

## **Existence of Weretigers among the Garos and the Khasis of Meghalaya: A Posthuman Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

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The indigenous communities throughout the world have their own socio-cultural ideologies that always promote their indigenous identities against the hegemonic structure of the mainstream society. In the face of complexities in preserving their indigenous cultural values and practices, they try to cling desperately to their belief-system. Their beliefs transcend the hybridization of mainstream society as reflected in the pages of history. Their attempts to separate themselves from the linear path of history further complicate their indigenous existence. The story of their origin and existence may not coincide with the linear hegemonic community, their myths and rituals may seem to be superstitions and their efforts to preserve them may mark them as backward. But, the philosophies behind their existence tend to resist the impositions and onslaughts of the mainstream ideologies. From that light, attempts can be made to mark the members of the indigenous communities as posthuman figures. Donna Haraway's posthuman philosophy points towards the concept of cyborg. The cyborg is not just a half man- half machine. It's the core of posthuman existence - a being of both the worlds. The paper will attempt to understand and analyze the beliefs of the Garo and Khasi tribes of North-East India about weretigers- half man- half tiger beings. The weretiger is also a creature belonging to both the worlds- the civilized and the savage. The aim of this paper will be to analyze the psycho-philosophical approach of the Khasi and Garo community members towards the weretiger myth vis-à-vis Haraway's concept of the cyborg, and thus, examine if the indigenous belief assumes a posthuman tint.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, Myth, Cyborg, Weretiger, Posthuman

## Introduction

North-East India is an enriched part of Indian biodiversity hotspots. It is so from both the ecological and cultural point of views. Majority of the land belonging to the seven sister-states consist of several indigenous communities among other things. The Garos and the Khasis are two significant tribes of the region. The Garos belong to the Tibeto-Burman ethnic and linguistic group (Brighenti 96). Majority of the Garo community members live in the state of Meghalaya centering the Garo Hills (the nerve centre of which is the Garo Hills). But a few of them are also found in the state of Assam and in Bangladesh. Where as the Garos are the second largest tribal population in the state of Meghalaya, the Khasis are the largest. The indigenous community of the Khasis belongs to the Austroasiatic Mon-Khmer ethnic and linguistic family (Lyngdoh 650). This indigenous community is divided into five main subdivisions: the Pnar, the War, the Khyntiam, the Bhoi and the Lyngngam. Majority of the members inhabit the Khasi Hill region in Meghalaya. By sharing the same geographical region, the Khasis and the Garos also share some crucial ethno-cultural values. Both of the tribes faced the negativity of colonial onslaught and post-independence neo-colonial dread. These indigenous communities have ancient heritage that can be traced back to the period of the Aryan invasion during 1000-1500 BCE. They have been referred to as Kiratas in the Indian epic, *Mahabharata* and in *Yajurveda*. Such ancient communities as these, during the colonial period, were threatened by the fear of conversion into Christianity. Many community members have chosen the foreign religion out of anxiety about and dread of the white colonizers. But that never stopped them from preserving and practicing their indigenous religion and rituals. As, during the ancient time, there was a lack of preservation of their socio-cultural beliefs in written format, their ideological values were sidelined. As for the Khasis, it was Thomas Jones, a Presbyterian Christian missionary from Welsh who formulated the first Khasi alphabet from Roman script in 1842 (Nongkynrih vii). It was the power to document in written format that gave the community members the ability to represent their socio-cultural indigeneity in front of the mainstream society. Now, many indigenous writers from the North-East tribal communities are writing about their ideological heritages in English language to universalize their belief systems. Writers and poets like Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao, Desmond Kharmawphlang, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih are composing and translating their myths and folk narratives into English to represent their indigeneity.

The mainstream society, during the colonial and post-colonial period, has tried and is still trying to separate them as the 'other' by alienating them socially and culturally. North-East India has been a center of political turmoil in the Indian post-independence scenario. Majority of the crisis is born out of the reluctance of the mainstream people 'accept' them as fellow beings. As a result, efforts have been made by the indigenous communities to preserve their ethnic values, land

and local resources involving them in a conflict with the government and the local bodies.

