

**THE PARADOX OF TRADITION: EXPLORING THE BLESSINGS AND
CURSES OF TRADITION FOR WOMEN IN AKHA CULTURE WITH
REFERENCE TO LISA SEE'S *THE TEA GIRL OF HUMMINGBIRD LANE***

Dissertation

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **The Paradox of Tradition: Exploring the Blessings and Curses of Tradition for Women in Akha Culture with Reference to Lisa See's *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*** is a bonafide record of research done by **Aiswarya T J** (Register Number AIAWMEG002), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Introduction

Literature is an amalgam of everything, it includes everything that we see around all over the globe and it has no limitations and hence, it always keeps on growing. Literature can be considered as a canvas on which everything around the world is painted using beautiful colours of imagination, themes, characters etc. People consider literature as a tool to express their thoughts, opinions, their perspectives, their motives etc and hence literature proved to be valuable and useful art through which people can learn, grow and reach on to their success in life. So we can undoubtedly say that there is no better thing than literature where topics including human beings, animals, society, technology, nature etc and all can be brought under an umbrella. Through literature we can learn about many things, like, we can learn about different people from all around the globe, their culture, their tradition and their entire way of life. And through all this we will learn about various cultures, its pros and cons, its relevance and also through that we will learn a lot about differences, gender, patriarchy, feminism etc. *The Tea Girl Of Hummingbird Lane* written by Lisa See is a good example to prove this because it is a novel that discusses the life of an ethnic minority called Akha, a tribe from China and the novel clearly shows how culture, traditions and also the patriarchal ideas affects the life of the Akha women who is both benefited as well as twisted by their culture and its traditions and also how the arrival of modern world and education led them to progress and self-discovery and hence to their own world of freedom and choices breaking all their traditions and all the patriarchal ideas.

In order to prove all this, I have divided the chapters into five, the first chapter is the introduction, where details about the book, author, theory etc are discussed. The

second chapter is titled as tradition as an evil in the life of Akha women and this chapter highlights the negative impacts of tradition in the life of Akha women. The

third chapter is titled as tradition as a blessing in the life of Akha women and in this chapter the positive sides of tradition which appears as a support in the life of Akha women is explained. The fourth chapter is titled as the emergence of modern world and the self-discovery of Akha women and in this chapter the impact of modern world in the life of Akha women which led them to self-discovery is discussed. And the final chapter, the fifth chapter, is the conclusion which is the sum up of all the topics discussed and also further scope of study and research on those topics are also mentioned. So, through this project my aim is to show the dual face of tradition in the life of Akha women and how they find their identity by breaking chains of tradition through modernization.

Lisa See is an American writer and novelist. Her novel *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* discusses how tradition can become a villain as well as hero in someone's life. Lisa See was born on 18th February, 1955 in Paris, France. Lisa is part Chinese, she says. Her great -great grandfather went to China to work and she says he was a god father or patriarch of Los Angeles Chinatown. She doesn't look like Chinese people with their special features, but she grew up in a very big Chinese family. From her childhood onwards she was fond of China and its culture. And this had a great impact on her literary works. She has written works for China and has also led in many cultural events intended to emphasise importance of Chinatown and Los Angeles .

Her famous works are *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (2005), *Peony in Love* (2007) and *Shanghai girls* (2009). *Shanghai girls* was included in the 2010 New York times bestseller list. And both *Shanghai girls* and *Snow flowers and the secret fan*

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received awards like the Asian /Pacific American awards for literature. Lisa see has received awards like the Golden Spike award from the Chinese Historical Association of South California. She was also titled as the national women of the year by the organisation of Chinese American women. See was fond of writing about different

races, their cultures and traditions. She always tried to figure out how they moulds human life through her works. Isabella Allende, Melanie Benjamin, Alan Brennet are contemporary writers like Lisa who all followed a similar style like that of Lisa see in their works.

Women are always treated secondary to the patriarchs. Life of women all around the world who all belong to different races, cultures etc and all are destined to be united by their common fate as a women and also as a social animal. In the society and also in their own families also women are always subjects of oppression and torture. They are always prey to unethical and inhumane rules and regulations that exist in society and their own families. Women are mere objects of suppression and harassments. Especially depending upon various races and nationalities there will be certain traditions and customs that control and suppress women and their duties. Due to such traditions and all women are restricted from taking decisions by themselves and are subjected to live a life as per their traditional roles and duties, where they lack their own identity, their opportunities for proper education, work etc. And hence their dreams remains unfulfilled and end up leading a life filled with despair, dissatisfaction and with a heavy heart full of sorrows. In the novel *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* also we can see many women characters who's life was shadowed under tradition and its rules but the novel also shows how they were able to overcome all the restrictions and obstacles on their way and how to prosper in life

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even on behalf of facing many problems in their life which are a part and parcel of life.

The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane is a novel written by Lisa See in 2017. The novel is about culture, nature, tradition, and relationships. The protagonist of the novel is a a girl named Liyan, who is introduced as a ten year old girl in the beginning of the novel. Liyan belongs to an ethnic minority named Akha from the Spring Well Village in the Nannuo mountain of China. The novel rounds on this ethnic minority

and their traditions. Liyan and her family follow a tea farming tradition and hence they have tea farms through which they find their livelihood and food. Liyan and her family's life revolves around their tea farm and its seasons. Therefore, tea stands as a symbol of life, tradition, strength and relationships in the novel.

Liyan's family consists of her mother who she calls A-ma, her father whom she calls A-ba, her three brothers and their wives and children. Other important characters of the novel are Liyan's friend Ci-teh, Ci-teh's sister in law Deh-ja, Liyan's first level school teacher Zhang, Liyan's first husband Sa-Pa, Liyan's second husband Mr. Jin etc. Liyan and all her villagers are very keen to their tradition and they have a lot of beliefs and practices of their own as per their Akha tradition. Tradition therefore appears as an overpowering force in their life that settles as well as unsettles their life. In their Akha tradition, there are beliefs and taboos like, a pregnant woman should not visit another village as it will even cause death. And in Akha tradition, a pregnant woman is called one living under another, which means a wife living under her husband and also indicates that she should not run away from him. According to their tradition, a new born baby should first cry three times otherwise it is considered not truly born. And they believe, "The first cry is for blessing. The second cry is for the soul. The third cry is for his life span"(See 27). So like this many traditions and

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beliefs exist in the world of Akha people. And later on the chapters we can see how these traditions trouble people especially, the Akha women.

The entire novel develops through Liyan and her life as an Akha woman. Liyan was attending a first level school after facing a lot of objections from her family as they never valued education for Akha girls. And later through education and her intelligence she entered into a world of changes and prosperity. Not only Liyan but also her entire village and its Akha people were transformed in many manner with the emergence of modern world in their life.

