



Contours of Belonging: Indigenous Narratives of Place and Identity from India's Northeast

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Abstract:

The article highlights that indigenous articulations of home are deeply tied to their unique ontologies and epistemologies. They view home as an interconnected space of emotional, spiritual, and social well-being rather than just a physical structure. This contrasts with the Western perspective, which often separates these aspects. Indigenous narratives emphasise the relational and cultural significance of home. These narratives challenge colonial stereotypes that portray tribal societies as primitive, chaotic, and lacking structure. Instead, they reveal a spiritually rich worldview centred on harmonious coexistence with both physical and spiritual realms. This paper analyses Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* and *Legends of Pensam*, Easterine Kire's *Sky is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered* and Siddhartha Deb's *Surface*. The analysis uses a qualitative and historical approach, focusing on how colonial encounters and postcolonial governance shaped identity and place in Northeast India. This approach calls for an analysis of how indigenous communities have been pushed to the margins through historical processes rather than seeing them as inherently belonging to a liminal space.

Keywords: Home, Identity, Ethno-Spirituality, Indigenous Narratives, Northeast India.