the man and it has nothing to do with the physical possession of the stone.In the novels, Vilie never uses the stone for himself and doesn't keep it for a long time, not even for a whole week. The stone becomes a symbol or representation for the attainment of higher spiritual human goals by cleansing the soul. The journey of retrieving it is, only an opportunity for training the mind and body for attaining the higher path of life, i.e. absorbing and becoming one with the ways of nature and the Creator.

The incidents that happen during Vilie's return pave way for such enlightenment, and become the base for the sequel, *Journey of the Stone*. On his return, Vilie is under gullible condition as men, and spirits in the form of men, easily target him to snatch away the heart stone from him. But Vilie carefully avoids them with help of his consciousness and abiding by the teachings of the seer and knowledge, he has presently gained from Kani and the old man who was his host. The old man has suggested him ways, not to get deceived by earthly things. Vilie

remembers his words that ***“Do not be deceived and do not let your heart deceive you either.”*** (*ibid*, p.125) and his best advice to always take the left at the crossroads and these aid Vilie in saving Ate from death. The purpose of Vilie’s life is ***“... to rescue those who are blinded and deceived.”*** (*Kire, 2021, p.21*) says the seer in *Journey of the Stone*, where Vilie becomes half-spirit and half -man after being stabbed by a stranger while trying to steal the heart stone from Vilie. Though the seer insists him on saving the deceived men as his purpose of being a spirit after his death; Vilie by his immanent nature during his lifetime itself is helpful towards his fellow men and tries hard to elevate them for betterment.

On his return from the border village, Vilie unknowingly enters the village of *Kirhupfumia*; but it becomes a turning point, as he is tested by the dark spirits and recovers Ate from the tag of being a ‘*Kirhupfumia*’ and from her death as well. He gives her a new leash of life literally and becomes her foster father and share strong bond with her. He doesn’t even care to protect the stone while trying to save Ate from deadly clutches of a spirit tiger. *Kirhupfumia* are considered to have powers that could evoke harm on humans and they are outcaste in a community. Ate and Zote are sisters who are considered to be *Kirhupfumia* and they live in a secluded village. Though Zote has powers to harm people, Ate, in actuality is a normal woman who is only made to believe that she is a *Kirhupfumia*. Vilie helps Ate to realize this and takes her with him after Zote’s horrible death as she has invoked the anger of ancestor spirits while taking revenge on the village that has secluded and ill treated her. Zote abducts the stone from Vilie to get power to wreck havoc, but in reality it is not the stone but the inherent vengeance in Zote’s heart that has made her spew anger on the village. ***“She did not have an ounce of compassion that her sister had for her fellow creatures.”*** (*Kire, 2015, p. 150*) Ate concludes on her sister’s death that, it is not the stone that gave power to destruction but Zote’s own cruel heart that has made it. Vilie advises Ate to come with him making her understand that she is fit for a normal life. He explains Ate that,

“If you accept what others say about you, you will always remain weak. You are what you believe you are and what’s more, you are meant to be more than what you are. Do you see that for yourself now? Does the heart stone give you the power to understand that?” (*ibid*, p.138)

But Ate is still doubtful as she has loved her sister more than anything in this world and she feels to be a part of her which is not true and Vilie proves it and makes Ate believe that, “No, you are not twin -souled though you were sisters. ***“... It was unthinkable that this wicked figure could be sister to the gentle creature beside him...”*** (*ibid*, p. 160, 156)

Ate having been convinced by Vilie’s words, moves with him to his village. Ate almost faces death on their way when a spirit tiger pounces on her and severely wounds her. Vilie destroys it with great effort and with the help of heart stone, bringing Ate back to life. When the darkness shrouded and the spirits screamed at Ate, Vilie lost his sense and aims at the white spirit tiger with his gun. The next moment he understands that it is a spirit and faces it by shouting the name, *Kepenuopfu Zanu tsie latalie!*, at the top of his voice with deep faith repeatedly without fear, until the tiger dissolves in the air. He is calling the creator deity for help as informed by the Kani and he remembers the seer’s teaching that ***“Sometimes the struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers which you would be quite foolish to defy with gunpowder.”*** (*ibid*, p. 189) By now he knows well and believes completely in the strength of

words and thoughts and how to handle the supernatural without fear, as fear becomes the greatest enemy of man in knowing the spiritual world. With all his knowledge and earnest effort Vilie fights back death for Ate. ***“It was not your time to die. It was the spirit-tiger forcing death upon you.”*** (*ibid*, p. 199) Such is the power of belief, by which he overcomes every obstacle on his way attain the real spiritual knowledge.