Liyan had to come across a lot of problems in her life, like, she became pregnant

before marriage from her boyfriend and due to the restrictions set up by her traditions she was forced to abandon the child. Later she marries her boyfriend and leaves for Thailand and after that many life changing incidents take place in her life. Her husband San-pa died in a tiger attack and then again she comes back to her village. From there she goes to Kunming to join a trade school and from there her life takes a u turn. She after that opens a teashop of her own in China and becomes an independent business woman. she then marries a man named Mr. Jin later settles in America. After reaching America, she decides to search for her abandoned daughter about whom she had come to know years back that she has been adopted by an American couple and she is living in California. In the novel her daughter is introduced as a tea researcher and later over the course of years she is presented as planning a trip to Nannuo mountain to learn about tea and also about her origin. And the novel ends without clearly revealing whether Liyan and her daughter met or not and it is left for the readers to come up with their interpretations. The novel proved to be a good feminist work as we can see that the protagonist and all other major characters are all women and also they were all struggling in their life from different

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sides. But when they came to be aware of their status and life as a women in the society, they started to fight for their freedom and at last they made their life meaningful.

The root of feminism goes back to the 1960s. Feminism started as a social or political movement which demanded the equality of sexes, empowerment of women, recognition of women's rights in the society and family etc. Feminism focuses on the welfare of women all around the world. There are different waves of feminism and now in this twenty-first century we are witnessing the fourth wave of feminism. First wave feminism started from the year 1792 to 1949, it was started for demanding common rights, reproductive rights, voting rights etc. The second wave feminism started from 1949 to 1980, which focused on gender discrimination, inequality,

domestic violence towards women, LGBTQ rights etc. The third wave feminism started from 1980 to 2000, which focused on issues like representation of women in the media and politics, intersectionality rights etc. And the fourth wave feminism started in 2000 onwards and it focused on ongoing issues like, rights of marginalised sections, equal representation of women, sexual harassments faced by women and others etc. Feminism never focuses on suppressing men and it only focuses and works for the wellbeing of women as a social animal.

Feminism in the literary world was marked with the publication of an essay named *A Vindication of Rights of Women* in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft. This work is known as the first feminist work. Later many writers came up with their works that focused on women, their rights, their struggles etc. An example for such works are, *The Subjection of Women* (1869) by John Stuart Mill, *The Origin of Families* (1834) by Frederick Angel, *Women and Labour* (1971) by Olive Schivens. Among all the Feminist writers Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Toril Moi etc are famous and are

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always quoted. Virginia Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own* is very famous and Toril Moi's *Sexual Textual Politics* is her famous work. And Elaine Showalter is the one who divided the history of the Feminist writings into three phases such as, 1) Feminine Phase (1840 - 1880), 2) Feminist Phase (1880 - 1920) and 3) Female Phase (1920 onwards). Women's writing is an area of literary study based on the experience of women as shaped by their gender. It took birth during the 1970s. Women writers aimed at establishing a woman's tradition in writing. Some of the world famous women writers are Virginia Woolf, Jane Austine, J. K Rawling, Maya Angelou, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Dickinson and so on.

Cultural studies and women's writings can go hand in hand. A woman is as important in our life as our breath. Because without women there is no human life on earth. So that, while we learn about different cultures around the world we can't keep the women aside. And while we discuss traditions, women and their role in tradition

can't be denied. When we analyse different cultures and its tradition we can see how a women are both tortured and also in some traditions how women are respected. For eg: Devadasi was a system that existed in ancient Indian culture. In that system girls before reaching the age of puberty are married or dedicated to a temple, temple priest or some local deity. And that girls who are called as Devadasi are then used by the temple priest to satisfy their wishes. These women undergo sexual and emotional harassments under them and some in pain dies naturally others suicides and some others who are thrown out of the temple turns into prostitutes earn their livelihood as they no they will no longer be accepted to their family's . Devadasi was an old system that existed in our country and while we hear the name we feel only sadness as the tortured images of women come to our mind.

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But while we think about the status of women in Meghalaya, if we are girls we feel happy and our heart might definitely wish to be born there. Because Meghalayan Culture gives importance to women rather than men. People there celebrates the birth of girl child more than that of the boy child. So considering examples like this we undoubtedly say that culture and traditions destroy as well as nourishes the women. In the novel also we have seen this. As we analyse Liyan and all other Akha women, we could see that tradition had always shadowed in their life. And Akha girls like Liyan were at a side benefited as well as troubled by it. But later in their life they overcame all the obstacles on their way and found freedom. So, in the novel we can see strong women characters who were once leading a dark life under the control of their culture and traditions but when education and modernity came to their life, it led them to success and they became epitome of strength, courage and freedom. Even though there were a lot of struggles in their life they still worked hard and fought with their circumstances and at last reached to their success which they can call as a world of freedom and choices that is unaffected by culture and also patriarchy. And hence the novel proved to be a good piece of feminist fiction.

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Chapter II

Tradition as an Evil in the Life of Akha Women

In the majority of cultures and traditions women are always given only a secondary importance and men are always held superior. Women in half of the cultures around the globe are considered to be only born to give birth and to look after their men and his families. In the life of Akha women who are portrayed in the novel also tradition and culture plays an important role that shaped their destiny. In most of the cultures and traditions all around the world, women are always the preys of disadvantages, ill treatment and torturing. In the novel *The Tea Girl Of Hummingbird Lane* also we can see that there is no exception from this fate for women. In the novel, tradition appears as a two headed sword in the life of Akha women. And the traditions followed by the Akha people is what brings many disadvantages and disasters into the life of Akha women. In the novel, it is evidently clear that the patriarchal system is also playing an important role in bringing troubles in the life of Akha women. The patriarchal system always aims to subjugate and suppress women and won't allow her to grow higher than the patriarchs. In the Akha culture and tradition mentioned in the novel also we can see that there is a group of Patriarchs who creates and executes rituals and traditions that makes the life of Akha women and children mis-fortuned and unhappy. As the Akha people are so submissive to their culture and traditions, there is a group of aged men in their village who work like priests and who bring in rules, regulations and rituals to control and shape the life of Akha people. There is a ruma, nima etc in the Akha culture mentioned in the novel who all are considered as priest-like figures and are believed to be close to the gods and they act as god's messengers. Liyan, who is the protagonist of the novel is an Akha woman and she proves to be one of the preys of inhumane culture and traditions that existed in her

society. She had struggled a lot in her life due to the traditions that she was subjected

to follow as per her culture. There are many incidents in the novel that show how tradition appears as an evil in the life of Akha women like Liyan.