The indigenous communities, throughout the world, are being presented and their cultural identities are being thought to be degenerative. We shall find that their stories have a unique value-system that deserves to be understood. From the genesis of their natural surroundings to their development as communities, the stories show a gradual progression. They do not tell stories only about some fictional and mythical characters and events, but also their history. Their histories and day-to-day activities have been represented in a symbolic way through those folk narratives. The Khasi folk narratives highlight their affinity towards their God, U Blei (Nongkynrih 1). The stories focus not only on U Blei, but also on the Khasis' belief-system associated with the liveliness of the ecological surrounding, the community members are part of. Some of the myths tell the story of their relation to the gods and goddesses. Some bring out their long-term affinity towards the animal and plant kingdom. There are some narratives that highlight the importance of the geographical landscapes, such as the mountains, rivers etc., within their respective indigenous locations. The same can be seen in the folk narratives of the Garos. The Garos believe in the existence of the gods and spirits all around them. Their faith in the afterlife influences them to preserve their rituals and the places associated with the rituals. What is more important is that some Garo myths coincide with the myths of the mainstream cultures. Stories of their mythical heroes and heroines, such as the account of Dikki and Giting (Marak 76), have a deep connection with traditional Hindu myth. These motifs show that the cultural heritage of those tribal communities is versatile in perspective. Currently, the world of ideology is shifting from anthropocentrism to biocentrism and the indigenous people are coming at the center of the movement. This movement is also asking for the identity of posthuman. Right now, we are unable to uncover the posthuman identity, but we can still search for posthuman features among the indigenous communities in particular.

### **Transhumanism and Posthumanism:**

Transhumanism is a philosophical and literary movement that focuses on the technological influence on the artificial rendering of evolution of human beings (Cavus 177). The evolution occurs both physically and cognitively. It's a widely understood concept as we are living in the world of constant technological changes and shifting. From medical industry to genetic engineering, transhumanist ideologies have found their ways in every field of human life. Natasha Vita-More, the transhumanist philosopher, known as the mother of transhumanism, has stated that, "the biological human is not the final stage of evolution for the human" (20). Transhumanism aims to unlock the patterns of human evolution artificially, ranging from artificial intelligence to molecular nanotechnology. It was Julius Huxley whose ideology marks the root of transhumanism. Being an evolutionary biologist, he focused on anthropocentric idea of forceful evolution of human beings. He presented the idea that human

beings must “utilize all available knowledge in giving guidance and encouragement to the continuing adventure of human development” (Huxley 287). Transhumanism aims to challenge the humanist limits by embracing reason, science and progress. Julian Huxley’s *Evolutionary Humanism* (1992) focuses on the connection between humanism and transhumanism. From Vita-More to Nick Bostrom, all have argued that implementing technology-based changes on human beings will ensure humanity’s long-time survival in the future. In a simple way, it can be said that artificial evolution is the future, where nanotechnology, molecular manufacturing and genetic engineering can resolve matters like environmental hazards, economic crises, diseases and mortality problems (Cavus 179). But, at the same time philosophers like Nick Bostrom posed a problem of existential risk in transhumanism that can “either annihilate Earth-originating intelligent life or permanently and drastically curtail its potential” (34). That is why Francis Fukuyama, one of the major rivals of transhumanist movement, has asked a very important question regarding the outcome of the technology-based evolution: “If we start transforming ourselves into something superior, what rights will these enhanced creatures claim, and what rights will they possess when compared to those left behind? If some move ahead, can anyone afford not to follow?” (25).

These questions eventually paved the path towards posthumanism, a radical shift from transhumanism and a challenge to humanism. Posthumanism is a sub-field of postmodernism that aims to break the limitations of postmodern aporia. The root of its philosophical origin is connected to philosophers like Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, Althusser and Judith Butler and their criticism towards the aesthetics of humanism (Cavus 180). Posthumanism directly challenges the anthropocentric notions of humanism and fields associated with it, like colonialism, racism and gender issues. Where transhumanism promises evolution of man only, posthumanism gives a new vision of post anthropocentrism. It means looking outward to understand man’s position within nature as its integral part, not outside of it. According to Francesca Ferrando, it is “a newly gained awareness of the limits of previous anthropocentric and humanistic assumptions” (29). Posthumanism challenges the established notion of man’s superiority where man justifies the identities of other natural beings and elements. Donna Haraway has rightly pointed out that, “Man the taxonomic type has become Man the brand” (74).

