

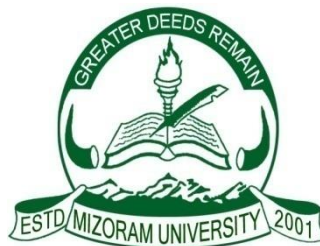
**PATRIARCHAL RESISTANCE: A STUDY OF HMAR WOMEN
AS REPRESENTED IN SELECT FOLKTALES AND SONGS**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

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Patriarchal Resistance: A Study of Hmar Women as Represented in Select Folktales
and Songs

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Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Patriarchal Resistance: A Study of Hmar Women as Represented in Select Folktales and Songs**” is the bonafide research conducted by Lalsangzuali Tuolor under my supervision. Lalsangzuali Tuolor worked methodically for her thesis being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University. This is to further certify that she had fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University.

(Dr. KRISTINA Z. ZAMA)

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DECLARATION
Mizoram University
February 2023

I, LalsangzualiTuolor, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous to me or to do best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Culture Studies.

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(LALSANGZUALI TUOLOR)

February, 2023

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A Brief History and Culture of the Hmar People

The chapter is a brief introduction into Hmar history and culture. It also briefly states about oral tradition, orality and place of orality in Hmar tradition today. It gives an introduction to the chapters that follow in analyzing resistance to patriarchy from the select folk tales and songs. The chapter also gives a brief introduction to patriarchy, existence of patriarchy in Hmar society and patriarchal resistance by women. Besides, for the purpose of critical analysis and theoretical understanding this chapter will mention the folk tales and songs written by women both in the pre-Christian and post-Christian era, in evaluating the position of women and their resistance to patriarchy. It further introduces feminist and psychoanalytic theories and texts on patriarchal gender relation along with contemporary Hmar writers employed for the purpose of the study.

The Hmar belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of the Tibeto-Chinese race and the language they speak belong to the Lushai-Kuki-Chin group. They settle mainly in the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Since they are scattered, they are outnumbered to a negligible minority in every state that created an adverse effect on their cultural and socio-economic life. In the colonial rule they were separated owing to the political division of the compact area occupied by them. They assimilated with the neighbouring tribes for many years and many have even forgotten their mother tongue. In Mizoram, only a small section who lives in the northern border speaks the Hmar language. Those who have settled to the western border of Nagaland and the Sadar Hills and the Tamenglong District of Manipur speak the Thadou-Kuki language. The Tribal List of India published in 1951 was erratic in the sense that Hmar was classed as sub-tribe of Lushai (Lusei) along with other sub-tribes in Lushai Hills. The Hmar leaders had taken active part in the Mizo Union movement and the first president of the Mizo Union was a Hmar leader named Pachhunga and another Hmar leader from Cachar named; H.K. Bawihchhuaka became the General Secretary of the Mizo Union in the Lushei Hills (Mizoram). The leaders lodged a complaint against the mistake to the Government of India and requested for revision of the Tribal List. The Government of India revised the list in 1956 and declared Hmar as one of the scheduled Tribes of India (Vide

Notification Order S.R.O. 24774, Gazette of India Part II, Section No. 316-A, New Delhi, 29th October, 1956) (Thiek 3)

There are two theories that give the origin and meaning of the term 'Hmar'. The first theory suggests that the term 'Hmar' ordinarily means 'North'. It was during the later part of the 18th and early days of the 19th century A.D. that the people living in the northern part of Lushai were identified as Hmar. The Hmar also spread over the north eastern part of Cachar and on the eastern and southern border of North Cachar Hills. (Thiek 67) Different historians like Rev. Liangkhaia, B. Lalthiangliana and L. Keivom who support this theory maintain that the then ruling Lusei clan of Lushai Hills (Mizoram) nicknamed those clans that left Lushai Hills and migrated northward and inhabited the northern part of Lushai Hills as 'Hmars', meaning 'northerners'. Gradually the migrated clans came to adopt the name as a common nomenclature (Dena 8). However, absence of any written records fails to suggest the probable date of their exodus from the Lushai Hills.

The second theory is based on the Hmar oral tradition and has been accepted as the origin of the term. Supporters of this theory argue that the term 'Hmar' was originally derived from 'hmarh'. 'Hmarh' is a name given to a typical style of tying one's hair in a knot on the nape of one's head. The Hmar believe Manmasi to be their progenitor and refer themselves as the offsprings of *Manmasi*¹. The Hmar revere *Manmasi* very much, but do not worship him as a deity. However they often invoke the name to tell the world (including animals and birds) of their coming and going and of their deeds. According to Hmar tradition, Manmasi had two sons - Hrumasawm and Tukbemsawm. During his childhood, Tukbeksawm used to tie his hair in a knot on the nape of his head. His descendants who adopted his hair style were called Hmar. Further, G. A. Grierson in *Linguistic Survey of India* Vol III and Part III, in course of his linguistic studies records that the term MAR or MHAR has already been used before they entered the Lushai Hills. (qtd in Thiek 68).

The people belonging to the Lushai-Kuki-Chin claims Sinlung as their place of origin. Scholars believe it to be situated somewhere on the banks of Yalung river in between the provinces of Chamdo and Szechuan in south-central China. Many

¹ 'Manmasi' may mean 'man' (human being) in contrast to other living creatures. It may also mean a special and unique creature or a being capable of making his own needs available. (Thiek, 1)

ancient folk songs sung to this day harken back to Sinlung as their original home. Hrilrokhum Thiek recounts, “One of the most popular heroic songs called HRANGLAM HLA (Song of Heroic Dance) tells us thus-

*“Tiena raw khuo an siengin,
Khaw Sinlunga...
Kawtsiel ang ka zuong suok a,
Mi la nel lo tam ie,
Hriemmi hrai a...”*

[In olden days when a village came to exist at Sinlung,
Came I out like a mithun,
There were myriads of people,
Offsprings of mankind...”] (39, 40)

The actual location of Sinlung till date continues to be a topic of dispute even though it is a recurring theme in the old folk songs. However, all traditions and culture, including material culture, support the idea that they migrated from South East Asia and entered Indian Territory. Hrilrokhum Thiek in *History of the Hmars in North East India (With Special Reference to Assam)* writes that after many years of prosperous and peaceful life a great famine broke out in Shan. This calamity was the cause of their semi-nomadic life lasting several centuries till they settled down in their present habitation in North East India. (61) Another heroic song sung at the time of *Khuongchawi*² festival proclaims-

*“Tiena raw khuo an sieng, khaw Silunga;
An that an man um naw rei, an lo tih a.
A en naunu tlan their sih a,
Zawl khaw chung a Hrangkhup le Thawnglaiin
Nunkhuo an pham...”*

[In olden days, a village came to exist (or flourish) at Sinlung
'There would be no killing and kidnapping,' said they.
But all women and children who witnessed fled in fear.
Hrangkhupa and Thawnglai brought mayhem] (Thiek 40)

² A Hmar festival prepared by the chiefs and rich people in the secular past.

Many of the songs were epic poems; some were composed in praise of the land while others were expression of their bitter experience at different periods in the course of their long nomadic life. There are stanzas that they sing during the sowing of seeds called *Butu-khuong-lawm*, where they praised the ancient ways of life they lived in Sinlung. In another stanza they would sing-

“Tiena ka Chin lei,

Ka pu leilung Himalei...”

[My Chin land of old,

My grandfather’s/ancestor’s land- HIMALEI...]

This stanza was sung in praise of the soil they had exploited. It is however difficult to ascertain what they meant by Chin and Himalei. By Chin they might have meant China or the Chin Hills in Burma (Myanmar). They had definitely lived in Chin Hills for several generations before they entered the Lushai Hills (Mizoram). Even though historical records are lacking, the Hmar group of people must have spent several centuries along the foothills of the Himalayas before they reached Burma (Myanmar). (Thiek 39-42) Further, the Mizo were believed to be the off springs of the Chinese king. The above contention is supported by the Hualngo Literature and Cultural Association, Burma in *Zofate Chanchin* where they believed that many kindred tribes of Mizo came out of Chhinlung. (qtd in Thiek 42) Another Mizo historian, K. Zawla tells us similar stories about Chhinlung established in Shan by the son of a Chinese king. (6-67) Furthermore, according to Hmar historian L. Hranglien Songate, it is possible that after leaving Sinlung the Hmar ancestors established a village on one of those many hills or mountain named Shan, or they lived in one of those many towns and cities named after Shan in China and not the Shan state of Burma (Myanmar) which was created lately in the later part of the twentieth century. (11-13) The settlement of the Hmar in Mizoram followed due to migration. They were scattered and forced some of them to settle northward and southward, while others migrated with the Lusei. (Liangkhaia 22)

In the account of the “Exodus of the Hmars from Lushai Hills and their Dispersion” and “The Beginnings of Hostility in Lushai Hills and the British Expeditions”, Thiek documented that in the year 1871 when the British expedition was sent to Lushei Hills at the villages established by the Hmar sub-tribes in the

name of their respective clans had already been deserted and occupied by other communities. In the 18th century A.D. many of them already settled in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Arakan Hills and Cachar, including the North Cachar Hills of Assam. Even before other Mizo tribes entered the Lushai hills there had been inter-tribal wars among the various tribal communities of the Tibeto-Burmans of the Kuki-Chins. In spite of the atrocities, the Hmar and the Lusei lived together in many villages and developed common characteristics in lifestyle and socio-cultural practices. This had adversely affected the identity of the Hmar as a community in the Lushei Hills. Before the Lusei and other Mizo group entered, some of the Hmar and Kuki group had already left the Lushei Hills on learning the advent of warlike tribes and had reached the Northern part of Tripura, Cachar, North Cachar Hills and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. All the Hmar villages except a few on the northern border had been deserted or taken by the Lusei (Sailo) chiefs. Strangely, the names of those villages and hills named after the sub-tribes of Hmar have retained the name till date. Thus, Lushei Hills started to be deserted by the weaker and non-warlike tribes and even by the original settlers who had established many prominent villages. By 1894 most of the Hmar and other non-Lushei communities had already deserted those villages occupied by the Lusei chiefs. A good number of them continued to live peacefully with the Lusei and other Mizo group while a number of them remained in the houses of some chiefs as slaves or servants till the first decade of the 20th century A.D. when a new chapter opened up in the history of Lushei Hills (Mizoram) through the coming of Christianity. (113-134)

The Hmar have rich traditional songs which are statements and reminiscences concerning the people, the milestones in their history, their experiences, their joys and sorrows. The Hmar have been known by names- Kuki (Old Kuki or New Kuki) Lushai, Khawthlang, Fenngo, etc. Some Mizo historian fixed the date of their entry into the present day Mizoram to be sometime in A.D. 1562. Other historians contended that the time of their entry from Burma (Myanmar) was around 1200 A.D. (Thiek vi) The traditional songs and stories of the Hmar tell us about Sinlung as their primeval abode, and cherish their sentimental attachment to Sinlung and Shan till today. By nature the Hmar are receptive as well as adaptive so they easily imbibed the practices of their neighbouring tribes. In course of their long migration from the

south western part of China through the Shan states and Chin Hills of Burma, Mizoram and Tripura, many changes have taken place in their traditional usages and traditional practices due to contact and association with other tribes. Many of them have even been absorbed among other hill tribes.

Folktales and songs as traditional heritage handed down through generations express the cultural history and ancestry of a tribe. The traditional songs and tales assert about their history in the primitive stage. In understanding the significance of oral tradition I would like to denote Walter J. Ong's observation in *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, where he writes that primary oral culture today hardly exists and every culture has experienced the effect of writing. The orality of people perceives the world as interactive and interconnecting, "Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth."(14) The characteristics of orally based thought and expression relate intimately to the unifying, centralizing, interiorizing economy of sound as perceived by human beings. Orality is therefore an entity focused in the field of human consciousness that is analyzed into its component part. It is interactive and harmonious to the human consciousness. In the secular past, in whatever form the oral narratives played a significant role in the life and custom of the Hmar. Song and verbal expression were indispensable for any occasion or event to express their joy or grief. It created connectivity and harmony among the people and occupied an intrinsic part in their culture and tradition.