The protagonist of the novel is a girl named Liyan who at the beginning of the novel is presented as a ten year old girl. She belongs to an ethnic minority named Akha living in the Nannuo mountain of China. She and her entire village is strongly bonded to their Akha traditions. Like most of the traditions that exist these ethnic Akha traditions also have their own dressing style, belief systems and rituals. Tradition is presented in this novel as Oxygen for the Akha people because without that they can't survive. But while we read the novel we will understand that although the traditions that the Akha people hold are precious but still when it comes to the matter of women and children there are some injustices we feel like. Some of their traditions we can't digest. It's good to have traditions but it should never take or destroy the life of someone or something. In some traditions earth and its creatures are tortured for no logical base or reasons. For eg; for certain traditional practices animals like cow, goat etc are killed especially as offerings to god. In this novel also certain such traditions are mentioned. In the novel we can see that tradition is what changed the destinies of Liyan and few other women. For Some women life ended as a tragedy but for some fortunate.

Liyan is presented as a ten year old girl at the beginning and she lives in a family of eight adults and many children. They follow a tea growing tradition which is their source of livelihood. The Akha are people who lead a life completely submissive to their traditions. In certain cases especially of women they don't even pay attention to human values. The plot of the novel develops through the ill-fated women characters including Liyan. In the beginning of the novel itself we can see how a

woman is controlled in her family and also the rules laid especially over her. One day, everyone in Liyan' s family was describing the dreams they had and in between her A-ba unexpectedly asked her to tell about her dream. At hearing this she was shocked

because the request surprised her to the moon and back because neither of her parents have never asked this to her before. And she adds "I 'm just a girl. Unimportant, as I have been told many times. Why A-ba has chosen this day to single me out, I don't know, but I hope to be worthy of the attention" (See 4). There are many incidents like this in the story that indicate the restrictions faced by women, especially the Akha women. One day while she was in their tea collecting centre. She accidentally meets with a boy called San -pa who gave her a piece of stolen pancake to eat but she was not aware whether it was stolen or not. Then the pancake seller catches them and informs the matter to both of there family. And their family along with village priests decided to conduct a cleansing ceremony for them because as per their tradition what they have done is a sin. Here we can see how important tradition is for the Akha people.

None of the members of Liyan's family was educated but she after facing lots of struggles finally attends a first level school. The Akha women have a lot of restrictions and certain code of conduct that they must obey. We can see that as per their tradition, a pregnant Akha women is not allowed to visit another village or she might miscarry that. And a woman must never step over her husband's legs on his sleeping mat. There are so many believes like that the Akha women are subjected to. In the houses of Akha people there are separate sides for men and women. Liyan says the women and girls in her household gather around the firepit near the women's side of the house to do their traditional needlework etc. The Akha women are subjected to follow up with their traditions from their very childhood onwards. Liyan says that

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girls like her taught from childhood, the proper behaviour during pregnancy so that they will have a bone deep understanding of their responsibilities when they go into marriage. She also says that as per their tradition at certain times a pregnant woman should be shy about her condition and should stand at an angle so that their stomachs will be less prominent. And in their Akha tradition, a pregnant woman is referred to as

one living under another because the pregnant woman must obey her husband and should never run away from him. Liyan's mother is a village midwife who takes delivery and all. So Liyan was trained from her childhood to become a midwife like her mother.

Regarding the matter of childbirth, the Akha people have a strange tradition. As per their tradition, her mother says "Twins are the absolute worst taboo in our culture, for only animals, demons give birth to litters"(See 27). She also says "Animal rejects are contrary to nature too. If a sow gives birth to one piglet, then both must be killed at once. If a dog gives birth to one puppy, then they too must be killed immediately. None of the meet can be eaten either"(See 27-28). At this point their tradition acts as a curse in the life of Akha women. There are two characters in the novel named Deh-ja and Ci-do who are Liyan's friend Ci-teh's sister in law and brother. Deh-ja gives birth to twins and her twins were killed because they are considered as human rejects in their tradition who can cause harm to their own family members as well as their entire village. How tradition can become a curse in the life of a woman is clear from this incident. And after other ceremonial rituals Deh-ja and Ci-do were exiled from the village. Even the house they stayed in was burned. Deh-ja here stands as a prey of her tradition. She here didn't do any sin she just gave birth two healthy children but just in the name that they were born as twins they were

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killed. She being a mother was unable to protect her children for whom she waited for months and nurtured dreams regarding them.

Later in the life of Liyan also such an ill fate happened. Liyan got pregnant before marriage from her boyfriend and he was out of their village while her pregnancy was found out. She hides it from everyone but her A- ma catches and kept it as a secret from everyone in the family because the child of Liyan is also considered as a human reject as it was formed not after a wedlock. Liyan's mother, being the midwife of the village, arranged her delivery secretly in their grove. Liyan delivers a

baby girl but she should be killed as she is an human reject but her A- ma advised her to live the child in a child welfare centre in a city named Menghai. Their tradition won't allow the child to live if it is taken home, she will be killed. So in order to save her life Liyan abandoned her in a child welfare centre. And with the heavy heart of a mother she returned home and led her normal life to escape from everyone around her as nobody knew anything about her pregnancy and all.

She then waited for her boyfriend San- pa to come back, so that with his help she could find her daughter. After about one year San-pa came back and married her and they both started searching for their daughter but there also they failed as they came to know the child had already been adopted to an American family. They wished they would find their daughter one day because at that time it was not easy for them to reach America where their daughter lives. If their traditions were not there things won't end up like this. Then they both decided to settle in Thailand. And on their way to Thailand, when they were in Myanmar village, Liyan unexpectedly met with Deh-ja and about that she says like this, "My eyes try to focus. I see a woman in filthy rags. Her face is thin and worn. It's Deh-ja, and it's been eight years since she and Ci-do were forced out of Spring Well for having human rejects"(See 121). Liyan

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felt happy for meeting her because both had an unbreakable bond between each other. And later when they began to share their stories to each other their bond became even more deeper as both of them were sharing the same kind of sorrow as both were denied of their motherhood because of the evil in their life, that's, their tradition. Deh ja was ill fated in some other way also because her husband Ci-do with whom she was exiled from her village for having human rejects had already abandoned her and she is now living alone. Deh-ja explains it like this to Liyan," Tradition demanded we could not speak to anyone for twelve months, So we gestured and grunted to make ourselves understood. One morning I woke up, and he was gone. That was seven years ago"(See 123).