Vilie, before leaving Ate in his old aunt’s home, he gives the heart stone for the safety of Ate. She is overwhelmed by this gesture as she is fully aware of the troubles that Vilie has faced to get the stone. “She understood he was gifting her life.” Ate says to her husband later that, ***“Well, he was not my biological father, but he was the greatest life-giving source I ever know.”*** (*ibid*, p. 223,237) When Vilie comes to his forest shelter, he is confronted by a stranger who stabs him to near death to possess the stone from him. The plot is carried forward in the sequel where, fortunately a spirit tiger from nowhere pounces on the man killing him instantly. For Vilie is meant for more, tries hard to deny death. But as the time to deny death is crossed over and Vilie’s body has taken irrevocable injuries, Vilie becomes part spirit and part man; with power to transform to his human self only when in need to protect people in danger. When Vilie implores about his inconsistent condition, the seer advises him to be in the form of spirit and asks him to impart all his knowledge he has learned in the journey to the right ones before he could leave the world totally. He guides him with words, ***“No life is purposeless. But many lives are lived without fulfilling their purpose.”*** (*Kire, 2021, p.17*) Thus Vilie traverses to the other world to find out its mysteries and it is fascinating for him to know that, it is just faith that rules them.

Though the seer pronounces the ‘purpose’ of Vilie’s life only after his transformation; he has been doing such help from the moment he acquired the stone and even before that too. He is always helpful to fellow people even as a common man and is considerate about all the species. It becomes evident from many things that he does towards his community. As a hunter he is inclined to make an additional room in his house for the travelers to rest. As every other sensible Angami practices, he also leaves food materials and utensils for the travelers to cook their meal. Vilie takes care to repair the shed of a stranger, where he stayed for a night, as it has been damaged by the were tiger. His responsibility towards man and nature as well is stunning when he raises concern to a hunting party whose camp fire mistakenly becomes a forest fire in a blunder act. He saves them but informs them that, ***“We all are responsible for each other’s lands. That fire can cause destruction that would take years to repair. ...the fire was so unnecessary. ... it would take much longer for animals to find food in the area again.”*** (*ibid*, p. 65) Such is his responsibility as a guardian of the forest and as a spirit to save humans from destruction.

The parting words of Vilie to Ate shows the essence of his wisdom. ***“The heart-stone is in my heart. I have its knowledge carved into my heart, and no one can steal it from there.”*** (*Kire, 2015, p.223*) So it is the experience that one gathers while seeking the stone is the knowledge, which has to be passed on. Once when he becomes a spirit, he gets totally different experiences from their world. He travels again to all the places like the *Rarhuria*, the river, to the widowed spirits’ village and to the village of *Kirhupfumia*, to find out the meanings that lie behind their life. Even in the form of spirit, when he faces a danger from a fellow spirit, he uses the name of *Kepenuopfu* with the same faith when he has used while being a man. Usually, once a man becomes a spirit, he leaves everything from his human life and transforms completely; but Vilie

still lingers in his previous form as he is part spirit and even at times yearns to become human and be in the company in his early days of transition. Vilie feels that,

“I am still me. When I lived my body, there were people I loved and cared for. That has not changed for me. I took care to honour the creator-Deity. I still do. I am still me. Perhaps I am more myself than I ever was.” (Kire, 2021, p.51)

As a spirit he learns that, whatever is the change, it should come from within. Though he sees the widowed spirits observing various *Genna* days to attain salvation, he understands that, ***“There was no possibility of redemption for those who had crossed over.” (ibid, p.86)*** there is a limit to human sin that could possibly salve itself.

“Once the spirit (soul) is damaged by human (physical being) vileness, there is little to be done to mend it. No number of rituals can change the heart. It is the heart that has to change. Not the person outside. The heart has to learn kindness.” (ibid, p. 106)

Thus Vilie slowly understands the ways of spirit and gets acquainted with his new self. In the state of spirit, he saves two boys from the river spirits and teaches them dangers of ignorance and asks them to listen carefully before plunging into any act, particularly before travelling and serves his purpose. When his changing of physical self to save people becomes too tedious for him, he once for all finally departs his flesh as to become one with the spirits. Before that he passes his knowledge to Roko, the village boy whom he adores. He chooses Roko because he is accessible to learning; open to teachings and is the right one as his soul is teachable and is ready to receive.