However, the place of Hmar orality in the post-colonial time has come to be neglected to a large extent. Margaret L. Pachuau in "Orality: Analyzing its Politics with the Domain of Mizo Narrative" focuses on the idea that colonialism has ushered in change in the perspective of identity. In the pre- and post-colonial perspective there has been a significant shift largely due to the advent of Christianity. "Even as colonial dynamics are inherently primary, relevant as they are today, it will not be too farfetched to state that orality is still best regarded to be less of literature and more of myth and lore, its literary merit remaining yet to be appreciated." (191) Hmar oral tradition also experiences a similar paradigm shift in the post-colonial period and there is a need for the Hmar community to reach beyond the paradigm of colonialism to rewrite and preserve the continuity of oral tradition.

The Hmar did not have any written records; hence the early history has to be gleaned largely from the oral traditions which have been passed on through generations, and also the folk tales and songs which have been sung from past generations. There are indeed many traditional songs that have been collected and documented. All such songs are account of their daily life, achievements, failures, wishes and recollection of events that affected their lives. The Hmar are also renowned for their skill in magic art and craft accompanied by mantras, chants and incantations. These mantras are sung in the form of songs while others are chanted or mumbled. There are also a number of children songs and lullabies sung by mothers to lull their babies to sleep in the oral tradition. Some of these are even tongue-twisters and help children in developing their language skills. It was customary for children to play together and sing these songs in the moonlight till bed time. In addition, there are a number of victory songs sung by brave and successful warriors and hunters. If a hunter is successful in bagging an animal, he would sing a victory song by which the people would come to know the animal killed. They prepare appropriate arrangements for the reception and celebration. There are songs even for the success in head hunting of enemies in war in which the warriors sing and celebrate. (Bapui 79)

Further, there are oral accounts, myths and tradition concerning the origin of man and story of creation termed as tradition of *Thimzing*. In those days it was believed that humans and fairies could communicate with each other and even intermarry; and their offsprings were exceedingly fair and beautiful and desired by every young men and women of the time. (Bapui 6) Instances of such marriage are also found in the folk tales of *Buonhle* and *the Fairy* and *Thlakur*. It is further believed that, in the beginning all mankind spoke the same language and even the animals and birds understood and spoke the same language. Yet the event of *Thlanrawkpa Khuongchawi* marked an occasion where there was the distribution of language and allotment of different sounds and functions to all inhabitants of the earth. From that day onwards all began to speak different languages and started to make different sounds. Subsequently, different functions were also distributed and assigned. There are also narratives associated to the origin of the eclipse, earthquake and some domestic animals. (Bapui 7-10)

According to Raymond Williams, culture is ordinary in every society and in every mind and it is synonymous to everyday life with the forms of signification that circulate within a society. Further, society is created by finding the common meanings and directions. Thus, the nature of culture is both traditional and creative, culminating from the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings.

Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact and discovery, writing themselves into the land. (4)

Therefore, culture implies a distinct way of life of a community. It can be detected in the various spheres of life, code and manners along with rules that is followed and practiced in the life and custom of a community.

The study of Hmar culture gives a valuable meaning of the Hmar society through the traditional institutions, customs and practices. It establishes knowledge about their history, culture and tradition. As accounted by Vanlal Tluonga Bapui in *Oral Traditions of the Hmars*, the oral tradition in religion and beliefs relates that the Hmar were originally animists. They believed that all things in nature could be animated or possessed by a spirit and upon their offense they need to be appeased by offering sacrifices. Most of the religious rituals have to do with the spirits who animated the objects of nature. They believed in the existence of a supreme God, called *Pathien*, believed to be the chief care taker of human beings, *Vanhril*, the God of fertility, *Hnuoihmangpa* is god of the nether world who ruled over the people of the world nad the under world, and *Khuonu-Khuopa* is god of nature, believed to rule over all matters existing on the surface of the earth. *Simbak* is another nature god ruling over crops and harvest.(11)

The Hmar believe that human beings have soul. The soul of the rich, hunters and warriors are believed to inherit *Pielral* (Paradise). The soul of the dead is believed to be taken care by *Kulsamnu*, who leads them to the village of the dead. They are also known to offer ancestor worship as they believe that their ancestors

will be able to bless them. Such worship is known as *Pi-Pu-Rau-Biek*. Though the Hmar believe in the supreme God, they do not offer sacrifices to him. Most of the sacrifices are offered to the evil spirit. (Bapui 12, 13) The principal worship and sacrifices are as mentioned: *Sungbing Inthawina*, is mainly ancestor worship observed by a family worship where a prized boar is killed. The cooked meat is served with *Zu* (liquor) the next morning. *Inronei* is another family worship where a prized boar, a full grown hen just before laying eggs, a he goat and a white cock are offered for the sacrifice. *Khawtlang Inthawina* is a corporate worship held outside the village at a suitable place. It is generally held once in a year to ensure good health and all round abundance and welfare. *Mimal Inthawina* is an individual worship held when a person falls sick. A priest examine the ill person and prescribes a sacrifice which may be a cock, a pig, a goat, a dog or even large animals according to the seriousness of the ailment. *Arthiem* is a sacrifice of a cock and is offered for fever of different kinds, cough and cold or influenza like illness. *Runat* is a sacrifice for rheumatism believed to be caused by *Kau*³ or *Khawhring* spirit. In this case all the bones of the sacrificial animal or bird are collected and buried in the ground *Tuibiek* is the sacrifice of the spirit of the river. *Ram* is a worship of the forest. It is offered to the deity of Khawbawn (Bhubon tilla of Cachar-Manipur border) to cure typhoid, pneumonia and other serious illness. *Nauhri* is worship for all ailments of children like polio, malnutrition, slow or unbalanced growth etc. *Uituk* is a sacrifice offered for chronic and malignant illness. *Kausie* is for those afflicted with the evil eye and *Phiengnat* sacrifice is for cure of all stomach ailments including dysentery, cholera and gastro-enteritis. (Bapui 15-17)

The Hmar are superstitious and believe in different kinds of spirit that are considered to be the root of all misfortune and affliction. So they try to appease them through sacrifices. The spirits believed to be in existence includes, *Thlarau*, which is the soul of the human being without which one cannot stay alive, *Thla* or *Thladam*, is a spirit dwelling on a person during his lifetime, *Thlatap*, is a weeping spirit, *Khawhri*, an evil spirit, *Khawchawm*, a spirit which often follows a person secretly, *Khuovang*, is spirit of the forest, *Phung*, an invisible spirit, ugly and fearful in form,

³ *Kau* is an evil and malignant spirit which is very envious of the state of people.

Khawmu and *Zasam* are spirit of the forest, *Pheisem*, a visible spirit having the form of a small person, *Tulum*, a malignant spirit which often enters the dead body making it rise up and move about, *Lasi*, a fairy, beautiful in appearance and dwells in caves and precipices, *Nelhau a rawi* are a group of playful spirits, *Tuolfa sum suk*, a spirit known to enter a person, *Ralhlo*, is a ball of fire seen flying about in winter. *Fanfa tui in chu*, are spirit of dead infants, *Tau* is a wandering spirit and *Kau* or *Khawhring* is a malignant spirit of envy. (Bapui 12, 13)

In the traditional belief system the Hmar have to perform divination before commencing any task or action known as *Aisan*. For settling a new village, ensuring perennial supply of water in a stream and to ascertain the success or failure of hunters, a priest performs divination. Divinations performed include; *Simbak*, considered a deity and a divination performed before the commencement of harvest known as *Tharlak*. Another divination and chanting of mantra is performed after the completion of harvest called *Fang ko Dawi* and the ritual for calling of *Thuite* is held to prevent the soul of a person to tarry in the field, done by the head of the family. (Bapui 18-23)

In the village organization and administration, the Hmar from the earliest time had community leaders with remarkable leadership quality after the exodus from Sinlung homeland. They led the people in course of their long migratory movement. Under their leadership they settled down in different lands and areas and established villages. Such leaders became head of the communities and they exercised administrative power and authority. They were responsible for the safety and welfare of their subjects. They were recognized as Chiefs by the Government when they entered India and were known as *Lal* among themselves. Every *Lal* imposed various taxes; the tax over the produce of the land was given in terms of paddy, known as *Busung* or *Faseu*. The *Lal* also took one of the forelegs of every wild animal killed by the villagers. The house of the *Lal* was constructed by his subjects that eventually become *Impui* (Supreme House) for the village or community. (Thiek 275)

The Hmar have age-old systematic institutions and village administration which are still maintained and practiced among the tribes. In Hmar villages, after

independence, the institution of *Gaonbura*⁴, as the successor of the office of the *Lal* is still considered hereditary in many villages. Some of the prominent traditional officials and position in the social institutions of the past are mentioned briefly as follows: The Chief or *Lal* appoints members of the Village Council known as *Khawnbawl* or *Pachawng*. There are a few specially privileged members, designated as *Siehmang* who are advisers to the Chief. In some villages there was another class of successful farmers or cultivators known as *Ramhuol*. Even though the chief possessed the supreme judicial power he acts as the chairman or president of the village court where all cases are tried and settled according to the customary law. Other dignitaries of the Hmar village includes; *Thiempu*, the village priest, *Tlangva*, the village crier, *Thirsu*, the village blacksmith and *Val Upa*, leaders of the young people appointed by the village authority. (Bapui 88-91)

There was also an institution called *Buonzawl*, also known as *Zawlbuk*, a male bachelor's dormitory, which was the first school for learning every skill of wooing a girl, to martial skills and hunting skills to defend the village from enemies and predated wild animals besides learning other social etiquettes. *Zawlbuk* also served as information centre where current affairs and happenings were intimated to the leaders. It also served as a watch-tower where the inmates should be readily available in times of emergency and help the sick, the needy, and the bereaved and also for digging graves. The virtue of *tlawmngaina*⁵ is also inculcated which is a significant social manner. Thus, *Zawlbuk* played an instrumental role in shaping the life of a Hmar young man. It has been noted by Hrilrokhum Thiek that, as the Hmar lived with the Lusei together in a number of villages and also as close neighbours, it is most likely that they adopted the *Zawlbuk* system from Lusei and Pawi communities as circumstances demanded. (327-331) However from the third decade of the twentieth century, *Zawlbuk* seemed to lose its dignity of the past and thus it was abolished. Today it has been replaced by community halls and clubs in small villages of the rural areas. (334)

⁴ Village headman

⁵ A self sacrificing service without expecting any reward or praise for the sake of others and do whatever the situation demands.

The Hmar are basically agriculturists depending entirely on shifting cultivation for their livelihood. They depend to a large extent on supply of wild vegetables and fruits from the forests. They keep domestic animals like bison, buffalo, cows, pigs, dogs, fowls and poultry. The main production includes rice and cereals. These animals and birds are kept for meat supply, for sacrifice and for barter. The Chief and his council of elders select a certain area from the forest for cultivation, where the heads of the families of the village are summoned for the distribution and assignment of the plot for cultivation known as *Pam Rorel*. The allotted portion is cleared and most of the farming works are done in group along with other families of the village and form a sort of cooperative group called *Lawm*. During the sowing the working group sings and dances as they work and the dance is known as *Butu-Khuong-Lawm*. The Hmar are also expert in hunting, trapping and fishing. They use bows, arrows, spears and later on guns. They hunt animals and birds for supplementing their diet. They are also expert in hunting by tracking. An expert hunter who is exceedingly successful in hunting is known as *Ramvachal*. The practice mentioned may be considered as one of the food gathering habits of the people. (Bapui 111-116)

In the traditional social practice, the matrimonial law is called *Thailak Dan*. There are mainly two methods of marriage among the Hmar. The most common method is called 'Marriage by Purchase' where the boy has to pay the bride price according to the law, in terms of of *Siel* (Mithun) which is a unit of measurement of monetary value. The oldest method is called 'Marriage by service' termed *Kawnglaw*, where the girl remains in the father's house for some years and her husband is expected to work for his in-laws. In such marriage the bride price is very much reduced. The law of divorce established that if a man divorces his wife illegally he has to pay a fine of one *Siel* and *Salam*, in the form of animal is paid to the village authorities. In case of divorce by wife the woman repays her bride price to the man, termed *Sum Insuo*. *Peksa Chang* is a divorce by the husband if his wife is disloyal. The woman need not pay back her price. *In that the*, is separation by mutual agreement. [Thiek 279-282]

The Hmar celebrate a number of festivals, organized by individual families or by the whole village where dance play an important part. Men, women, young and

old gather together and make merriments. The ceremony is consecrated in performance and observation involving the role played by the distinguished person arranging the feast. *Inchawng*, a family feast is given by a rich person connected with a family worship. The most famous *Inchawng* festival is *Siel-sun* (piercing the mithun) where the maternal uncle of the rich person, after the performance of the necessary rite by the priest, would pierce the mithun with a spear at the axilla (armpit) making a small cut. It is designed to be killed with one stroke. They pray for wine and meat and shower blessings to the host after their demands are fulfilled.