Deh-ja was subjected to suffer all these in her life just because of their tradition and its rules. If in their tradition, twin babies were not considered as human rejects, she would have been able to lead a life in her own village along with her husband and children happily. Therefore, tradition is what played the role of villain in her life and

left her as an ill fated woman. Deh-ja advises Liyan saying that,

You don't have a choice. Life continues whether we want it or not. The sun will rise despite our suffering. Maybe this is better than nothing. Maybe this is all we deserve. No nima can find a cure for us. No ruma mix a potion. But isn't this better than no life at all? Isn't it better than hearing the tree that represents me in the spirit world crash to the ground?.(See 123)

After taking all the advice Deh-ja gave she left for Thailand with San-pa. Then they settles in Thailand and their troubles never left Liyan free. In Thailand, she worked hard to find money to live because San-pa never used to go for any work and all the responsibility was left on her shoulders. San-pa had already became an heroin addict, so that he was always lazy and had also started to behave rude towards Liyan without

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considering her feelings as a wife and also as a mother who had lost her child. San-pa used to curse and blame her for all the misfortunes that happened in their life. San-pa once said Liyan that,

You were supposed to change my fortune. You were supposed to grow from the number one girl to the number one woman. The first from Nannuo Mountain to go to university. The first to be a leader of women. With me standing proudly at your side. I was trying to be honourable. I was to marry the number one girl, but I ended up the number one fool. Now all we can do is hide from your mistakes. (See 133)

San-pa used to curse her like this and he never used to apologise and show some sympathy to Liyan. He also tells Liyan that, "I thought coming back for you would change everything. But you doomed us by having human rejects. Then you made it so

we couldn't fix our mistake and save our daughter"(See 139). Liyan was upset after hearing all these from San-pa and she used to curse herself and her fate. And she says, "I'm not the girl I once was. I'm still only eighteen years old, but I'm many decades older in my heart"(See 139). These words of Liyan indicate her despair and her unsettling inner conflicts. All these sufferings happened in her life because of their tradition which always shadowed her life.

Later San-pa died in a tiger attack and Liyan was again ill-fated. Then she came back to her village and after years she got a new life with new responsibility but still the memories of her daughter haunted her. In between her life journey she met with Deh-ja after years. Liyan saw her as a beggar in a city's street and Liyan saved her. Even though she was saved, she still missed a family of her own. Earlier she had it but now nothing because her tradition took away her family life. Liyan, her A-ma and Deh - ja are all Akha women belonging to different age group or generations but

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still they are united by just one factor in common, that is, they three live with a heavy heart of a mother who worries about their children. Tradition appears as a curse in these women's lives and if such traditions never existed, they would have been able to lead a peaceful life with their children.

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Chapter III

Tradition as a Blessing in the Life of Akha Women

Even though tradition appears as a villain in the life of the Akha women in few ways still at one side they too appears as a blessing in the life of Akha woman. The Akha people follows a tea growing tradition, their life is surrounded by tea farming and its other processes. In the life of Akha people tea stands as a symbol of their life and their tradition. Especially in the life of Akha women, tea growing tradition plays a significant role. All the women belonging to the village of Nannuo mountain have their own family farming fields and they all work there from their very

childhood onwards along with other family member's. The main characters of the novel are Liyan, her mother and lady named Deh-ja. In all of these women's life their traditions played an important role from their childhood.

Liyan's mother is a midwife of their village, she got to that position after her mother so its Liyan her daughter who should become the next midwife. It's what their tradition is. As a midwife of the village Liyan's A-ma receives a lot of respect from the villagers. Her words are respected by everyone in the village. All the honour she received in her life is because of the post she is in which was given to her by Akha tradition. Here we can how tradition appears as a blessing in her life. Liyan's mother have also preserved a traditional grove for Liyan which is very sacred and is full of tea trees which includes a mother tree and many other sister trees, who all are aged more than hundred years. Liyan and her mother find peace and happiness from here. Here we can see how tradition can nourish a mother daughter relationship in the life of the Akha women like Liyan and her A-ma. They all stand as a symbol of life and prosperity. There are also many sacred plants which Liyan's mother uses to cure many diseases that her family and her villagers suffer. As an Akha woman who

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belongs to a tea growing tradition, Liyan was so fond of tea and had enough knowledge regarding its entire cultivation process. Later in the novel we can see that, while she went outside her village to live, she benefited from her tea growing tradition which was dissolved in her blood. Here tradition appears as a blessing in Liyan's life that helped her to prosper in her life.

The Akha women portrayed in the novel are so hospitable and loveable. Especially Liyan's mother who is so hospitable and treats all youngster's around her as her own children. She serves good tea to her guests and also gifts her special tea leaves to people she loves. For example: in one chapter of the novel it is mentioned that she had given Liyan some her tea leaves to give to her teacher named Zhang. Liyan says, " During the great proletarian cultural revolution, he was pulled down

from his university post in the capital and "set down to learn from the peasants."

When the cultural revolution ended and others were called home, he remained unable to get a permit to return to his family" (See 36). Due to this reason Liyan's mother had a special care for him and Liyan says "A-man likes me to give teacher Zhang some of this tea for two reasons. First, he is a sad and lonely man. Second, I must respect my teacher" (See 41). Liyan used to give him the tea leaves her mother sent for him and through this act there developed a beautiful bond between the three of them. All this happened because of the hospitality tradition Liyan's mother learned, and later in her life we can see how Liyan benefited out of this bond.

The tea which stands as a symbol of the life of Akha people here turned out to be a blessing in the Akha women, Liyan's life. When Liyan delivered a baby girl and abandoned it in the child welfare centre Liyan had kept a tea cake which indicates their tradition with her as per the advice of her mother so that later in her life if Liyan wants to find her, she can use it as a symbol to find her daughter out. Liyan's mother

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had once told that tea cake goes back many generations of women in her family. And it is the best gift she can give her granddaughter, yet it holds many secrets and much suffering. She says that it will remind her of who she is and where she comes from. Here also we see how tradition blesses Liyan.

After she got married to San- pa and moved to Thailand there she didn't had her tea farms to find livelihood but she carried with her traditional dresses and other special things of their tradition. These things she bought founds her out a way for her to find a livelihood in the new land. She along with a couple of women she got as Friends in Thailand who also belongs to an ethnic community from outside Thailand finds a new job. Liyan and all other women dresses in their tradition wedding dressing and stand to welcome the foreigners. The foreign tourists gets amazed on seeing them and they will comes to take photographs with them. And through this they earn money. Liyan after clicking the photos with the tourists asks them, "Photo five baht" (See 135). In

Thailand she was able to find a group of good friends as a blessing out of her tradition. She says that, " They had held me when I cry from homesickness and for the sorrow of my life, which did not turn out as I imagined" (See 131).