Posthumanism is often regarded as a critical blow in the face of Anthropocene humanist ideology where the posthumanist philosophers have attempted to root out the cause of ecological problems from anthropocentrism. Validity of man’s central position has been questioned by philosophers like Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles and Rosi Braidotti. They have challenged the existence of duality arising from the western cultures. Being feminist scholars, their main objective was to deconstruct the concepts of gender and racial division rendering them as null. Particularly when we are talking about Rosi Braidotti, it can be said

that she has refused to hide the “power differentials that divide us” (Braidotti 22). These ‘power differentials’ are social barriers which are constantly trying to separate all the living beings within the natural ecosystem based on some artificial anthropocentric hierarchical categorization. This eventually leads to Braidotti’s concept of “ecosophical species equality”, where all species are seen from an equal point of view. Donna Haraway’s ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ (1990) is a solid base for denying the western duality. According to Haraway, a cyborg is being devoid of gender and racial identity, hence it cannot be understood by common social biases. It is a being “imagined to find a way towards equality by eliminating all sorts of problematic dualisms like that of self/other, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man” (Cavus 181). Haraway’s cyborg is a posthuman model to highlight equality in the absence of duality. This absence of duality is eventually leading to ‘Posthuman Ecocriticism’. According to Cary Wolfe, posthumanism is not aiming to reject human beings, but is focusing on recontextualization of human relations with other natural beings promoting the existence of ‘human animals’ (xxv). Thus, posthumanism can be viewed as a tool that can open up close boxes to redefine human existence in terms of other species (Hayles 285).

### **The Garos, the Khasis and the Weretiger**

While analyzing some of the folk tales of the Garos and the Khasis, I have found out that both the indigenous cultures tend to highlight a hybridized existence of man and animal. D. S. Rongmuthu in his compilation of Garo folk tales in *The Folk-tales of the Garos* (1960) has put forward several stories indicating the existence of weretigers as well as other were beasts among the Garo community. In the folk tale “Turning into Animals”, it has been depicted that the Achiks have a faith system which focuses on the transformation of man into any kind of beast: “The Achiks believe that human beings can transform themselves, consciously or unconsciously, into animals, such as tigers, elephants, deer, boars, foxes, wolves, bears, flying squirrels, rats, and so on” (Rongmuthu 112). According to Garo or Achik ritualists, the main force that is responsible for the transformative procedure is a person’s ‘jabirong’ or ‘jachri’ (Rongmuthu 112). This ‘jabirong’ or ‘jachri’ can be regarded as an essence of life that lies within everything- be it a person or an animal. As it is a common thread between all living beings, using this thread a man can enter into any animal form and revert back. According to the Garos, these transformations are triggered by some medication or incantations or mantras. But the transformations themselves can be controlled by will power. A person can remain in his/ her animal form as long he/she likes. In a Khasi folk tale, “The Tale of Iawrit Rakhe of Mawsaw Village”, this kind of metamorphosis into an animal has been highlighted. Iawrit Rakhe could transform herself into a tigress at night and roam the jungle and hunt (Rafy 70). The weretiger is a being sharing both the identities of man and tiger. This myth is similar to the European myth of the werewolf. The myth of weretiger is a well-established belief in the North-Eastern frontier of India. Particularly in the indigenous belief system of the