Vilie finally has become a free spirit having given all that he has to Roko and Ate, with a hope that they will further pass it on to others. It strikes him that when one completes the given job destined to them, they have to move on. He contemplates that, now his place is only with the world of spirits. Because as a guardian of the forest and as a part spirit, he has done whatever he could do to save people from deception and to elevate them to a safe place; be it Roko, Ate or the boy Puse whom he saved from the young river spirits. He has helped humanity more than what his capacity would allow. By this he has gone beyond human agencies to save and impart knowledge to his people. When he feels done, Vilie ruminates that many other will take over his place to continue this job and it is his time to leave his body and join with the spirits in the right place. ***“My place does not miss me. It never will because where I am is my place. I am finally in my place now.” (ibid, p.189)***

The Journey of the ‘Stone’ - metaphorically represents the journey of the heart of man. He is killed for the stone, but raises in a different form to spread its real knowledge. It is symbolic like that of a rolling stone, the community wisdom and learning that has been acquired by various experiences should get passed on without getting stagnant in a place. It also suggests that one should move on the course of life, striving to find truth and not just accepting what is being said. Through the novels, Vilie becomes a representative of knowledge dissemination and an epitome of human fineness and strength. He goes in pursuit of his dream and learns life and its essence of ‘being’ and also meticulously transfers it to others. He proves what humanity and good thought could do to people. As it is a psychological process, one doesn’t find any clue to where exactly the stone has gone from Vilie’s forest residence. It just becomes a symbol, with its utility

and power transferred to men's heart. Those who do not know how to protect and control their heart are lost as of the heart-stone that is represented.

As the novels are based on the Naga folklore of a quest hero going in search of knowledge, it can be analysed under Vladimir Propp's functions of folk tale. Propp in his book *The Morphology of the Folktale* gives 31 functions, or basic structure selecting in chronology, from which any folk lore is built upon. For Kire's novels the structures can be read selecting in chronology from functions, 01,11,12,14,15 and 21. To explain as stated by Peter Barry in his *Beginning Theory*:

01 & 11- One of the members of the family absents himself from home and leaves home.

12- The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper

14- The hero acquires the use of a magical agent

15- The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search.

and 21 – The hero is pursued. (Barry: 2011, p.219)

Vilie goes through all the mentioned phases, and the plot proves to be of folk nature in its every aspect. To read Vilie along these functions would be apt as he possesses every quality mentioned that is devised by Propp. To begin with; the hero leaves home- Vilie leaves his native village home and his forest home as well, to go in search of his dream. On his way he is brutally tested, interrogated, attacked under various circumstances which prepare him to receive the magical knowledge, that is nothing but being faithful, courageous and concerned to all. He is tested many times by various different elements on his onward and return journey as well, as discussed earlier. His belief and usage of knowledge is questioned with the attack of were tiger, river spirits, deception and finally with the grand fight with spirit tiger to save Ate. He gives a tough fight with extreme belief in God as well as in the stone. The following words by Vilie while fighting for Ate's life show how hard it is for a human to resist the evil spirit and achieve goodness:

“He made his heart strong and with his hands he mentioned as if pushing back the now ear-piercing hiss that surrounded them. He felt his faith being mocked, not tested, but like a ship buffeted by stormy waves, it was being pummelled... But he pushed back and felt a renewed sense of strength... he would go all the way, even die if need be, but he would never submit to their oppression. The battling was vicious, neither side giving in.” (Kire, 2015, p.194)

After such fierce troubles, though Vilie gets the heart stone; 'acquiring magical agent', he actually doesn't use it at all except for the one instance of saving Ate. Even when Zote has taken the stone from him, Vilie never tires to go after the stone leaving the ailing Ate behind. Though it is hard earned one, he knows that human life is more important than mere possession of a stone. He victoriously comes across those testing situations. Soon after providing Ate a new life, he leaves his body because of a murder and turns into half spirit. It is quite a leaping transformation where he really makes the enquiry deeper into the symbolic stone. He is also followed by a fellow

spirit who helps him transform fully into the ways of them. Thus the last two functions are taken in the sequel. That is his spiritual quest, as stone is just a symbol of that.

Conclusion

The novel *When the River Sleeps* poses problems that a human can encounter and through the protagonist, Kire provides solutions. Its sequel though titled *Journey of the Stone*, has nothing to do with the 'stone' as such but it represents journey of the hero and finding the mysteries behind attaining spiritual powers. The real stone is the heart of Vilie that comes over all the difficulties and stays along the spiritual path without getting deceived by worldly things with unwavering spirit.

William Wordsworth in his poem, "The Tables Turned" notes that "One impulse from a vernal wood / Will teach you more of man, / Of moral evil and good, / Than all the sages can." He says that, from nature, one impulsively gets wisdom. And also, the idea of man responsible for his own deeds is also backed in the ancient Tamil literature *Purananooru* by Kaniyan Poongundranar stating that, *Theethum nandrum pirar thara vaara*, which roughly translates to 'good and bad will not be given by others'. Vilie proves that the impulse to act according to the situation is given by the knowledge that is derived from the folk wisdom soaked in the native culture. He takes the responsibility for all his actions. Vilie teaches that one should take the responsibility of being good and teaching good, and to disseminate that knowledge to others. Both the novels are based purely on this concept of knowing and making others know of what lies before one's life and how to handle it faithfully.

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