Siel-Sun, is one of the most famous *Inchawng*. There are two kinds of *Siel-sun*: (i) *Sun-fang*, where only one mithun is killed. (ii) *Sehmai*, where two mithuns are killed. The festival lasts for two to three days. Dance, singing, eating and drinking follows. The young would rock the house of the host violently as they sing until the host and his family members come out to offer their demands. After their demands are fulfilled they would bless the host with songs of blessing. *Siel-sun* is a pompous entertainment given by generous and very rich people.

Khuongchawi is also a big feast given by the chiefs and the rich people. In this ceremony the villagers prepare a big litter (*hlang*) in which they carry a big drum with the host or his youngest son and his nephew. A pompous procession is made from outside the village up to the house of the host passing through the streets of the village. The host or the entertainer throws away cornelian beads and other ornaments to the young people who scramble for the gifts.

Sahlang Dawm is a distinctive festival arranged by distinctive hunters and warriors. When a big *Siel-sun* is performed by the prominent hunters and warriors a public feast is arranged by the host and during the ceremony all the villagers prepare a big litter in which they carry the host with the skulls of all the wild animals and human beings he had killed. These skulls are the trophies of the hero. The people participating in the ceremony make a big procession along the streets of the village to commemorate the host.

In-ei is another ceremony of success and victory or triumph over the animals killed in hunting, a foe killed in fighting or a successful harvest. The festival held in connection with the killing of wild beast is called *Sa-in-ei* and those with a good harvest as *Bu-in-ei* and victory over an enemy or head of foe is called *Rallu-in-ei*.

During such celebrations different kinds of victory dances are performed. These victory dances are performed to show honour and respect as they celebrate their heroic deeds and valour. (Bapui 105)

Sikpui Ruoi or *Sikpui Lam* is the most important festival of the Hmar. In the past, the festival was called *Sikpui Lam*. In the past, everyone was involved in the celebration of the *Sikpui* festival. Men and women, young and old danced hand in hand singing the various *Sikpui* songs in unison. The whole performance was therefore called *Sikpui in Hruoi*. (Thiek 302-306) *Sikpui Ruoi* is an interesting and elaborate festival and takes about fifteen days during which any kind of quarrel is prohibited. It is regarded as a cheerful and peaceful festival. If there is death or mourning in the village during the season, the festival is cancelled. *Sikpui* dances and *Sikpui* songs are performed during the festival. Now, only one day, the 5th December is observed every year as *Sikpui Ruoi*.

The Hmar have various kinds of dances for different occasion and ceremonies. Most of the dances are still remembered and performed in the states of Assam and Manipur. Some of the popular dances include: *Hrang Lam* – an ancient victory dance, *Pheiphit Lam* – Pipe dance, *Khuol Lam* – dance in honour of important or distinguished guests, *Vaituksi* – War dance, *Lal Lam* or *Vai Lam* – Royal dance, *Feitung Tawl Lam* – Spear dance, *Dar Lam* – Gong dance, *Kawl Tet Lam* – Loom dance, *Lampalak* – a common dance performed by men and women arranged alternately, *Saipui Khup Suk* – dance in half-kneeling posture in imitation of elephant. *Par Lam* – Flower dance and *Chawn Lam*- dance associated with *Sikpui Lam*. (Thiek 315- 317)

The Hmar love amusement and different types of indigenous sports and pastimes are arranged in the street and open spaces. Some of the children's game and amusements are noted as follows: *Inlen* or *Indir* – it is a children game as well as dance played by two girls. *Fahrel-Tawk Lam* – Pestle Dance, *Khuoi-uo Singa Luta* – Bees entering the hive, *A Vakawl Uo Zuong Lam Uo* – Hornbill dance. Among the indigenous sports and pastimes, the most significant ones are: *Pawi Inkap* – Pawi (a large bean like seed) shooting, *Lamving* – Peg top, *Tau Uo Vava* – calling or invocation of the Tau spirit. Other interesting sports are *Inbuon* (wrestling), *Inher* (turning opposite through a staff), *Insun* (pushing opposite through a staff), *Inkei* (tug

of war), *Vawkpui innawr* (pig fighting) and *Insik* (pushing by the head). (Thiek 318-323)

The culture of the Hmar is manifested in the whole way of life. The attitudes, values, belief system are reflected in the oral tradition, folklores, rites and rituals, custom and practices. These cultural traditions maintain a relation to everything that existed in the society. The study seeks to look at the culture of Hmar where patriarchy is followed and seeks to problematize resistance by women to the established norm, by virtue of their feminine attributes of submission, forbearance and silence.

Within cultural studies, sex and gender are matters of culture rather than nature and are thus considered social construction. Cultural studies have particularly proved that women worldwide are regarded as subordinate to men, positioning them to the patriarchal world of domesticity. Cultural influence affects an individual perspective on cultural institution and how it adheres to the interpretations that are prompted by socially produced cultural norms. The influence of culture directs the existence of demarcation between men and women encouraged by the norms of the society and takes in for questioning the subordinate position of women. The concept of subordination of femininity is further evaluated in the concept of gender, which holds the basic biological and psychological difference leaving a subordinate consciousness in women, rendering them to meet the expectations of a society dominated by men. The concept of dominance and social order often placed women on the side of negativity, depravity, imposing them into silence. Women are relegated to a life of limitations and thus imposing silence upon them is regarded moralistic, designed by men and decision makers.

Patriarchy rests on the defined notions of man's ascendancy and interests over and above women's concern maintained by social relationships and cultural practices. According to Gerda Lerner,

Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. (239)

Women by custom and convention are traditionally rendered to subordinate and feminine roles. They are appropriated to a world of domesticity and become a product of ideological construction conditioned by society. Men's participation in public life exposed them to work outside and fulfill their role as providers and protectors of the family. Thus family becomes the core institution of women's domestic labour controlled by men through economic power. Men as a dominating figure argue and act in favour of male domination on the pretext of cultural conditioning. "Both in everyday life and in theoretical and intellectual formulations, men have come to define maleness as that which is basically human, and to define women as not-men." (Chodorow 111) Patriarchy has thus influenced the psychology of both men and women; where women are reinforced to accept the ideology of masculinity, of men as strong, infallible, as those who have a right to authority, respect and dignity. In the differential treatment of women, denial and negation rendered them to assume roles that are traditionally insisted.

In the traditional pre-Christian society, Hmar men assumed the role of protectors of village and were considered strong and brave. In fact women, children and the entire village needed men to protect them from enemies and harmful wild animals. In such a state, women looked upon men for security. There are several domains where women are considered subordinate. In traditional Hmar society, the head of the family is the father. The head of the household was also a representative in inter-clan and community relations. From such historical account it is evident that patriarchy was dominant. The masculine-bias custom and practices render women into traditional familial roles. Women were primarily concerned with child-bearing and child-rearing and household maintenance are considered socialized responsibilities of women and more importance was given to private than public life. Women's roles and responsibilities were limited only to domestic chores and responsibilities and any other work associated to domestic work. Besides her responsibility in all the household work she also assists in the fields by taking midday meals or gathering tools and implements of men after a day's work. After she returns from the fields she continues to engage in her domestic chores again. At night she spins and weaves while attending to her guests until she sleeps. A girl child begins learning the household tasks at home from her mother while the boys move

out early to attend the *Zawlbuk*, (bachelors' dormitory) to learn disciplines of hunting, wrestling and social etiquettes. The customary law was a fundamental yardstick in administration and maintaining social rules.

There are certain maxims associated to women. Lal Dena writes in "Status of Mizo (Hmar) Women through the Ages" that indicate the inferior status of Hmar women in the past.

- 1) The wisdom of a woman does not extend beyond the banks of a river.
- 2) A woman (wife) and old fencing can be replaced any time.
- 3) Let women and dogs bark as they like;
- 4) Women and crabs have no religion, etc (36)

A Hmar woman has no rights within the family and society. She belongs in mind and body from her birth till death to her father and brother and to her husband after marriage. She is not considered to have an identity in the family or society and adopts the identity and name of her husband after her marriage. By custom and convention, a Hmar woman has no inheritance rights or share in the property of her father. Gender hierarchies among the Hmar still prevails in the post-Christian time. The coming of Christianity introduced education, yet it was not encouraged among the girls, as they were intended to do domestic work. They were trained towards child care, home nursing, cooking, knitting sanitation etc. (Dena 36-38) Today, even though women have become educated and earning member of the family, yet they have to look upon men in decision making. Women conform to patriarchal obligations and follow responsibility accorded to them. The experience of patriarchal control is psychological, resulting in their individual anxieties. The customary laws are also male-centric and certain restrictions are still maintained for girls in choosing their partner. In Hmar, patriarchy is practiced where women are cultured to stereotypical roles in their lived relationships with men.

Patriarchal resistance in the thesis is understood as a confrontation to a system that is practiced and accepted in Hmar society since traditional past. It is a resistance put forward by women against a structure and conducted in different ways. The psychology of Hmar women considers it a norm to be subordinate and silence is considered moralizing. While interrogating their struggles and painful episodes of subordination and neglect the thesis further tries to problematize how Hmar women

prevail over these very struggles by mustering emotional strength, patience and determination. In the traditional pre-Christian time, resistance is reflected in the silent effort of women as analyzed in the women characters of the folktales. In the form of expression, the songs composed by women in the pre-Christian era interpret the enduring nature of women through the agony and misfortune encountered and identifying the mode of resistance shown by them. In addition, the songs composed by Hmar women in the post-Christian era have allowed women to create their own world; expressing the condition of their existence, where the major occupation has been a delineation of their inner life. An urge to document their expression and experiences are to be understood as a conscious effort by women to create spaces for themselves from which they are able confront the challenges of their life. They are more liberated in their view and more articulate in their expression.

All psychological and sociological factors that go to make up the feminine quality of a woman make them strong and develop means to oppose and resist patriarchy. Women conform to patriarchal standard as a means to obstruct, control and resist patriarchy. In the modern post-Christian context, women are empowered by education to use different platforms to resist patriarchy. There is a considerable shift in the nature of patriarchy today compared to the traditional past, In present modern society women are earning members and financially independent. The confrontation and challenges posed are more psychological in nature definitely linked to treatment meted out through patriarchal forces, where women are faced with anxieties to comply to the decision of men in the family and society. Although women are educated and no longer face any of the traditional tasks or standards of conformity of the traditional past, yet their mind is entrenched in patriarchy and positions themselves to play gender roles. However they face these critical situations with courage and dignity and manage to retain their identity in a male dominated society. "Women by contrast, although always of secondary social and cultural status, may in favorable circumstances gain psychological security and a firm sense of worth and importance in spite of this." (Chodorow 65) Thus, the female psyche develops through the experience of certain relational issues. Her true self emerges from the layers of conformity she follows and may attain psychological assurance and a firm sense of self worth and importance.