Garos and the Khasis, weretiger phenomenon is regarded as a ritualistic process allowing the tribesmen to become something else, something beyond our normal understanding. For both Garo and Khasi settlements, tigers were always an issue. They are coexisting with the tigers from the ancient time. This coexistence has made the tigers an inseparable part of their indigenous socio-cultural structures. When we are talking about the state of Meghalaya, 54% of the tigers live in the Garo hills (Brighenti 98). As a result, the encounters between man and tiger were very frequent. From these encounters, the weretiger phenomenon took form. Majority of the stories regarding weretigers, in the Garo community, are found in the oral tradition of *Khatta Agana* (Brighenti 198). A British administrator named A. Playfair has documented the existence of two types of weretigers- 'matchadus' and 'matchamarus' (Brighenti 198). In Garo language, 'matcha' means tiger. As Playfair (1999) and other scholars have translated the oral heroic epics and ballads of *Khatta Agana* in English, some crucial information are available to understand the whole issue. Matchadus are known as a race of savage cannibals living deep inside the forests of Garo hills. According to scholar Rongmuthu, they would be "recognisable by their thick head of hair, sturdy and hirsute body, blackish complexion, nervous gait, and tendency to growl." (Brighenti 100). This notion of man behaving like an animal may be anthropologically and historically plausible. When we are talking about the savage cannibals, it is understandable that their behaviors are being associated with that of wild beasts, hence they are being related to tigers. If we look into folklores of Sema, Sangtam and Konyak Naga tribes, we will notice the same issue as the Naga head-hunters are also associated with leopards, hence leopard-men, for their ferocity (Brighenti 101). There are certain locations in Garo hills and some other parts of the North-East which are known to be the dwelling places of the weretigers. One such place is a large cave in the southeast portion of the Kamrup district in Assam in Landu hill region, known as Matcha-Melaram or the 'Mustering Place of Tigers' (Brighenti 102). What is most fascinating about it is the social structure of this Matchadus-weretiger people. They have a matriarchal hierarchy where they follow the doctrines of the tiger-goddess 'Durokma' or 'Matchama'. Legend says that Durokma lives on the Koasi or Khoasi Hill situated at the northeastern side of the Garo Hill (Brighenti 102). Among the Khasis, also, places are associated deeply with the weretiger myth. According to the Khasi belief, 'Khla Sympih' is the queen of the weretigers just like 'Durokma'. Her abode, according to scholar Dr. Desmond Kharmawphlang, "is described as being treeless and barren, where no stone or metal is found. The picture evoked is almost moonscapic." (Kharmawphlang 168). Garo folk tales like "Awat and the Matchadus", "Jereno, The Orphan", "The Cannibal Demon", present the existence of the matchadus or weretiger among the Garo community (Rongmuthu 97-114).

The myth of cannibal head-hunters doesnot devaluate the psycho-supernatural aura connected to the whole issue of man to beast transformation. According to scholars from North-East, the transformation may occur psychologically or physically. This issue is relevant both among the Garos and the Khasis. To the

Khasis, the whole process of metamorphoses depends on the 'rngiew' or 'essence' or 'spirit' (Kharmawphlang 166). This notion of spirit is associated with the Garo concept of 'janggi' or 'life-soul' (Brighenti 103). According to scholar Desmond Karmawphlang, the transformation from man to tiger occurs in the dream world or 'ramia' when the person is sleeping or within a hypnotic trance. The person's 'rngiew' goes into the body of a jungle dwelling tiger and the man's soul becomes a part of the tiger's body- two souls inside a same body. U Dising Marin, one of the famous tigersmen of the village of Pahamshken, has stated during an interview with Dr. Karmawphlang that after sleep, when a person starts to dream about being a tiger, it means that that person's soul has entered a tiger's body in the jungle – "Dising: At that time when I told you- at the time of sleep, after I have eaten- as soon as the 'rngiew' goes there, I start to roar. Says the mother of my children 'Oh you! Your 'rngiew' has gone that side. You are starting to roar...' (Kharmawphlang 162).

The same experience has been shared by other two tigersmen, U Jodi Makri and U Sarot Maji during interviews with Desmond Kharmawphlang. According to Garo belief-system, these weretigers are known as 'matchapilgipas' (Brighenti 103). Some of the Garos of Meghalaya follow the religious belief of 'Jadoreng' where the practitioners gain the power to transform themselves into any wild beast, especially tigers:

One of the many myths which is still unexplainable is the practice of Jadoreng. Jadoreng is still said to be practiced by some devout Achik (i.e., Garos). Jadoreng means holding the kite by the hand (ja- hand o the human astral body and doreng- kite). The spirit of the man is likened to the kite and, as the kite is attached to the man by an invisible cord, so is the spirit to the body. But just as the kite flies about, so does the spirit of man while still attached to his body. Here in the practice of Jadoreng, the spirit can change and take another physical form. Thus, one's spirit can change into a tiger, a snake or an elephant and roam about at night, while the human form remains in a trance, almost lifeless. But just the way the kite is attached and cannot fly away for good, the transformed animal also comes back as a spirit and re-enters the human body. (Bordoloi 105)