She also says, "we're united by sorrow, and I'm comforted by the fact that we all speak the same language and follow the same traditions. We all wish for the bounty of earth to reward us. We all hope for peace, quiet and sanctuary" (See 136). Here we can see how tradition acts both as a link as well as a blessing in Liyan's life. And through that link they stay close to each other and depend on each other. Her A-ma always reminded her to preserve her tradition from her very childhood onwards. After the death of San-pa she returned to her village and decided to join a trade school to enhance her tea growing tradition that she got as a blessing out her

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Akha tradition. Her mother also passes her traditional information to her to preserve. She says,

You could say the trees shows the history of our female line. You must remember, girl, that not only men recite the lineage. We women do it too. For generations, the nima and the ruma of spring well and so many other villages have sought the help of the women in our family. We give them leaves, bark and even the yellow parasite from the mother tree to use as medicine. (See 151)

She also informs her that, "If you were to open the tea cake I gave your baby, you would see yellow threads twisted and growing throughout. That cake is a link to time and women who came before us" (See 151). Her mother is a traditional lady and she always sees her tradition as a blessing and she reminds Liyan,

You have special abilities,. I don't mean you are a witch or a fox spirit. And you've never seemed drawn to the special gift of healing or magic. Rather you are like A-ma mata, who gave birth to the Akha people, who pushed against her restraints, who said, 'no, i will not accept my bad fate,' and who endured

against all odds with her intelligence, compassion and perseverance. All that comes from this grove. And the mother tree. Your a-ba didn't give you this land because you're worthless. He had no rights to it at all. I insisted that it go to you. It can only belong to you, as it will belong to your daughter one day.

(See 152)

Her mother always motivates her and stands with her. She teaches her their tradition because as a traditional lady she believes Akha law will protect her all evils wherever she is. Liyan's mother was so keen to their traditions and she always used to motivate Liyan by telling her stories about their tradition and its values to spread positivity in

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Liyan. When Liyan decided to leave to join the trade school. Her mother advises her that,

Always follow Akha Law. If you adhere to our ways, you'll be protected from problems whether from the spirit world or the human world. Never forget us.

Always remember how to behave, how to speak to people, how to respect the world around you, No matter where you go or what you do, don't abandon our customs. (See 153)

All these words from her mother about their tradition and its values kept motivated Liyan, who is on her way to new beginnings in her life and career. While she was travelling alone to chase her dreams she remembers all the advice of her mother which always soothes her soul and so she never felt alone wherever she is. And Liyan says that,

I've learned and been scarred by the inevitability of pain and defeat. Now that I'm totally alone, I feel the blessings of my culture feeding me strength. I gave birth to a daughter and lost her. I married the man I loved and lost him – in so many ways. I may be separated from my family, my village, and my mountain, but in my heart I'm connected to them more than ever. (See 154)

Liyan after facing so many misfortunes in her life, like, losing her daughter, her

husband etc, she then finally after many struggles joined a trade school in Kunming as per the advice of her lovable teacher Zhang, who too always motivated her like her mother to look on to life with optimism. In the new land Kunming also, the symbol of her tradition, the tea, kept her positive and motivated. To Kunming, her mother used to mail her loose tea in pretty homemade packs each spring. When she was studying in her own village, she used to gift her teacher tea packs and like that in her trade school in Kunming also she does the same thing. About that she says, "I

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gave these gifts to my teachers the same way I once gave our humble homegrown tea to teacher Zhang: as a sign of respect and gratitude"(See 166).

Liyan was then selected as a candidate to the tea college that was opening in Kunming by the Yunnan agricultural university. She got that opportunity because she was the only person in her trade school who comes from the tea mountains so the faculties from her trade school suggested her name to the tea college as an eligible candidate there. Here, we can see clearly how her tea farming tradition appears as a blessing in her life. Later in her life also many fortunes happened with the help of her tea growing tradition that she followed from her childhood. For e. g, she had got an opportunity to sign a contract with a known tea company named Green Jade Ltd and then she went to Guangzhou, a big city in China, to reach on to new heights in her life. And there she had opened a tea shop of her own. she was so happy about it as it had opened in front of her a new world of learnings, growth, opportunities and relations. And about her shop and new life in china she says that,

When I unlock the door to my Midnight Blossom Tea Shop, I'm greeted by the intoxicating aroma of Pu'er, the only type of tea I sell. Knowing the rest of my workday will follow my rhythms allow me to relax. My first customer is from Beijing. We exchange business cards, each of us making internal calculations as happens in every transaction across China these days. (See 196) After facing a lot of ups and downs in her life, she is now settled in China as a tea shop owner. All

these blessings happened in her life because of her ample knowledge and respect towards her tea growing tradition. Where ever she went her tradition gave her strength to withstand all the struggles and obstacles on her way and it also helped her to reach on to her goals and also to a good career in her life. Later she marries a man named Mr. Jin, who was also smart and curious like her. She then had a son in

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him and then with her husband and child she migrated to America to live. And there also, her tradition consoled her soul and again appeared as a blessing in her life. As we can see that, Liyan's lost daughter who is also in America is now a tea researcher and she is on her way to Nannuo to learn about tea and the history of her origin. But in the novel it is not revealed whether Liyan and daughter met or not and it is kept as a secret by the author and is also left to the readers to form their own interpretations. But still we can hope that they would have met as Liyan's daughter had with her a teacake that was kept with her when she was abandoned, to indicate their tradition and also as a symbol to find her roots. The teacake, which stands as a symbol of her origin, might help her to reach on to her family. Here, we can see again how their tradition appears as a blessing in the life of Liyan and her daughter who are separated from each other and who both finds a way to reach on to each other with the help of their tradition and its symbols in their hand.

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Chapter IV

Emergence of Modern World and Self - Discovery of Akha Women

Whether to preserve tradition or deny it is always a question under debate in the modern world. Traditions are needed to mark our ethnicity on this earth but we should be aware about one thing that it should never control or take away our life. In this novel *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* written by Lisa See we can see a village under a tradition named Akha. The Akha tradition mentioned in the novel, helps as well as troubles especially the women in the village of Nannuo mountain of China.

And with the emergence of modern world begins to transform them not fully but still slightly a shake in some of their traditions that are illogical and inhumane. In the life of the protagonist Liyan and her entire villagers, the emergence of the modern world helped them to stay away from at least half of their taboos and progress their living conditions. In there a village power and importance goes in this order: the headman; the ruma, the spirit priest who keeps harmony between spirits and humans and the nima shaman, who has the ability to go a trance visit the trees God planted in the spirit world to represent each soul on earth, and then determine which incantations can be used to heal or enhance vit. For the Akha people, ensconced in ritual and routine, life goes on as it has for generations – until, one day, a stranger appears at the village gate, marking the first entrance of modern world in their lives. And hence slowly they begin to transform. As per their tradition in their village there is something called the village spirit gate which is built by the ruma and tha nima (the village priests) to protect the entire village and its people from all bad spirits that may approach them. The spirit gate here stands as a symbol in this novel. It indicates protection as well as a world under it. The spirit gate represents a border that the Akha draws between them and the rest of the world. One day near this gate appeared a man,

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a boy and a car. Liyan says it like this, "A car! Green, with a tin red star attached to the front. It's an old people's liberation Army mountain vehicle – something I have seen in school posters commemorating the war of liberation" (See 76). The man told them that his name is Huang Benyu and he is from Hong Kong. He says, "I have come a long way to buy your tea. I am a businessman. I make and supply cranes. China is in great need of those now"(See 77).