Mary Wollstonecraft, the first major theoretical explorer of gender inequality in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* rejects the established view that a woman is naturally weaker or inferior to man and remains enslaved because a corrupt process of socialization inhibits her intellect. Socialization in childhood and gendered task and family roles mould the behaviour, attitudes and psychology of women as propounded by Chodorow in *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. This gendered social stratification upholds in intensifying the difference and are delineated through the analysis of the folk tales and songs. Women experience institutional inequality bound by custom, laws and social roles. The dichotomous existence of men and women categorized into public and private domain, leads to disadvantage of women relative to men.

To contextualize patriarchal resistance through the folktales and songs, twelve folktales sourced in their original Hmar language and in translation have been rendered in the original Hmar language and in translation, sourced from Lal Dena Hmar *Folk Tales Retold* and two books written by Vanlal Tluonga Bapui *The Oral Traditions of the Hmars* and *Assam Rama Hmarhai*. The tales of *Buonhle* and the *Fairy*, *Lalruong*, *Lalmang*, *Hrangkhup* and *Thawnglai*, *Lamlir*, *Rengte*, *Paruolsarihai*, *Mauruong*, *Sawrlai Sakhilawngdar II Pawthir* and *Hrangchal* and *Thlakur* have been rendered to evaluate the representation of the lives and struggles women and also the hegemonic representation of the power of men in the society. The glorification and celebration of men-folk through the festivals observed like *Khuongchawi*, *Inchawng*, *Siel-sun*, *Sahlang dawm*, *In-ei* have been rendered as referents of honour towards their bravery and strength. Besides, the songs *Hlado*, *Darlam Hla*, *Hranglam hla*, *Saia Ke Tet Hla* are profuse with pronouncement of pride and dignity.

The songs chosen for the study of the difficult circumstances experienced by women in the pre-Christian context includes *Semruk Hla* speak of the gratuitous treatment meted out to a woman. *Chongngo Hla* is a vengeful song that carries the malice of a woman whose parents were killed. *Hrangchawm Hla* comprises composition expressing a feeling of discrimination in a state of bereavement. *Tuoni Hla* is a sequence of songs expressing the humiliation of a woman. It may be noted that women were allowed to express their thoughts through songs which may be

accounted as a privilege they enjoyed in a society where they are considered subordinate. Further, to contextualize the anxieties and struggles of the modern Hmar women, twelve songs composed by women in the modern Christian era has been taken from *Independent Kohran Hlabu* [Hymn Book of Independent Church]⁶ to analyze the anxieties and struggles of modern Hmar women that includes; Thangsuontling – “Taplai Bangin” [Ceasing to weep]⁷ (200) Darlientling – “Khawvel hi a Buoi tah” [The World is in Turmoil] (239) Rosiem – “Sam ang Thena Khawvel” [This World of Separation] (83) Darchawngpui – “Lalpa Hnena Ropui” [The Great Victory of the Lord] (312) and “Hmun a Hang Siem Ka ta Dingin” [The Lord has Made a Place for Me] (239) Darhnieng – “Ka Tlung Pha Chun” [When I Reach the Abode of God] (252) Luii’s “Lalpa Kuomah” [Near to God] (337) Runchawng – “Sandamtu Lengna” [The Abode of God] (217) and “Mi tin Lawmna” [Everyone’s Happiness] (202) Hrangawikim – “Chu Ram In Hawi zie chu” [How Peaceful is the Land] (103) Lalrohnem – “Ka ta a nih” [The Lord is Mine] (29) and Tirko Zingi “Hring Intluon Ram.” [This Living World] (290)

In the analysis of the patriarchal resistance by women the folk tales and songs are reinterpreted to decipher the enduring nature of women in the analysis of the challenges they face and the power and strength that evolve from their endurance. The struggle to overcome their misfortune assured their maturity that renders them internally strong and resistant. “The concept of femininity is artificially shaped by custom and fashion, it is imposed upon each woman from without; she can be transformed gradually so that her canons of propriety approach those adopted by males” (Beauvoir 762). Women characters in the select folktales are tolerant, abandoned and forcibly conquered by men. The superiority of men is impressed upon them rendering them passive or silent. But amidst this passivity or silence there is a rebellious note that tells us that they have not accepted their fate and challenge to grapple with their suppressed feeling.

In the second chapter, the lives and struggles of women in the pre-Christian era through the study of select folk tales based on the biological, psychological and socio-cultural process has been rendered. There is a demarcation in the feminine and

⁶ The title of the book has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

⁷ The title of the songs has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

masculine roles and behaviour that gets conclusively reflected. There are striking examples of women regarded as possession of men who are manipulated by men. In the story of *Thlakur*, Lawnglai reveals the tension of a woman as she fulfills the role of a wife and a mother. She was forced to be possessed by Thlakur who was captivated by her beauty and lent a deaf ear to her requests and had to endure misfortune and hardships. The story of *Sakhilawngdar II* reveals another character manipulated for her beauty and forcibly married by Pakhattepa. She walks out of her marital life as her husband in a fit of drunken state abused her continuously. Mauruong's mother in the story of *Mauruong* reveals another unfortunate episode of a woman who is deceived by her husband and killed. The daughter Mauruong is further pushed to a life of injustice and manipulation by her step mother. However these women characters in their socialized role as mother, wife and daughter are persistent in fulfilling their role even in the face of humiliation and hindrance.

The psyche of a woman that develops through gender identification in the mirror stage and socialization develops relational issues distinct from men. The psychological influence is reflected in the case of Sawrlai and Mauruong, as to how they develop intrinsically feminine traits connected to their particular social roles. Ultimately one cannot deny the power and struggles implicit in the women characters, the ability to choose and act even in the position of willed submission. The derogatory terms and position accorded to women characters reveals how language is used to refer to female characters so as to establish a position of authority over sexuality and personality defined by men. Women are not appropriated in the dominant world of men in literature which conceded their role in derogatory terms as is evident in the case of Sibarnu from *Rengte*, Kulsamnu from *Lalhmang*, Supheikak from *Lalruong* and Mauruong's stepmother from *Mauruong* which are varying representation of women in a negative role. The representation of the struggles of women is further evident from the songs composed by women in the pre-Christian times that are expression of the difficult circumstances they experienced as evident from the historical account of their lives. The suffering and challenges faced by the women characters in the select folk tales and songs are representation of their struggle and will power amidst difficult circumstances, surrendered to the edifice of culture where she is subordinated and manipulated in the name of culture. An

interpretation of the yearning expressed in the songs composed by women in the Christian era illustrates the experience and struggle of modern women and their challenges are reflected through their individual anxieties. It suggests an understanding of the changing state of affairs under Hmar patriarchy, while identifying the mode of resistance shown by women towards it.

In the third chapter, the cultural conditioning of dominance, aggressiveness and ambition of men in the pre-Christian era is analyzed as represented in the folktales and songs. The chapter looks at how Hmar social system prioritizes masculinity and patriarchal dominance as seen in its history. For men, learning to be masculine means learning his gender identity and have a clear sense of gender difference which induces them to maintain a vigorous boundary in consciousness and being. Men in the select Hmar folktales are represented to be strong, witty and courageous and assumed the role of warriors and successful masters. The manner in which their strength is extolled is the culmination of the superiority of men. Men in the select folk tales did not only expose their power and command but were also witty and skillful as evident in the story of *Lamlir* and *Lalhmanng*. Lamlir's exceptional skills are portrayed in the manner in which he performed extraordinary tasks along with his three friends. It expresses not only their skills but also their vigour and robust disposition in their behaviour and action. On the other hand Lalhmanng's wit and talent secured him worthy position among the other ministers and won the favour of the king. Further, men in the folktales exhibited whatever behaviour was necessary in rendering their strength and power. The story of *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai* exposes the courage, determination and unwavering strength of Hrangkhup in his encounter with Thawnglai. The legacy of strength is further exhibited in the next generation in his son Suonvawr.

The complex interactions of the historical, psychological and biological factors that are displayed and experienced are manifested in the activities of people that constitute the cultural tradition. The socialization of boys from an early age emphasizes his gendered attitude and behaviour that further influence his psychology. Jacques Lacan's theory of gender identification in the mirror stage proves that the personality and nature of a man is internalized from the early childhood experience which ultimately becomes a constituent part of his personality.

Lalruong's proficiency and adroit skill are but a result of his exposure in the gradual acquisition of self-identification and expertise concerning men. Likewise, Buonhlel's proficiency and accession to skills of warfare and fight are marked by his symbolic entry into the symbolic order and socialization. Further, the idea of masculine power and strength through boastful display of strength victimize women who are regarded subordinate to men. Sawrlai stumbles to the authority of her father and becomes a captive of Vawmpahrawng. Mauruong's father denouncement of his wife by killing her, Sairam's powerful magical spell upon Kungi and Thlakur's compulsive nature in refusing to listen to the pleas of the agonizing Lawnglai are exposition of the authority of men upon women in the boastful display of power which may be interpreted as a part of their action that advocated the hegemony of men in the socio-cultural practices.

The chapter also delineates how culture observes the traditional view of man as dominant as they ascribe to particular behaviour accorded to them. It also interrogates the purpose of traditional festivals like *Khuongchawi*, *Inchawng*, *Siel-sun*, *Sahlang Dawm* and *In-ei* to emphasize the importance and indispensable presence of men. During such celebration, different victory songs are sung that celebrates the achievement of men. It is an expression of pride rendered for a successful male hunter or warrior. In its composition and form it is vigorously masculine with a message of bravery and success. The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' as put forth by R.W. Connell, is a concept that stands as a standard in evaluating other form of masculinity that guarantees the dominant position of men and subordination of women in patriarchal system where power and dominance is transmitted to men through culture and society. This further elaborates the dominant position of men and subordination of women in patriarchal system that transmits power to men through culture and society. Likewise, Antonio Gramsci's theory of spontaneous consent explains how consent is given by the subordinate group to the directions imposed by the dominant group to make its rule acceptable before it resorts to direct force upon the subordinate group they victimize. The consent of women reveals that the social values accorded to men are internalized not only by men but by women as well in contemporary Hmar society.

The fourth chapter interrogates the silence and voices of resistance by women through their experience and their responses. It highlights women's attempt to cope with these challenges and assert their strength. Even though men did not show any sense of respect towards women, the women characters in the tales find a way to assert their strength in their resistance against such pressures. The fairy's escape in *Buonhlei and the Fairy*⁸ reinforces the idea of a woman challenging the issue of women's oppression in patriarchy and offer alternate path in her struggle for autonomy. The metamorphosis of Mauruong's mother in the story of *Mauruong* is an expression of endurance amidst pain and disillusionment in fulfilling her duty as a mother. *Sakhilawngdar II* narrates a woman's silent submissiveness as an effective means of tolerance in a tyrannical society. Kungi's ordeal with Sairam in *Pawthir le Hrangchal* is an assertion of her maturity and endurance. Lawnglai in *Thlakur* is enduring in accepting the fate and her silent and strong determination shows that a woman can persist and adapt even in a calamity.

Women characters in the folktales are tolerant, abandoned, forcibly conquered by men. The superiority of men is impressed upon them rendering them passive or silent. Even though silence is often seen as a sign of women's submission to patriarchal authority, yet it may be stated that silence is not merely a sign of absence of voice or power but it also signify resistance to hegemonic power. Silence in women delivers power to sustain strength in her. It is a means of their confrontation and challenge against limitations on their freedom and exploitation. The resistance implicit in the case of Buonhlei's wife in *Buonhlei and the Fairy* is one where a woman derives an alternate path in her suppressed existence. Also, in *Thlakur* Lawnglai's endurance in securing her position is one where she was faced with the wrath of her own uncle and surmounting obstacles. Her silence becomes more communicative in expressing her tenacity and endurance. In the story of *Pawthir and Hrangchal*, the silent submission of Kungi to Sairam asserts the maturity and determination of a woman who ultimately became successful in attaining freedom.