Apart from these psychological/ dream transformations, the common notion of physical transformation is also a very important part of their indigenous belief system. Among the Garos, the process of physical transformation into a tiger is known as 'matchapila' or assuming the form of tiger (Brighenti 105). The Khasis have more elaborate structure regarding physical transformation into weretigers. In Khasi belief, the weretigers are known as 'San saram' or five claws and the real jungle dwelling tigers are known as 'Saw saram' or normal four clawed tigers (Kharmawphlang 162). The tribesmen can see the pug mark on the ground and understand the real identity of a tiger. Dr. Kharmawphlang, during another interview with an informant named Hari Marin, attempted to understand the tiger transformation phenomenon in the Bhoi region. Here he came to know about the

‘phuli’ tigers – “Hari: It means a tiger transformed from a man, who has five fingers and five toes. It is due to this that people when observing the prints can make out whether it is a tiger of the forest which has four fingers leaving four prints, or a phuli-tiger with five, that has passed by” (Kharmawphlang 162).

As per the belief-systems of both Garos and Khasis, not everybody can become a weretiger and can go through the metamorphoses, physically or psychologically. Only few selected persons can have the ability to become tigers and roam free in the jungle at their own whims. Some of the weretigers are even positioned higher than the others because of their innate abilities. One example is U Dising Marin (Kharmawphlang 173). He is often called a ‘lyngdoh’ or a tiger shaman. The tiger shamans are only allowed to enter some hidden sacred places or the sanctum sanctorums. As Dr. Kharmawphlang has found out that U Dising Marin is a ‘Jonglykhum’ or ‘the black tiger’. “The Tale of KohSulin”, a Khasi folk tale, recounts the story of KohSulin, a Khasi village person, who defeated some murderers who were hired to kill him. KohSulin invoked his tiger spirit and caused fear among the fiends (Rafy 75).

#### **Posthumanism in ‘Weretiger’ phenomenon:**

“By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras...” (Haraway 150)

This concept of chimera of Donna Haraway in her “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (1990) has been a driving force behind understanding the hybridized posthuman identities. A chimera is a mythological being from the Greek myths- a lion, goat and serpent hybrid. Haraway and other posthumanist philosophers have argued that though the chimera may be malevolent and deformed in structure, still its unique hybridized identity foreshadows our future posthuman existence. By utilizing the image of chimera, Haraway has tried to address the deformative notion of conflicting identities structured within our human society. The western concept of binary opposition is having a delusionary effect on the human beings. The posthumanist philosophers like Haraway, Hayles and others have attempted to configure a new wholesome structure to avoid the biasness of existence by accepting the merger of duality. Thus, the chimera is not an abomination, but a new future reality we are striving to achieve. Haraway introduced her cyborg theory only to intensify the chimera effect more effectively by infusing the notion of technology in it - “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (149).

The cyborg is the modern-day chimera we are all looking for to ensure our posthuman identity. It is not only a cybernetic organism, but also a being that can challenge and force to reevaluate the definitions of various social divisions within our social structure. It denies the western humanist idea of individualism confined by social restrictions and taboos. As we are moving towards our posthuman future, it is crucial to understand the proper definition of hybridized



identity of being. A posthuman future reflects a unified, hive-like plural existence rather than individual singularity. Not only the social divisions are blurred, the dividing line between man-animal, animate-inanimate, human-nonhuman, human-machine has been blurred as well.