As Liyan's family has tea farms he had come here to buy a special tea leaf that the cultivate as per their tradition. Liyan is the only person in her family who have attended school so she understood what he spoke but none other didn't got any idea. But Liyan translated what he told to everyone and they understood his intention. As

he is a business man he wants their aged tea to market so that from that Liyan's family will be also benefited. Finally after many discussions with their village priests and all finally they agreed to his deal. And he left the village promising he will come back soon after all arrangements for the deal. The arrival of Mr. Huang and his son marked a turning point in their life, a wind of the modern world had come to them then. After they went many incidents took place in Liyan 's life like she got pregnant before marriage from her boyfriend, San- pa, who left the village to find job then she delivers the baby in secret with the help of her mother and she abandoned the child in a child welfare centre at Menghai as per her mother's request otherwise the baby will be killed as per their tradition the child is a human reject and should be killed. She after abandoning the child comes back to her village and waits for her boyfriend to come so that she can marry him and can go and find their abandoned daughter. After two years he returns and they both searched for their daughter but couldn't see as she had been adopted by an American family from the child welfare centre and she is in America, where Liyan and San-pa can't reach easily. So they began to live in Thailand. When

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they reached Thailand only Liyan came to be aware of her tradition. She felt as she is in a new world. She says," The first time I saw a foreigner, I thought it must be a spirit, for no one living could be that tall, white, or fat" (See 134). She learned the English words which all foreigners, no matter where they are from, use to communicate. To the tourists there she along with a gang of her friends sells pouches for their sunglasses, laptops, and cell phones. In her new land she found a new way for livelihood rather than following her tea farming tradition. She along with her gang of friends who also belong to different ethnic communities outside Thailand wear their traditional costumes and appear in front of the tourists. The foreign tourists who get amazed by their looks come to take photos with them and they earn money. Liyan says she used to tell the tourists after clicking photo like this," photo five baht" (See 135).

After beginning a new life in Thailand Liyan starts to think broad and out of her tradition and also at the same time she preserves some of it with her which are useful. Liyan also noticed a character change in San- pa. He became lazy now. San - pa no longer feels any attachment towards her as before. He never used to go for work or hunting as before. Liyan was the one who worked to make both ends meet. San -pa takes away all the money that Liyan collects to buy his drug. Liyan was not knowing at the beginning that San- pa became a drug addict but later she finds out that he is a heroin addict. She becomes disappointed in him and curses herself. She says, "I 'm not the girl I once was. I'm still only eighteen years old, but I'm many decades older in my heart" (See 139).

San-pa used to oppress her through her words and finally after all struggles she decided to leave San- pa. She runs out of their house secretly and while she entered a jungle a tiger came to attack her and as a surprise San-pa appeared there and

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in between the fight with the tiger San pa was killed in the tiger attack. Liyan buries his body along with the tiger's dead body and lives the jungle. She then goes back to her village and informs the matter to his parents. After the ceremonial rituals she went home. There she was welcomed by her mother and with the help of her mom and her teacher Zhang again a new world of change where she can prosper by herself was opened. By the advice of her teacher Zhang she decides to join a trade school in Kunming city. And through that a new world of science, technology etc was opened in front of her. she says, "All this is happening too fast. I don't know what to think or how to feel. Disappointment. Confusion. Guilt. Worry. Fear. Sadness. Grief. And more. But one emotion overrides them all : deep love for my a-ma. Tears of gratitude streak my face." (See 150)

She then reaches Kunming. As a villager she was amazed to watch the towery concrete buildings and everything that decorates the city. A new world of change and self discovery was opened in front of her. In the new land she faces a lot of struggles

and criticisms as a villager but she denies all of it. She says that most of her classmates in the trade school saw her as a country bumpkin. She then surprisingly gets an opportunity to apply as a candidate to a tea college that is starting in Kunming which is opened by the Yunnan agricultural university. And she was suggested to me there because she was the only one who comes from the tea mountains. She attended the interview for that and waited for its results. By that time she thought of taking a vacation to her mountain. She sets off on her journey and reaches there. She was amazed at the changes that happened in her village and also to its people. She was able to see changes all around her village like some women started wearing foreign attires like jeans, T- shirts etc. She was able to see construction site with bulldozers moving earth and workers building massive retaining walls. When she searched for

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her home she saw a building that resembles a greenhouse with glass planes held together with aluminium struts. Inside it there were her people. She says that, When I reach my home...It's gone, as are all the newlywed huts. Where our house once stood is a building that resembles a greenhouse –glass panes held together with aluminium struts. Nearby are four stucco structures –all of the cheapest and ugliest materials, soulless, antiseptic, not one with glass in the window frames. None of them are built on stilts, so there's no place for the livestock to live. One is slightly larger than the others. I don't see separate verandas for the women's and men's sides of the house. (See 183) She was happy to witness all these changes in her family and around. Liyan remembers that, earlier in her home there were two separate verandas for men and women to gather separately for doing their works. And for women it was the fireside of the house where Liyan says, she along with her mother and sister in law's gather and do their works like weaving their traditional headdress. So, at her childhood days she have seen women being separated but now after years when she came home, she was able to see a change in that. After the arrival of modern world, when their lifestyle got improved, there happened a lot of changes in their perspectives. And now

she could see that in her new home there was no separate place for women and men and there is only one common place for both of them where they sit together, chat, play and enjoy without any discrimination of gender. When Liyan was young, all these things were not possible to happen and she had also never seen a woman in her family or around who are allowed to speak, discuss and take decisions like Akha men. But now things have changed. Now, after years she could see that all Akha women around her village had become more intelligent and independent than before and like men they were also given equal importance in the family and also in their society. Now the

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women are allowed to make necessary decisions by themselves and implement them even without the help of any men. They are now allowed to speak, work, earn and live independently just like men. An example for such independent Akha women in Liyan's village is her friend Ci-teh. Now, After years when Liyan met with Ci-teh, she was shocked to see her changes and about her Liyan says that, "Her giggling ways seem to be gone, and any embroidery that would mark her as an Akha have been packed away as well" (See 186). Ci-teh's house is the best house in their village and it is in her house where electricity was first taken in their village. Liyan also says that Ci-teh was also the first one in their village to own a cell phone. Like Ci-teh's, the lifestyle of Akha people in her village had changed a lot. Like, earlier they sat on the ground and ate near the fireplace but now there are tables and chairs. Her entire family was improved and she felt happy about that. Women's life and their conditions too changed a lot. She says, "And It all started with Mr. Huang. Our life changed rapidly after the Hong konger came to us"(See 184). She also sees that some of her traditions have changed. After visiting her family she felt happy for all the good things that happened and she left as her vacation finished.