⁸ The word 'fairy' is taken from the translated text of Lal Dena. The meaning given in *Hmar-Hmar-English Dictionary* by Vanlal Tluonga Bapui for the word 'lasi' as a spirit who can appear as beautiful damsel in the forest, rightly explains the word in the context of the story.

The songs written by women in traditional pre-Christian society are recognized as powerful note of rebellion and resistance. The life and songs of Chawngmuok⁹ and Chawngchirh¹⁰ are testament to the fact that women have sought various strategies to voice their ideas and concerns and to overcome social and traditional obstructions. Such assertion is seen as a demonstration of their strength in grappling with the situation. Women discover the diverse possibilities that silence holds as a means of expression in their resistance against patriarchy and social oppression. Likewise, a number of gospel songs composed by women in the Christian era has been ascertained that bears the pain and suffering of women in this bleak world against which they renew their spirits for an eternal bliss. Therefore, the language of femininity in protest involves ambiguity to express the dilemmas of women who have the social and material resources to confront the anxieties of new possibilities.

The concluding chapter recounts and sums up the analysis of the preceding chapters. The gender based analysis of folktales and songs, the traditional female task reinforced by the acceptance for survival that resulted in the misfortune and suffering of the women characters. In the present context the internalization and acceptance of patriarchy by Hmar women involves a positive evaluation and not compliance to inferiority. The attitude that resulted in the assimilation of the western culture in the name of Christianity and the impact of modernization have profound reaction in developing the status of women in the present context. The value systems had also undergone sweeping changes. Traditional value systems have been replaced by modern and western value systems. However, there are several domains where women are considered subordinate. They evolve conscious effort to create space for themselves from which they are now able to view the world through their own perspective while being aware of continued anxieties and struggles under limitations of patriarchy.

⁹ A famous woman song composer in the pre-Christian time, popularly known as Pi. Hmuoki, widely known not only among the Hmar but also among the Lushei and other kindred tribes.

¹⁰ Another woman composer of the pre-Christian time. She belonged to the Bapui (Faihriem, a Hmar sub-tribe) family and lived in the Bapui village. She was popularly known as Bapuinu.

While interrogating their struggles and painful episodes of subordination and neglect, the thesis seeks to prove how Hmar women prevail over these very struggles by relooking at their silences, presumably imposed by patriarchy and mustering emotional strength, patience and determination in their resistance. Contending to the concept of tradition and culture, women persevere to whatever competency they have as a form of resistance. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* emphatic analysis of women's status in the discrimination of status and role, Wollstonecraft's urge for equal opportunities for men and women in education, work and politics in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* explosion of the misconception that women finds satisfaction in traditional roles, probed towards equality and identity formation have been rendered as they questioned the politics of male superiority. Further, the concept of dominance and social order that often placed women on the side of negativity, depravity, imposing them into silence is seen as their strength in asserting their determination. The unheard subaltern voice by Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, the apathy resulting from silent submission in Helen Cixous, the urge by Luce Irigaray for women to speak are seen as crucial in countering their exploited state.

In addition, Jacques Lacan mirror stage, as the most significant moment of self-identification has been used to demonstrate how social and cultural institutions are responsible in the formation of sexual inequality and social institution of gender in the course of transformation in the sensitivity and the psyche. Further, Nancy J. Chodorow's concept of unconscious awareness of self and gender within a socio – psychological perspective has been considered in the formation of inequality and difference that permeate society and culture.

Gerda Lerner's seminal text *The Creation of Patriarchy* has been studied to trace patriarchal gender relations. Even though it traces patriarchy from western civilization, it incorporates issues to reinterpret patriarchy from a woman's perspective. In addition a systematic analysis of patriarchy, its dimension, sites and changes of patriarchy has been analyzed as found in Sylvia Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy*. It provides necessary overview of recent traditional debates which has taken place over gender inequality.

Among the Hmar writers the writings of two contemporary Hmar writers have been studied in assessing the position and contribution of women in the secular pre-Christian as well as the post-Christian Hmar society. Lallungawi's *Thlirna Tharin* [New Perspective]¹¹ is an analytical approach towards the culture, religion, economic and social life of the Hmar, juxtaposing it with the contemporary Christian life while maintaining the essence of Hmar secular culture. He gives a different view towards the position of women that contributes not towards their subordination or what is traditionally held in Hmar society. In addition, L. Keivom *Hmar Hla Suina* [Detailed Account of Hmar Songs] is a comprehensive record and analysis of songs of the traditional past up to the Christian era. The book is seminal in tracing how Hmar women were endorsed towards composing songs in the traditional past which however ceased until the dawn of Christianity that produced a few women composers yet discontinued without any significant production by women.

In traditional pre-Christian time the Hmar woman plays important role in daily activities pertaining to social, economic and cultural life of the community. She plays multiple roles in activities concerning household, neighbourhood, fields and forest. In the past education was not encouraged among the girls. There was no school for girls and they were left to support their mothers in every household work and no matter how much they contribute towards the society and family they were bounded by the rules and regulations as per the customary laws. Certain taboos were prescribed for women folk and their movement was restrained under such superstitious beliefs. Under such restrictions the life of women was expected to conform to social expectations. However the underlying note is sustained in seeing their endurance as their strength even in the state of subordination.

The new forces of modernization brought about by Christianity, globalization and modern education have advanced the position of women socially and economically in the Hmar society. Education has become an encouraging factor for girls. The rise in literacy rate has enhanced the position of women in the society and widened opportunity in the field of employment, education, political and social life. The role of women is taken to greater heights beyond home makers to bread winners.

¹¹ The title of the selected works mentioned in the stanza has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

Traditional value systems were replaced by modern value system and women occupied a more respectable position in the society. The impact of modernization and multiculturalism amongst the Hmar ushered in deep rooted reaction to indigenous values. The cultural identity of Hmar women came to be relegated to a contradictory and ambivalent role. The forces of globalization and modernization for Hmar women in today's context elevate them to reclaim their lost assertiveness, individuality, their status and strength.

Yet the patriarchal society with all its shifts and changes still encourages hyper-masculinity in all its social, economic, religious and political function that positions women subordinate to men. Women are still exposed to confront the limitations of patriarchy in their lives and their struggle and resistance is carried out in their assertion of individuality, evaluating their status, expressing their problems, dreams and aspirations while being aware of continued anxieties and struggles under limitations of patriarchy.

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CHAPTER 2

Representation of Women: Their Lives and Struggles as Depicted in the Tales and Songs

The analysis of the lives and struggles of women in the folktales and songs composed by women both in the pre-Christian and post-Christian period seeks to interrogate society's notion of gender and gender discrimination in the social system and cultural practices of Hmar society. The songs composed by women in the pre-Christian era are artistic composition that paved the way towards an estimation of the position of women in the traditional past and attempts to reveal how their songs serve as an avenue to give valuable insights into the social system, superiority of men and social standards accorded to women. The content of the songs are evocative in communicating their feelings, grievance and resentment in the patriarchal scenario of their time, which may be interpreted as their persistence in forbearing their affliction, an estimation that may be marked towards their resistance to patriarchal standards. In addition, the analysis of songs in the post-Christian time also reveal similar element of discrimination and pain. Even though the nature of affliction may not be similar to that of the traditional past, yet it is poignant with desperate feeling of mortification and injustice experienced by them in their life. It may further be noted that the songs of women in the post-Christian era is marked by optimistic note of salvation and deliverance in the afterlife which support and integrate a source of strength to face and resist the pangs of inequality and injustice in the social hierarchy. Likewise, the Hmar folktales reflect the attitude and traditional values of the Hmar society in the past.

The representation of women in the Hmar folktales emphasizes the struggles and difficulties that they face in the stereotypical images of mothers, daughters and wives. The social stratification that places men over women exposes patriarchal dominance behind the folk narratives in maintaining the position of women in the society. Women were regarded as possession of men and are expected to safeguard patriarchal interests. In such a situation women encountered familial and social problems that were at the same time aggravating and challenging for them. Hence, this study illuminates the concept of gender socialization, cultural influence and psychological influence that formulates society's notion of gender and subordination

of women. Women are defined in relation to men and socialized to acquire qualities of submission, gentleness and passivity in their relation to men and also to please and depend on them. From such historical and ideological inheritance patriarchy has become dominant. In traditional Hmar society, the dichotomy of private and public life of men and women postulated a division of labour where men were exposed to the civic life of farming, hunting, fishing, gathering food and other materials, setting out for war and fight, while women confined to domestic and field work. The day for a woman began with carrying water from a source in the village, separating rice husk and cooking. Besides, she gets herself involved in weaving for the family, looking after the children and domestic pets as well. She also accompanies the men to the fields. (Lalthangliana 14) Men work outside and from a young age they have the privilege to develop themselves in the Zawlbuk institution to learn various arts and discipline to shape their personality and character. However, there was no Zawlbuk for women. (Thiek 326) Men did not dominate only the public realm but also the private sphere as they were positioned to make decision. The practice of cultivation for survival prompted them to move places in search of space and land. Eventually, women became dependent on men for survival and security. Besides, there were social taboos accorded to women before they embraced Christianity. The first one states that a pregnant woman should not uncover her abdomen; otherwise, the evil spirits may see the foetus inside the mother's womb and destroy it out of jealousy. The second, crossing of river by a pregnant woman is believed to cause miscarriage. Such superstitious belief augmented insecurity and fear in them. (Thiek 289) There was also the constant fear of being attacked or killed by enemies or wild animals; this insecurity of women inhibited their movement and as a result women depended on men who impressed their superiority on them and patriarchy became more defined.

The strict roles and responsibility attributed to both men and women are ascribed where gender becomes the main differentiating factor. The patriarchal standards that were directed towards women stood as a differentiating factor in the society and culture in which women belongs. Men are advantaged in inheritance and succession in the Hmar customary law. Properties were equally divided among the sons. Daughters have the right to enjoy their father's property but no share of inheritance was accorded to them unless some special reason arises. (Bapui 2011,

128) The father or eldest brother is responsible for taking decision in the family or legal matters. In terms of succession and inheritance the youngest son inherits the property. However, in some cases, the eldest and the youngest son enjoys equal share of the father's property. Sometimes chieftainship was succeeded by the eldest son and in the absence of a son, the eldest brother's son preferably the youngest one succeeds the chief. In many cases the property of the father was equally divided among the sons while daughters may also have good shares in the father's property. (Thiek 282) As a result, the family is structured by such social conditioning where preference was given to men compared to women.

It may however be noted that patriarchy has also accommodated in the interests of women. According to Gerda Lerner, "One of the most challenging tasks of Women's History is to trace with precision the various forms and modes in which patriarchy appears historically, the shifts and changes in structure and function and the adaptations it makes to female pressure and demands." (Lerner 239) Even though women were subordinated in the family and society, they had an important role to play as they were expected to perform traditionally feminine task and were socialized to be nurturing and responsible. A woman's role in reproduction, nurturance of children and household chores though may not be considered productive nor having any economic value, yet it may be ascertained that the position of woman was important as she is the determining element of social life. "Men seized control over the households, women became degraded and slaves to men's lust and were instruments for producing more children... This shift towards gender inequality was presented as a natural, not a social process." (Engels 11) Women as the source of new human being began to be exchanged as valued property. The Hmar tribe involved in constant inter-clan or inter-tribe wars for which they needed good number of citizens to fight during the war for the survival of their clanship. Therefore women were important for their reproductive ability and were needed to reproduce more children and it emphasized what was seen as their major role. Even though men controlled women, men became aware that the reproduction of women becomes his property and therefore both women and children became valuable property or economic assets of men. Women therefore hold an important position for men and their interests were safeguarded.