Now, in order to understand the Indian weretiger myth under the light of European model of Posthumanism, we first must understand the universality of indigenous folklores. Folklore as a term has two major meanings- 'a body of materials' and 'separate science' (Kondi 1). The main objective of folklores is to represent the people and their socio-cultural beliefs. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, folklore is "the study of a particular mode of cultural production" (282). To understand the objective of various folklores, they are needed to be analyzed from multiple perspectives. According to Richard Dorson there are four modes of analysis- the comparative, the anthropological, the national and the psychoanalytical (Kondi 2). Among these, the comparative method has been widely used by the folklorist to understand the interconnectedness of various folklores. Finnish historical-geographical method, developed by two folklorists from Finland- Julius Krohn and Kaarle Krohn, has clearly stated that the universality of any folklore lies in its 'urform' or the core and it is what interconnects various folklores (Goldberg 1). The 'urform' forms a kind of hypothetical archetype of a folk narrative. If we can understand the structure and development of the 'urform', the value of the folklore can be revealed and also interpreted. It follows the German school of diffusionism which has stated that folklore can have multiple interpretations regardless of its cultural and geographical origin. As the 'urform' remains the same, the body can be molded using local flavors. The theory of diffusionism has been promoted by German philosopher Friedrich Ratzel in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to understand the growth and movement of folklores. In this light, we can say that folktales travel (Goldberg 2). This travelling nature of folktales is an important factor to understand this paper. We can put the Indian weretiger myth in the same place as the European werewolf myth. Both these myths are deeply rooted in the theory of myth-ritual, a tool of folkloristics (Burns 115). The transformation and the creation of a human-animal hybrid form the core of both these myths. Tanika Michelle Koosmen in her thesis entitled "'Between the City and the Forest': Towards a Posthuman Reading of the Ancient Werewolf" (2022) has stated that werewolves or the man-animal hybrid can be used as a tool to understand the critical posthumanist ideas of Deleuze, Haraway and Braidotti to challenge any binary division in the society (iii). Jennifer K. Cox, in her paper "Symbiotic Werewolves and Cybernetic Anchoresses: Premodern Posthumans in Medieval Literature" (2015) has also interpreted the medieval representations of the werewolf myth as a way to understand the identity of posthumans denying any binary oppositions. Using Haraway's cyborg figure and reinterpreting it to understand the werewolf phenomenon, it can be regarded as a new model to understand the development of posthuman identity (2). My attempt is to use the same theoretical path to

interpret the weretiger myth of the Garos and the Khasis to understand its value as a posthuman device.

Posthumanism attempts to put man inside the circle of nature along with other natural beings and objects, rejecting the western binary opposition. But it is noteworthy to understand that posthumanism will be successful only when man will accept that coexistence. Haraway's cyborg is essentially a symbol of this coexistence. When we are talking about the north-eastern indigeneity and their belief in weretiger, that also can be interpreted as an example of posthuman coexistence. The weretiger is an example of a cross-species. This kind of example of cross-species is not uncommon in world mythology. In Norwegian culture, we have the werebears, in American and East European culture, the werewolves are very famous. In Africa, were hyena myth is prevalent. Even, in Nagaland of north-east India, wereleopard myth is also on the table. According to folklorist Nengminza, weretiger is "an animal holding a middle place between man and tiger" (109). This man and tiger hybrid is another remodel of man and machine hybrid "occupying the liminal space between human and beast" (Brighenti 101). From posthuman point of view, the weretiger denies any limits of existence rendering it as an independent free being outside the known social norms and regulations. Haraway's cyborg is a symbol of challenge to western binary concepts. The world of cyborgs, according to Haraway, is "a world without gender" (150). The image of cyborg is a "way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tolls to ourselves" (Haraway 181). From that point of view, Haraway has tried to highlight the possibility of coexistence of man and animals creating an ecological harmony. In her work, *When Species Meet* (2007), she has demonstrated the stories regarding the multispecies coexistence. Again, in her book, *Staying with the Trouble*, *Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016), Haraway has challenged anthropocentrism "by stressing human's relationship with the earth and other critters on it" (Cavus 183). Her idea was that of the unitary status of existence and interdependency of both humans and other species, "Critters- human and not-become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling..." (Haraway 97). The concept of 'becoming-with' has developed her idea of "Chthulucene", an alternative to humanist concept of "Anthropocentrism" (Cavus 183). The society, based on this motto of coexistence, has become a compostist society. The chthulucene ideology can be rightly appropriated in the context of the weretigers among the Khasis and the Garos. According to Brighenti, the weretigers "sustain the possibility of a mutual awareness between man and beast- a liminal mode of sharing knowledge and experience that could also be called 'cosubjectivity', or, 'copersonhood'" (109). This unitary status is the ultimate motto of the age of Chthulucene which has the ability to create an indigenous compostist society in the North-Eastern tribal lands. In *How We Became Posthuman*(1999), Katherine Hayles has clearly stated that "the construction of the Posthuman does not require the subject to be a literal cyborg...The defining characteristics involve the construction of