Liyan had come across a lots of ups and downs in her life as a woman. Some happenings in her life were a curse but some other happenings were for some good things to take place in her life. About that and all she says, "Who can question fate?"

Bad things happened to me; then my fortunes turned when I went to the trade school and Pu'er Tea College. Now another propitious moment blossoms before me. Perhaps what the Han majority say is true: Good luck comes in threes" (See 192). After reaching Kunming only she has got many good opportunities in her life to learn and grow. From Kunming, she got an opportunity to sign a contract with a tea company named Green Jade Ltd. And after that she left to Guangzhou in China and

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there she was able to start a tea shop of her own named Midnight Blossom Tea Shop. From here onwards her life began to become even more colourful and prosperous. A new world of business and growth was then entered into her life. Liyan, from a weak girl of Nannuo mountain had now turned into an independent and smart business woman. Earlier she was just one among many Akha women in her village who led a life submissive to their traditions and its roles and duties insisted on them. But with the coming of modern world in her life, her perspectives on life and its goals changed and she then worked hard to become an independent and strong women to stand as an example for all other Akha women like her who all wish to grow and prosper in their life rather than dying without getting any of their dreams fulfilled. Liyan then also gets a new life partner named Jin. She was happy to get a smart and intelligent husband like him. Liyan used to think about what all things happened in her life both as a curse as well as a blessing and she says, "I stare at myself in the mirror. I look young and unmarred by my experiences, which is both unsettling and a relief. The clothes remind me of all I've lost, but also gained, and I'll need to forget and remember" (See 229). Liyan and her husband used to visit her village as she was supporting her family's tea business as she is a business woman. Liyan's husband was always supportive to her and he was a wise man with independent and progressive thoughts. They both have already begun rejecting many illogical traditions of her community that are unnecessary. For e. g, as per Akha tradition, girl child's were not given much importance and her Akha tradition always celebrated the birth of boy

childs as a blessing in their family's. Liyan says that, "Every Akha wishes for a son first, followed by a girl, followed by a boy, followed by a girl. It's how we keep balance in the world" (See 263). Liyan's husband Mr. Jin was a modern and progressive man and never supported this idea and he says Liyan that,

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"I don't need a son, you don't need to do that for me" (See 263). Mr. Jin's like this wise and progressive mentality always motivated Liyan and removed all her anxieties. As the modern world came to Liyan's village we have seen many changes happening in the perspectives of the Akha people. And an important perspective change had happened in the case of girl child. Earlier, their tradition never considered girl child important but now their perspectives on that has begun to change. Liyan says that now in her village she could see many posters all around marking the launch of a new campaign intended to address the dark and poisonous side of one child policy that was introduced in China. Campaigns were started because the one child policy intended on birth control by having only one kid in a family. So if such a system comes most of the families would only prefer for boy child's as that one child necessary for a family to live and automatically the need for girl child would decrease. To stand against this only campaigns were stated at her village and it was initiated by Liyan's old school teacher Zhang. Teacher Zhang announces that, "China already has a huge surplus of men over women, and that number is expanding by about one million each year" (See 263-64).

Liyan was able to see many progressive changes like this in her village and she says, "Each poster has a different slogan, all bearing the same core message: Daughters constitute the next generation. Men and women build a harmonious society together. Nature will decide the sex of the newborn. Giving birth to a girl is the will of nature" (See 264). Liyan had three nieces and all of them were so smart and intelligent even though they were aged only eleven years and also they all supported women empowerment in their village. Liyan says that they used to recite a saying in support

of this with an alarming frequency. They recite, "Care for girls. Support the girl

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class." "Protect girl children. Benefit the state, the people, and families." "To care for today's girls is to show concern for the future of China" (See 264). Later Liyan became pregnant and on their way back to Guangzhou from her village, she again met with Deh-ja, her friend Ci-teh's sister in law. Liyan saw that she had become a beggar and Liyan felt sad and takes Deh-ja with her to Guangzhou. And after many days Liyan came back to her village with her husband, her mother in law and Deh-ja. Before the arrival of the modern world in their village, if once one person especially women is exiled from their village for any reason, they were not allowed to come back to their village as per their tradition. But now as in Liyan's village modernity and progressive thoughts had taken its roots and hence the arrival of Deh-ja back to her village who was once exiled for having human rejects was now welcomed without much objections. And at this Liyan says that, "If we lived entirely by the old ways, what I am doing would be a violation of Akha Law. But if her human rejects had been born today, they wouldn't have met their sorrowful ends and she and Ci-do wouldn't have been banished" (See 287-88).

Here, we can see how perspective changes that happened with the emergence of the modern world changed the life of Akha people, especially of the Akha women. Liyan sees many changes in her village and its Akha people with the emergence of the modern world. Liyan feels happy and proud for all the changes that happened to her Akha people, especially her Akha women. Liyan says that, "And I get to see how much life has changed for young girls like my three nieces, who tell me about a campaign aimed at minority girls like them to achieve "independence, self strengthening, intelligence, and dexterity" (See 290-91). They're supposed to do things like learn to weave handbags with symbols showing their unique culture, but I don't see how that will help them become village cadres, go to college, or start their

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own small business. But when first sister in law's daughter recites popular slogans, "Give birth to fewer babies, plant more trees, if you give birth to extra children, your family will be ruined," I understand that all three of them are thinking about and planning their lives in ways I clearly didn't at their age" (See 291).

From all these we can see how the emergence of the modern world led her Akha women to a world of growth, education, thought and hence self- discovery. Liyan stands as a perfect example for all other Akha women. she has shown how to overcome the different obstacles in ones personal as well as professional life and move towards our goal in life. Liyan has grown from a weak Akha tea girl to an independent and smart business woman in China. Not only Liyan but also her three nieces and her friend Ci-teh all stand as a symbol of independent and inspirational modern Akha women in this novel. They all changed their living standard as a woman in their society and in their families by intelligently making use of the education, thought and opportunities offered by the modern world.

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Chapter V

Conclusion

Lisa See is one among the famous contemporary writers and has also won many awards. She is known for her novels that discusses cultural traditions and also human connections. Most of her works discusses themes like history, culture, people, bonds, identity etc. In the novel *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* also these themes are prominent. The novel discusses life of ethnic minority called Akha belonging to the Nannuo mountain of China. Liyan, a tea girl, is the major character through whom the entire story is developed. We have seen how from her childhood onwards she was shaped as an Akha woman.