Lallungawi's *Thlirna Tharin* in assessing the priority given to women by men in the traditional past stated that, even while returning from the fields after their day's work women carry heavy laden basket while the men returns almost empty handed. They do so as cautionary measures for men to act promptly in case of an unmediated attack by wild animals or any other such dangerous attack upon women.(207) Moreover, women were included to play a role in the administration of the village. A woman, whether married or widow of high repute was chosen for *Khuo Nupui*¹². A leader is chosen for them from amongst the *Pachawng* (high official of the churf) and their duty was to welcome the members of the village whenever they return victorious. They play a major role in consoling the family where an infant dies and takes the responsibility of its burial. They are the first to be present whenever there is death in any family. In Hmar tradition, whenever a feast is arranged on some special occasion, there is a provision to wrap the cooked pieces of meat. The wrap of meat is distributed among distinguished guests or relatives of the host which is a mark of respect. *Khuo Nupui*, therefore were privileged as they were entitled to receive a wrap of meat whenever a prized animal is killed along with the *Hausa* (Chief) and *Pachawng* (officials)

In the religious belief also some of the supernatural beings with feminine essence were worshiped. *Khuonu*¹³ was considered the creator of every living form on earth. She was regarded as the protector of mankind. The name of *Khuonu* was the most popular and commonly worshipped among the other gods. The term *Khuonu* associated to a woman may be contradicting, yet it may be said that mothers and their role as reproducers and nurturers of children gives a sense of protection to children. Even children feel safe with their mothers as they look upon them for their need and guidance. Such an ideal characteristic was attached to *Khuonu*, that even people feel safe with the motherly affection associated to her name. For this reason people were more prompted towards seeking her name to keep them safe and protect them from danger and misfortune. (Lallungawi 51) Vanchunglaizuor was another goddess who was believed to do good to mankind. Whenever people needed water she would fetch water from her heavenly abode and pour down to the earth which

¹² A woman leader in a village

¹³ A female term for God.

people call rain. Vangchunlaizuor was responsible for deciding whether an annual year would be prosperous or barren. The people therefore request the priest or *thiempu* to call upon the spirit of Vanchunglaizuor to grant them a year of blessing and prosperity. (Lallungawi 63, 64)

“Where culture meant a state or habit of the mind, or the body of intellectuals and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life. This development, like each of the original meanings and the relation between them, is not accidental, but general and deeply significant.” (Williams, xvi-xvii) The habits, attitudes and standards of an individual contribute towards the development and functioning of a society or a community. The cultural practices influence an individual perception of the cultural institution and consequently, the constitution of man as masculine and woman as feminine is done through the dynamics of culture. Women’s sole responsibility lies in maintaining the domestic and nurturing roles. In addition to their daily life routine, women were responsible towards the care of the home, children, men, sick and old members of the family, even while she remains engaged in her other household work like cooking, washing, cleaning, weaving and even working in the fields. They were regarded as consumers of the resources produced by men and their role in reproduction are unaccounted and not considered economic activity or productive because women do it for care and love for the family. They adopt the socially accepted feminine roles of nurturance and compassion for the smooth functioning of her role as a wife and as a mother. It is through such social relationship that the individual life of a woman is defined and conceptualized.

The concept of femininity has an impact on the individual perception and the expectation of society as well where gender becomes an important factor. Ann Oakley states, “Gender is the amount of masculinity and femininity found in a person, and obviously, while there are mixtures of both in many humans, the normal male has a preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity.”(159) Therefore it may be said that gender is a complex socio-cultural construct, wherein we find the demarcation of the feminine and masculine roles, behaviour, psychological and emotional qualities and performance that conclusively reflect sexual difference. It further holds the expressions of social inequality and hierarchy associated with men and women in the society and the distinction is

maintained to dispute the definite biological or psychological difference. Such distinction generates a consciousness in women that they are naturally suited to domestic roles. Thus, the constitution of femininity distinct from masculinity gives pattern to gender socialization where the expectations of society are maintained.

Gender socialization promotes the habits, attitude, ability and certain standards that contribute towards an individual participation in the smooth functioning and participation in a society or a community. Hence gender socialization is “The specific process of socialization which teaches children their gender roles” (Bhasin, 13) A biological child is exposed to a standard of norms and roles, an expectation to do or not do in terms of his or her identity in a given society through the process of socialization. The process continues in the learning of the normative behavior associated with his or her gender identity and thus psychologically trained to estimate the difference. In women, the reproductive ability which includes child bearing, child birth, lactating and responsibility of child care, seems to be a universal experience. The exposure and acquaintance to external world develop their choices, ability and attitudes. These experiences are crucial in building up their self-perception.

Thus men and women are socially constituted to be different in behavior, emotions and attitudes. Socialization and the whole process of discrimination against women was traditionally done by society and sustained by women themselves.

The first and most important qualification in a woman is good-nature or sweetness of temper: formed to obey a being so imperfect as man, often full of vices, and always full of faults, she ought to learn betimes even to suffer injustice, and to bear the insults of a husband without complaint; it is not for his sake, but her own, that she should be of a mild disposition. (Wollstonecraft 105)

A woman may suffer injustice and bear the insults with mild disposition of forbearance and docility. These virtues intensify their level of fortitude to put up with the strains of patriarchal dominance. The women characters represented in terms of quality in the folktales ranges from a modest, faithful, hardworking woman to the cruel and cunning woman. Even in terms of position, she may be seen as one who is docile to the words of her husband and sometimes as the second wife who holds

authority in her hand. However their primary character traits are marked by loyalty, submissiveness, self sacrifice and will power. Such qualities are employed in the women characters of the Hmar folktales and it constitutes the overall implication of the struggling figure of a woman. Even though they are viewed as physically and emotionally weaker and confined to private domain they are represented as embodiment of beauty, love, affection and determination. Thus, the life and struggle of a woman is represented in the form and content of the tales where they render the nature of compassion and tolerance in validating their stand against patriarchal constrains.

The gender based role of a woman is evident in the story of *Thlakur* where a woman is positioned to meet the expectation of a man. Thlakur forcibly marries Lawnglai, against her wishes without paying any heed to her refusal where she stated that she did not belong to the world of human beings. She concedes to the will of Thlakur, yet escapes later on only to be secured again by Thlakur with the help of Zumtenu. Her return with Thlakur enraged her maternal uncle Lungpum and she had to suffer his wrath. Lungpum turned Lawnglai into a frog and put her inside a hole in the middle post of his house. She was however rescued with the help of Zumtenu. When Lawnglai gave birth to a son, Thlakur was arrested by the plainsmen and to aggravate the situation she was separated from her son who was abducted by a greedy widow. The unfortunate turn of events diminished Lawnglai to cry in agony “What a wretched woman I am! All kinds of miseries and misfortune have befallen me one after another!”(Dena 197) is an aggravating exclamation of unmitigated mortification. In spite of the unending hurdles Lawnglai deliberates her role as a wife and as a mother through tolerance and sustenance by surviving the odds. Lawnglai’s encounter with Thlakur brought different levels of misfortune in her life. Lawnglai could have enjoyed a peaceful life in her own world, yet the deliberate intervention of Thlakur resulted in her endless suffering. However, Lawnglai’s patience and perseverance prompted her to remain stringent to overcome the obstacles.

The story of *Sakhilawngdar II* reveals another such character that is made to suffer upon marrying a man against her wish. Her autonomy is sacrificed for a man who failed to appreciate her emotions. Pakhattepa, the husband enjoyed the privilege of man in imposing his authority upon a beautiful maiden that evolved from the leg

of the animal he bagged in hunting. Pakhattepa was so enamoured by the beauty of Sakhilawngdar that he refused to consider the dilemma of the lady who refused to marry him. Sakhilawngdar's reason for refusal was because of the fact that she was a deer. But when she turned into a beautiful woman, Pakhattepa denied to consider her refusal and thus forcibly marries her. However, Pakhattepa soon failed to appreciate the relationship in their conjugal life. On becoming the wife of Pakhattepa, Sakhilawngdar prepares his meal and tidies up his house in his absence and happily managed all her duties as a wife. Yet her happiness was short lived as Pakhattepa turned alcoholic and humiliated her several times. Pakhattepa refused to consider the sentiments of his wife until it became unbearable for Sakhilawngdar who abandons him and went back to the forest. "Women resist verbally and physically, sometimes arguing and fighting back, sometimes side-stepping and deflecting, sometimes hanging on to life itself" (Walby 146)

The socialization of a woman in a motherly role is conceptualized in the character of Sakhilawngdar as she chooses to sacrifice a part of herself and her independence as she continued to look after her daughter and six month old baby after separating from her husband. Her nurturing spirit is accentuated by the risk she overtook in reaching to her children as she revived herself in the form of a deer to feed her children. Yet she was shot dead by the village people on being summoned by Pakhattepa. Later, she transformed into a *Phunchawng*¹⁴ tree from one of the bones of the deer which she instructed her daughter to bury. Yet when the father came to know about it he immediately fell down the tree to sever her ties with her children. Finally Sakhilawngdar turned herself into a mermaid but was defeated as the husband gathered people to poison the river in which she lived and was killed. Sakhilawngdar's persistence in her nurturing role is resolute and faithful. The interference of masculine strength and power could not defy her compassion and vigour as she struggles to fulfill her duty under exorbitant pressure and confrontation.

Likewise, in the story of *Mauruong*, Mauruong is separated from her mother due to the treacherous act of her father. Mauruong's father in order to marry another woman pushes Mauruong's mother into a river, where she drowns and dies.

¹⁴ Commonly known as Indian Cottonwood.

Mauruong however is looked after by the spirit of her mother who turned herself into a dolphin. Yet the dolphin was killed by the shrewd plan of the step mother. When Mauruong's mother further transformed into *Phunchawng* tree it was fell down. Mauruong eventually had to undergo all sorts of misery and ill treatment in the hands of the step mother who favoured only her own daughter Subimtaitawt. Later, when Mauruong married Vailal she led a happy conjugal life. But it was short-lived due to the intervention of the step-mother who sent Subimtaitawt instead of Mauruong in a palanquin when Vailal's men came to fetch Mauruong and Mauruong was banished.

The story of *Mauruong* reveals different levels of misfortune accorded to the life of a woman. As a wife Mauruong's mother had to bear the treacherous deceit from her husband. She became a rejected figure, who was supplanted by her husband. The misfortune of Mauruong's mother is further revealed as she takes the responsibility of nurturing her daughter in her metamorphosed state that was disrupted by the intervention of the second wife until she was totally annihilated. Moreover, Mauruong continued to suffer in the hands of the step mother but faithfully waits upon her fate until she finally united with her husband again.

The fate of Mauruong's mother on being killed by her husband shows the authority of a man over a woman who supplants his wife for his selfish motive. Mauruong's mother however continues to gather all possible means to nurture and look after her daughter. The metamorphosis of Mauruong's mother is an exposition of the motherly affection of a woman that could not be terminated in spite of the strenuous pressure from her husband. The very task of sacrificing herself to support her daughter is a blatant symbol of the role of a woman in confronting patriarchal suppression. Further Mauruong herself was subservient in her relation to her step mother and remained obedient even at the cost of her own happiness. She seemed to carry on the discipline inculcated by her mother to remain caring and relational even in the most adverse situation.

Men are traditionally socialized to be assertive and powerful and in the exposition of power and prestige in the folktales they did not show respect to women as they seduced them to doing something which could be derogatory. It was boastful for men to win them and they did not care whether the girl loves them or not. The social and cultural articulation of sexual difference in the position of women is

fundamentally implicated in matters of representation and the basic gender identity ascribed by society. Women are represented as unwanted, docile and a struggling figure in their association to men. Women are assigned to a role of submission and obedience. They are inclined to bear the perversity of men and endure in benign temperament.

Incidentally, women in the folktales play central roles and are rendered to give way to men's desires and inclinations. Such representation may serve as an avenue to communicate society's notion of gender and issues of gender discrimination that is prevalent in the social system and cultural practices of Hmar society. Although women are perceived to be weaker, her true self emerges from the confines of conformity. The cultural practices articulate the meanings of how society controls women.