subjectivity” (4). This fundamental principle allows us to evaluate any cross-species reference as a Posthuman figure. In medieval texts, the werewolves have represented a kind of symbiotic existence of man and animal in a single body (Cox 91). The same can be applied for the weretigers as well. Pramod K. Nayar and his ‘humanimal’ highlight the “somatic connections and linkages criss-crossing all forms of life” (2). His interpretation of Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling* (2005) promotes this Posthuman crossover being- “neither human nor vampire, both human and vampire” (Nayar 1).

It has been stated earlier that the man-beast coexistence has already supported Haraway’s concepts of cyborg and chthulucene. The Garos and the Khasis, with their tiger transformation beliefs, are trying to reach that level of ecological harmony. It is deeply rooted in their psychological space. The weretiger myth can be analyzed from the psychological perspective of those indigenous people. According to J. Eliot, a late 18th century British Magistrate, “Among the Garrows a madness exists, which they call transformation into a tiger, from the person who is afflicted with this malady walking about like that animal, shunning all society” (42-43). To Eliot, it is a case of dissociative identity disorder where the person who transforms chooses to be a hybrid man-animal being. Sometimes, it is a willing transformation where a person takes some hallucinogen to enter the state of trance living the unitary identity of man and tiger (Brighenti 100). Sigmund Freud has already stated that our mind is divided into three psychological segments- conscious, preconscious and subconscious (Nayar 65). The subconscious mind is the storehouse of our deepest desires which cannot be fulfilled directly otherwise. Those desires can manifold themselves in various forms, such as dreams. This presentation of suppressed desires is known as ‘Freudian slip’ or parapraxes (Nayar 65). Both Freud and Lacan have considered that our unfulfilled desires create lack in us and that lack is responsible for the ‘Freudian slip’. It can take many forms, ranging from dreams to hallucinations to multiple personality disorders (Nayar 67). The weretiger is a representation of manifestation of their inner desire to become one with nature. When we are talking about the Garos and the Khasis, it can be understood that those indigenous people tend to follow an ecocentric lifestyle living harmoniously with nature and all the natural elements creating a kincentric relationship. This is one essential value of ‘Posthuman Ecocriticism’. So, it is quite obvious that they will try to use multiple modes of connection to find that unitary status with nature. The tiger transformation phenomenon gives them the ability to bridge the gap between the seemingly two separate worlds of man and nature supporting Haraway’s process of ‘becoming-with’. The indigenous people follow the religion of geopiety. Geopiety refers to the worshipping of nature by directly connecting ourselves to natural elements where even a rock becomes an important part of our existence. That belief is too strong within the Khasi and the Garo community. Desmond Kharmawphlang, during his interview with Sarot Maji, asked him:

Question: "What is the reason for turning into tigers?"

Maji: "For the reason of clinging, holding."

Question: "Clinging to what?"

Maji: "To religion." (Lyngdoh 656)

Haraway's posthuman concept promotes the religion of tribal geopiety where man coexists with nature. Thus, the weretiger becomes a symbol of Chthulucene, a human-animal being of Haraway's compostist society.

### Conclusion

To be precise, it can be said that man-animal hybridization in various cultures have the ability to fill in the gap that human beings have created in the name of civilization and development. But the real question is that if the process of filling in can make us posthuman figures. We have already discussed that posthumanism has sprang up from postmodernism as a reaction to the quest of identity of man and man's future existence; and that future depends on man's hybridized existence with the natural elements around him/her. The indigenous people have managed to maintain this connection from the ancient time. But, can they take this connection to the future as well, continuing their heritage? On the answer to the particular question depends the relation between indigeneity and posthumanism. The whole issue of weretiger as a posthuman feature is depending on the continuity of the rituals among the tribesmen of North-East. If the future generations manage to cling to their ancestral heritage and belief, it can sustain the posthumanistic value within it.

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