With the coming of modern word in their village the entire life of the villagers along with Liyan and her family changes. But still their tradition as an Akha people

was not fully erased from their land. Liyan and all her people carried with them the traces of their traditions to wherever they went. And through that they have also shown how their tradition was a blessing as well a curse in their life. In the novel we come across many women characters who lead a life submissive to their traditions and customs and we can also see how they act both as a blessing as well as a trap in their lives. The major character of the novel is a girl named Liyan. When the novel begins she is introduced as a ten year old Akha girl. The novel is all about her life and all other Akha women around her and the novel shows how tradition can appear both as a blessing as well as an evil in the life of a woman, specifically the Akha women. Liyan and all other Akha women in the novel are presented as very subjugated to their traditional roles and duties. Liyan's family owned a tea farm and like all other members of her family she also used to work as a

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tea girl. From her childhood onwards she was following her Akha traditions perfectly like her mother, who was the midwife of their village. From her childhood onwards she was very aware of her Akha traditions. Later on in the chapters, we can see how she supports as well as rejects her traditions. Her sister in law's, her friend and many all other women around her was all leading a life under the rules and regulations set up by their tradition. And we can also see that all these women's lives were somewhere trapped as well as blessed because of their traditions. In the novel we have seen how tradition troubles people especially women and also in some areas we can see how these traditions benefited them too. Therefore, in the novel tradition takes two faces, both as a blessing as well as an evil in the life of the Akha women. Liyan and all other Akha women around her were blessed with their tea farming tradition, through which they found their livelihood. Later on the chapters we have seen how Liyan's traditions helped her even in building a bond with her teacher Zhang and through whom she was able to reach new heights in her life. After overcoming many struggles in her life and when she reached new lands away from her village, there also

we have seen how her traditions helped her for finding new bonds and also for finding livelihood. For e. g, when she reached Thailand with San pa, she got a gang of women as friends who all also belonged to an ethnic community from outside Thailand like her. Liyan got these gang of women as friends just because of one profound reason that is their similar traditions. In Thailand, we have also seen how she finds livelihood with the help of her traditional costumes. Later in the novel, after her husband San-pa's death she had joined a trade school with the help of her teacher Zhang. She was able to attend this trade school because of her ample knowledge about tea which she had gathered from her very

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childhood onwards because of her tea farming tradition. So here also we can see how her tradition came as a blessing in her life. From the time when she began to attend the trade school onwards, her life took a u turn and from there only she started to dream big and we have seen how she reached on to new heights in her life. She later started her own tea shop and here also we can see how her tradition found her a way to a new world of learnings, opportunities and growth.

Even though tradition helped her out on one side, on the other side of her life, she was also affected by her traditions. For eg, we have seen how tradition controlled her duties and roles in her society and in her family. Liyan was restricted by her father and brothers for attending school but later due to her hard work and efforts she overcame all these restrictions and started attending the school but still her father and brothers were not happy about it and they always wanted her to discontinue with her studies as they believe she doesn't want to be educated as she is a girl and should learn only their traditional roles and duties and nothing more than that. Liyan struggled a lot to get educated because people around her believed and also treated their tradition over their life goals and just because of this reason Liyan and all other Akha women in her village are all suffering in various ways.

We have seen how tradition appears as a two headed sword in the life of Akha

women like Liyan. In the novel, we have seen a character named Deh-ja, who gave birth to twins and because of their tradition, they believed that twins are human rejects and the twin babies of Deh-ja were killed. And after that she along with her husband was exiled from their village. Here it is clear how poisonous tradition can be. Deh-ja was then left to lead an unhappy life with a heavy heart and with never ending

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sorrows in some other lands away from her own land. All these troubles happened in her life just because of her tradition and its rules.

Later in Liyan's life also, we have seen the same things happening. Liyan became pregnant from her boyfriend before marriage and she delivers a baby which was also considered as a human reject as per their tradition, as it was born illegal before marriage. But due to the Liyan's luck the baby was not killed. With the help of her mother, she was able to save the child by leaving the child secretly in a child welfare centre located miles away from their village.

Later Liyan, just like Deh-ja, also led a life with a heavy heart of a mother searching for her lost child. Deh-ja and Liyan here stand as a symbol of prey of tradition. If such a tradition and beliefs such as human rejects never existed, both Deh-ja and Liyan would have been able to lead a happy life with their children and family forever. But in their life tradition came as a villain that destroyed their entire happiness, especially their motherhood and its values and duties. Here, we can see how tradition became cruel and poisonous especially in the life of two Akha women. We have seen that the Akha people hold their tradition over anything in their life and even they treat life as a silly thing in front of their tradition. Tradition always overpowered their life and when the modern world took its roots on their village, there began to happen changes in their life and also in their traditions.

Emergence of the modern world happened with the arrival of two strangers from Hong Kong. They came to their village with a tea business proposal or deal and from

there things began to change in the life of the entire villagers. And also it had brought many changes especially in the life of Akha women. The villagers agreed to the Hong konger's tea business proposal and slowly they all began to become wealthy

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and hence their living standards and everything had improved. For e. g, when Liyan came back after years to visit her family from Kunming, she was shocked to see the changes happening in her village and to its people. We have seen that she was shocked to see her village with concrete and glass buildings and all. Changes had also taken place in the life of women in her village. Liyan sees changes in the dressing style of her people, she says that some women had already begun wearing Jeans, t-shirts etc, which all indicates the changes happened in their life with the arrival of the modern world in their village.

When the modern world came and changes took place, people began to think wisely and hence some changes happened in their perspectives too and they slowly began to reject their traditions that are poisonous to their life. Women in Liyan's village became more independent than before. In Liyan's life also many changes happened, after the death of her husband San-pa, she went Kunming and after facing a lot of struggles she finally opens a tea shop of her own in China. And at the same time she also supported her family in tea business and it brought them wealth and prosperity. And then she gets married to a man called Mr. Jin later settled in America. And she had also began to search for her lost daughter who is in America. Like this many changes happened in the life of Liyan and all other Akha women around her after the arrival of the modern world in their village and in their life. So, we have seen how tradition acted both as a blessing as well as an evil in the life of the Akha women and also how the arrival of the modern world changed the life of Akha women. The novel therefore stands as a perfect example for analysing and learning the pros and cons of tradition and its values and also it shows how the world of learning and growth can help us to overcome many struggles in our life and

prosper in life. The novel is truly a beautiful portrait of a little known region and its people and the celebration of family bonds. Hence, through all this the novel the tea girl of hummingbird lane proves to be a good piece of literature that opens way for the people to learn about culture and tradition of an ethnic community from China. It also opens doors for further research and discussions about ethnic groups present around the world and their cultural traditions.

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