The tragedy of woman's socialization is not that she is left unclear, as is the man, about her basic sexual identity. This identity is ascribed to her, and she does not need to prove to herself or to society that she has earned it or continues to have it. Her problem is that this identity is clearly devalued in the society in which she lives." (Chodorow 44)

The concept of cultural dominance enjoyed by men in the social order often places women on the side of negativity, depravity where she should be enjoying equal rights and opportunities. In the folk tales, even though women are not given the place and opportunity enjoyed by men, their compassion and nurturing spirit make them adopt feminine roles for the smooth functioning of her role as a wife and as a mother. Ultimately one cannot deny the power and struggles implicit in the women characters, the ability to choose and act even in the position of deliberate submission.

In the story of *Buonhleï and the Fairy*, Buonhleï falls in love with the fairy and forces her to marry him. The beautiful fairy faces the pressure of forceful marriage from Buonhleï and later from his brother Hrangrum. The fairy won the heart of Buonhleï and on being proposed, she refused as she belonged to the world of the spirits. In order to amend for her refusal she even blessed Buonhleï in bagging a wild full grown mithun and rhinoceros every time they parted after meeting. Yet her entreaty and request was declined and she had to comply to the wish of Buonhleï who had already devised a plan by stealing her clothes and a ring when the fairy had

gone down to the lake to take bath along with her friends. The helplessness of the fairy in preserving her maiden honour which was at stake in the hands of a man had no other choice but to accept the demand. Later, when the fairy left for her abode in the absence of Buonhlei she was pursued by Buonhlei and had to retreat with him again. Her return to the conjugal life with Buonhlei was short lived as Buonhlei's brother Hrangrum became jealous over his brother's beautiful wife and results in the killing of his own brother. On being forced by Hrangrum to marry him, the fairy was forced to leave her loving children behind and return to her own world which was the only means left for her to fight back the offensive iniquity in the world of men.

Man in his exercise of authority and power devalues a woman is evident in the story of *Pawthir and Hrangchal*, where Kungi becomes a victim of man's lust because of her beauty. Sairam (an elephant man) possessed by the beauty of Kungi cast a spell on her by secretly putting her hair in a magic box. It was a wicked plan of Sairam to win her and from that day onwards, fear gripped Kungi and she fell terribly ill. Kungi's mother in a fit of frustration over her daughter's illness declared that she would give the hand of her daughter in marriage to anyone who could cure her daughter, irrespective of position and social status. Kungi almost dies under the spell of Sairam, until Sairam came forward to try his hand in curing her, whereupon he stealthily pulls out Kungi's hair from the magic box and the spell was broken and Kungi was completely cured. However, to keep the promise made by her mother Kungi was bound to follow Sairam who carries her on his back to his village. Kungi is found languishing in the innermost part of Sairam's house and had to silently bear the injustice pronounced to her lot. Kungi's helplessness is aggravated on becoming a victim of the treacherous desire of Sairam because of her beauty.

Kungi's compliance to Sairam's demand does not imply obedience; it is a stratagem of her hostility towards the treacherous manipulation of the elephant man. Her helplessness in surrendering to the wish of Sairam may be one of submission but internally she is clamoured by an intense feeling of resistance towards the person controlling her life. The predicament of Kungi's mother in giving consent to the demand of Sairam is also an instance of the helplessness of a mother to save the life of her daughter. As she found Sairam turning into an elephant and carrying Kungi on his trunk, she grieved in pain and became determined to rescue her daughter by any

means. She arranged a special feast for young men who could rescue her daughter and thus sought the help of Pawthir and Hrangchal for the mission. Kungi and her mother are both aware of their helplessness in the hands of Sairam but calmly gathered efforts to challenge him.

The manner in which women characters like Sakhilawngdar and Mauruong's mother meet their violent end in the folktales reveals the manner in which they are controlled and handled by men. Men in their boastful display of authority and power do not hesitate to take brutal action towards women who seem to question or confront their position or fail to fulfill their wish. In the story of *Sakhilawngdar II*, Sakhilawngdar is destroyed by her husband Pakhattepa severing her every attempt to nurture her children first in the form of a deer, a Phunchawng tree and later a mermaid. The manner in which Sakhilawngdar returns back to her children was humiliating for Pakhattepa. He therefore devised plans to destroy her. Sakhilawngdar could no longer stand the incessant attempt of the husband's motive and was finally killed. Likewise, Mauruong's mother was not only pushed to drown in the river by her husband, but the several attempts she made to take care of her daughter in the form of a dolphin and Phunchawng tree, enraged the father and resulted in her devastating end. However, the return of these women characters in their metamorphosed state can be seen as their resistance to the control of men.

As there are definite difference in the physical constitution of men and women, there are differences in their approach towards events, issues, situations, relationships and commitments. The personality and nature in a man or a woman is constituted by the social relationships that are internalized and organized from their childhood experience. Jacques Lacan, focusing on the unconscious leads to the mechanism of the emergence of the consciousness. Lacan's third and fourth stage is the mirror phase that is the most significant moment of self-identification for both the male child and the female child.

But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming – into being (le devener) of the subject asymptotically whatever the

sources of the dialectical synthesis by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality. (442)

The mirror stage, Lacan believes sets up the assumption of identification while the child has not learned language, so he takes the image that society expects of the child. It is only after the child enters into the symbolic order or language that the other self image develops, where the human desire is adjusted according to the input from other people. The perception or identification at this point marks the beginning of socialization. The limitations and prohibition of patriarchy gradually develops as it maintains a balance between the mother and the child. While a boy adopts the role of the father and achieves autonomy and separation from the mother and thereby identifies himself as an independent individual valued by society, a girl develops the identical gender identity from her mother and develops capacity for nurturance and sensitivity towards situation.

The mirror stage for Sawrlai sets up the image where she perceives the specular image and becomes the other within the subject experience which marks the beginning of her socialization with restrictions associated with the father. She internalizes the difference that successively develops and maintains a balance in her life. The external experiences in her early childhood shaped her self-perception as a girl and she imbibed the role of forbearance and nurturance. Sawrlai takes the image and develops according to what society expects of her. She has been brought up in an environment where she is in constant exposure to the manners and conduct of men in the family which constituted of her seven brothers and father. She has experienced gender difference in the attitude of her father in whose opinion a daughter should remain at home and perform domestic duties. This was the reason why she was left alone at home when the father decided to take only his sons in his mission to take the stars. Sawrlai is thus responsible in looking after the needs and requirements of the family. Sawrlai, as a girl developed the role of nurturance and forbearance. She was brought up to imbibe feminine roles amongst her siblings who were all male. Her psychic nature was prepared to forbear and accept when it was decided upon her to be left alone in the house.

Likewise, Mauruong's entry into the symbolic order may be interpreted as one where she realizes her position through her experience. Her psychological

growth makes sense of the external world where the position of woman is marked by subordination. As a child Mauruong was separated from her mother and thus deprived of motherly care and affection. Her perception is no longer shaped by her individual desire but adjusted according to the norms of the external world. Mauruong's socialization begins with her gender identification and maintains the likeness with her mother. She is inculcated to be tolerant to put up with the differential treatment she received from her father and step-mother. Her maturity and endurance is revealed in her stringent disposition as she grows and develops in an environment marked by depravity and disgrace. She copes and sustains her misery and managed to withstand adverse situation in her life.

Moreover Nancy J. Chodorow states that "Gender differences, and the experience of difference, the differences among women are socially and psychologically created and situated." (Chodorow 100) Women in their categories as nurturers, role in the family and gendered work maintain a difference in behavior, attitude and emotions. Women no doubt are biologically different from men, yet women gradually transform and adapt to the prescribed roles of conformity impressed upon them by patriarchal rules and socialization. Thus, the psyche of a woman develops through the experience of certain relational issues that is distinct from that of man. Sawrlai adopts identical gender role as she was socialized to develop the capacity of forbearance and nurturance. It was by dint of her perseverance and allegiance that she gathers courage to withstand the affliction that has befallen her in her encounter with Vawmpahrawng who abducts her to languish under his authorial guard. "Women are more caring because their psychological and physical ties to physical being remain unbroken." (Rivkin and Ryan 767) As a result women tend to be more caring and emotionally attached to people and situation, even to the extent of ignoring individual needs. Though Sawrlai is an abandoned figure she nurtures the physical ties that she has in the family and manages to fulfill her responsibility in the household task assigned to her single handedly. She is courageous in remaining alone in the house and provides whatever was possible from her end. She bothers herself to the well being of her father and her brothers and persists in her efforts and ultimately she was the one who revived the dead bodies of her father and her brothers by sprinkling holy water over their dead bones. Her

psychological maturity prepares her to withstand her misfortune and survives not only her own life but also the lives of her brothers and father.

The intrinsic feminine traits of compassion and fortitude helped Mauruong in sustaining the unrelenting misery caused by the unrealistic intrusion of the father. Mauruong's psychological maturity is one which has been shaped by the diverse personal and social relationship that she adopted as a child and continued throughout womanhood. After the death of her mother Mauruong experienced various relational complications that made her life miserable. She encountered situation where she is neglected, deprived and manipulated. Mauruong was even deprived of the affection of her own father and made to suffer in the hands of the cruel step mother who made her wear tattered clothes and gave her under nourished food fit to be eaten by pigs only for which she turned pale and sick. Even her happy conjugal life with Vailal was disrupted by the intervention of her step mother. In spite of such tormenting ordeal and injustice Mauruong developed psychological strength that could withstand the pressures of alienation and injustice by her complacent nature and endurance to face the critical situation with courage and dignity.

Even though a woman holds secondary position in social and cultural status, she may attain psychological security and a firm sense of self worth and importance. According to Chodorow, it is not the degendering of society, but its appropriation by women, with women virtues, is seen as the solution to male dominance and further asserts that women are intrinsically better than men and their virtues are not available to men. (99) These virtues possessed by women are uniquely feminine, intrinsically connected to a particular social role. They face these critical situations with courage and dignity and manage to retain their identity in a male dominated society.

There exists a gulf of difference in the treatment of women in comparison to men. Women are denied and subject to negation as they are not validated in the dominant world of men. From such presentation we can arrive to the fact that patriarchal discourse has rendered them to assume roles with no scope of honour or rectitude. The phenomenon of patriarchy is seen not only in the conventional norm of patriarchal society but also in the literature as well. Significantly, narratives, songs and stories have been written mostly by men and presented from the perspective of men. In the select folktales some of the women characters in a substantial position

are estimated in a derogatory role such as a woman with evil spirit, magician, cruel step mother and greedy widow. They are repudiated and subject to negation as they are inconsistent with the opinion of men in a world dominated by them. “Thus humanity is male and man defies woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being.” (Beauvoir xx) In Beauvoir’s statement, mankind has historically been described in the image of man. The relation between the two sexes has not been symmetrical. The manner in which language is structured in the representation of women in the hands of men raises the issue of women’s relationship to that language and sexuality simultaneously. The objective is to retrieve women from dominance and from language at the same time.

The interpretation of women in derogatory terms authorizes the language of sexuality in the hands of men. “Language is patriarchal and therefore carries and reflects gender biases and inequalities.” (Bhasin 18) The use of language and sayings in Hmar society also reflect how women are considered inferior to men. Words of abuse with sexual connotation are normally used by men, but arouses contempt when women uses them.

The role of Mauruong’s step mother in bringing misery to Mauruong posits a negative assertion towards womanhood. Mauruong’s step mother shrewdly misuses the authority of Mauruong’s father against Mauruong. Mauruong’s mother contrives a plan of injustice and misfortune towards her step daughter. The manner in which she takes control in fulfilling her selfish motive is an attempt to undermine the authority of man and stimulate power in direct opposition to patriarchy.

Another character portrayed in a derogatory role is found in the story of *Lalhmang*. In the story, Sibarnu is projected as a fantastical figure. She is a terror to the village folks as she eats people. She does so by walking across the fields whereby she unfolds sesame plants upon the people and devours them. Sibarnu is a slanderous portrayal of a woman in a villainous role where she utilizes her power to sustain her ignominious practice of killing and devouring people. Similar such fantastical figure is found in the story of *Rengte* where we find Kulsamnu’s terrifying wait upon the delivery of the twin babies of Rengte, to devour them as they saw the light of the day and later hunted upon by the two grown up babies Khena and Rama is yet another

exposition of a derogatory image of a woman. She disturbs the peace and controls the anxiety of the family in the chase.

In addition, in the story of *Lalruong*, Supheikak's determination in attaining a superior power in witchcraft over Lalruong to avenge the death of her brother is another exposition of the determination of a woman in a derogatory role. Supheikak lures Lalruong several times to have control over his magical power and smitten by her love he was betrayed and defeated. Supheikak conquered him and eventually frustrates Lalruong until he dies of hunger. Supheikak's hostility is provoked over the killing of her brother by Lalruong and she avenges upon the death of her brother by her ultimate victory upon his magical skill. Further, the manner in which avarice is accentuated in the mind of the widow in the story of *Thlakur* is one of disdain and contradiction. The widow on learning that Lawnglai's son emitted coins when he cried and gold when he laughed culminates in her stealing the child away from her mother. Blinded by greed and devoid of motherly sentiments, the widow abducted the child for her selfish gain.

The derogatory terms and position accorded to women characters reveal how language is used to refer to female characters so as to establish a position of authority over sexuality and personality defined by men. The interpretation accorded by men towards such women is however a situation in which women is reestablished in subverting the definition and countering patriarchal control. They utilize their power to fulfill their role within the established order.

It may also be noted that the hegemony of men in Hmar patriarchy are internalized and accepted by women. Women in their position are also found to accept the exploitation of men and reiterate patriarchy. Colonial discourse is Eurocentric and emphasizes the superiority of culture of the colonizer influencing the culture, language and literature of the colonized.

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of acculturation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations and include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination. (Said 9)

Colonialism reinforces the idea of domination and suppression and results in the acceptance of the colonial stereotypes by the colonized. Even though the colonial system resulted in the exploitation of the natives yet they did not question colonialism as they have been indoctrinated with those ways of thinking and establish their consent. Said confirms that it is through culture that the European nation was able to propagate certain ways of thinking in communicating and representing their conquest as legitimate and beneficial for the natives. This is how hegemony is established over the colonized that are manipulated to regard colonialism as a natural phenomenon.

Men occupied and exercised their superior position to legitimize their prestige and power in society. In their categorized status, women may be viewed as victim in accepting the hegemonic assumption that the dominant or public life of men was more important than the oriented private life. Consequently it may be said that the social values accorded to men are internalized not only by men but by women as well. “Formed to live with such an imperfect being as man, they ought to learn from the exercise of their faculties the necessity of forbearance; but all the sacred rights of humanity are violated by insisting on blind obedience; or the most sacred rights belong only to man.” (Wollstonecraft 106) Women in internalizing the role identification as mothers, nurturers and their role in reproduction are trained to produce and imbibe to such roles and reiterate patriarchy and patriarchal interests. This may be understood as manipulation of reality that serves man’s interest.

In the story of *Pawthir and Hrangchal*, Kungi’s abdication by Sairam through the spell cast over her becomes a tormenting episode for the mother. Kungi’s mother in her state of helplessness sought the help of two brave men Pawthir and Hrangchal to rescue her daughter from Sairam. Kungi’s mother position is one in which she dissipates her capability and envisaged the help and support of men to save her daughter in her state of predicament, In Kungi’s mother we see the adherence and perpetuation of man’s ascendancy as she commits herself to the strength and power of men in her helpless situation. It is an internalization and acceptance of a condition where only the intervention of a man could restore her in the hour of dejection. She is found to be influenced by the dominant position that men hold in the society where men are regarded as the embodiment of power and

valour. In the story Kungi's mother kills her only pig to make a big feast for all the young men of the village and a special dish for the hero who could rescue her daughter which was eventually dined by Pawthir and Hrangchal. Holding of a big feast by killing a pig is an auspicious rendering of respect given to men. Kungi's mother surrenders to the authority that men hold and readily manages to obtain their help.

Men are exposed to the civic life of working outside as occupation while women are organized to fulfill all duties of the household, which can be interpreted as the perpetuation of patriarchy both by men and women. Men turn to become rational and superior, "Those who are rational and objective are valued more highly than those who are subjective and emotional." (Bhasin 16) The orientation thus accorded is produced by social and cultural values and standards where both men and women accept patriarchy as normal. Patriarchal thought has relegated gender based roles and responsibilities and became more defined. In the story of *Sahilawngdar II* we find Sahilawngdar who evolved into a beautiful woman out of the foreleg of a deer that Pakhattepa bagged in hunting and dried upon the hearth of the fireplace. Sahilawngdar perpetuates the norms of patriarchy as she devotedly performs all the private household duty of preparing meals and cleaning the house while Pakhattepa was away in the fields.

As Sahilawngdar evolved into a woman she busied herself in fulfilling the role of a wife even before Pakhattepa married her. On becoming a mother she fulfils her role of looking after her children besides her other household duty while her husband ventured out at night to drink with his friends and neighbours. The husband did not have to bother himself in the household affairs as he had a wife to look after those matters. Patriarchal interests imbibed by women in their domestic role perform their duty not only as a wife in maintaining the house but also as caretakers of children. Sahilawngdar continues to fulfill her nurturing role by feeding and taking care of her daughter and six month old baby even after she left her husband. As a mother, Sahilawngdar had vested interest in the well being of her children and was happy and contented to accomplish her responsibility while the father lived an independent life outside. Thus, the manner in which Sahilawngdar performs the assigned role of a woman may be interpreted as an attribute to the social custom of

patriarchy and how deep this power relation is entrenched in the life of a woman and how male dominance becomes magnified and accepted.

Thus, the internalization and acceptance of patriarchal dominance by women may be interpreted where women accept the exploitation without question. Even though men continue to dominate and control it is done with mutual understanding to a large extent.

In the analysis of patriarchal resistance, the experiences of women song composers in the pre-Christian context are analyzed as they express their grievance in confronting the challenges they faced as a woman. The historical account of their lives concedes to the rigorous situation of their lives that seemingly reflected in the content of the songs. The subjugation of women in the patriarchal society compelled women to adhere to patriarchal values in their lives. Yet it is significant that they could take stand in narrating the experiences through the songs and express their personal feelings and communicate their thoughts. L. Keivom in his book *Hmar Hla Suina* [A Record of Hmar songs]¹⁵ recorded a number of traditional songs of the Hmar amongst which a number of songs composed by women has been included. These songs in one way or the other manage to give us a lyrical record of their lives, apprehension and feelings where the experience of grievance runs deep. In the traditional past *Lohma Hla* of the Hmar are songs composed in connection with their agricultural life, where young men and women in the process of working in the fields engage themselves in swaying to the tune of songs to enliven their spirit and spread gaiety and vivacity. A number of songs sung during *Butukhuonglawm*¹⁶ are also included in *Lohma Hla*, where there is a practice of team work among the youngsters who come forward to help in the fields during the season of sowing seeds. The collection of *Lohma Hla* also includes songs written by women that expresses lamentations and misfortune. The expression of grief encountered by these women are named after them which includes; *Chongngo Hla*, *Hrangchawn Hla* and *Tuoni Hla*. The songs are marked by a despondent feeling of injustice and contempt. Another collection of songs composed to express the amorous feeling of young

¹⁵ The title of the book has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose this study.

¹⁶ Songs sung by people working in a group during the sowing of seeds

lovers called *Lenglai Hla*. *Semruk Hla* falls in the category of *Lenglai Hla* composed by women.

Semruk Hla : It is a love song composed to express the innermost feelings of lovers and was forbidden to be sung by children. It has been traced that the first lady who ever composed this song was Zawltling, when the Hmar settled in the Shan region, somewhere in the Shan state of Burma (Myanmar) but the year is not probable as the Shan state was created late in the twentieth century A.D. (Thiek 64) *Semruk Hla* are mostly composed by women and it is rather surprising that this tradition of composing songs was discontinued by women in later years. For most of the songs in later generation was composed by men and sung by women. In the earlier part as recorded, songs were composed by women and sung by men. When the Hmars settled in Burma they enjoyed a comfortable position and when they settled in the Shan region, the festivity and dance at the time of sowing rice called *Butukhuonglawm* was also first practiced in this region and it began with Zawltling.

Zawltling was an exceptionally beautiful girl and many aspiring young men desired to court her and marry her. One of the wealthy men of their time sent for a proposal of marriage for his son and was gladly accepted by Zawltling's parents. Yet it was resented by Zawltling as she was in love with another man Thilchung. When Thilchung's parents came forward with a marriage proposal for their son it was rejected by Zawltling's parents as they were poor. Zawltling became adamant to the decision of her parents by refusing to marry the rich man's son and pretended to be unwell and refused to eat and reclined in bed and replied thus:

*“A tlei sum pek relzawlah in sie,
Thadang sum pek dawtuongah in sie;
Sum ti tamin sieli kal naw ning,
Khawthal tui ang vuoia nghak de ning.”*

[You keep the bride price offered by other man in a basket,
And the bride price offered by my lover is scattered on the floor;
I will not marry the one who have given the higher price

And wait for my lover till the water dries up in winter.] ¹⁷(Keivom 71)

Zawltling's opposition towards the decision of her parents is a direct confrontation of a woman subjected to matters against her will. She refused to be persuaded and determined to sustain until she dies. Her assertion of waiting for her lover till the drying up of water in winter is suggestive of her resolute determination as she suffers and confront the trauma in silent recline. Her refusal is a blatant resistance towards domination.

Chongngo Hla [Chongngo's Songs]: This song composed by Chongngo narrates the misfortune faced by her. During the time of harvesting Chongngo's parents stayed in the jhum while Chongngo stayed at home to tend to the pets and chicks. In the middle of the night Chongngo witnessed day break all of a sudden and hurriedly began preparing food for her parents and headed towards the jhum only to find the dead bodies of her parents drenched in pool of blood.

*“Chun le zuo famna dingin,
Lentlaipui aw pat ang zuong var;
Tlan intlir tiengtlang tang e,
Chongngo ka ron soma e.”*

[To witness the death of my parents,
Lentlaipui, thunderbolt struck like daybreak;
I proceeded alone towards the field,
Only to find the dead body of my parents.] (Keivom 46-47)

Chongngo stood terrified as she cried in desolate mortification seeing her parents lying in a pool of blood. In a state of despondent shock she was unable to decide who among her parents should she first approach and take on her lap.

*“Chun Suo maw pom ing ka ti,
Zuo Ngam maw pom ing ka ti;
Fiertatui ang kan tlingna,
Chun Suo pom ing, aia e.”*

[Whom shall I hold first,
My mother Zuo or my father Ngam;

¹⁷ The lines of the songs have been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

My mother who held me in her womb,
I will approach and hold her first.] (Keivom 47)

Chongngo's agony is emphasized as she is filled with hatred and contempt towards the murderer. She is helpless as she has been orphaned. She is overwhelmed in her inability to avenge the killing of her parents. She however turns rebellious and filled with vengeance to retaliate for the slaughter.

*“Chun- Zuo rokkharah kan zal,
Thangvan suorbil ang a chim;
Tlanga pa ram ang chang ning,
Thuom lai ang do ta rei aw.”*

[As I bury the last remains of my parents,
Life's biggest misfortune has befallen me;
Had I been a man,

I would have killed them.] ¹⁸(Keivom 47)

Chawngo's mortification is even more intensified by her helplessness and inability to avenge the killing of her parents as she was a woman and helpless. The humiliation she suffers aggravates her desire to kill the slayer, yet compelled to concede. As a woman, Chongngo is aware that her physical ability stands no match against the men who brutally killed her parents. Yet she turns rebellious as she revolt to challenge and kill them. Even in her incapacity she is prepared to resist and fight back.

Hrangchawn Hla [Hrangchawn's Song]: *Hrangchawn Hla* one of the popular *Lohma Hla* composed by women is significant on two aspects. First, it was composed during the time when there was constant war and turmoil. Secondly, it reveals that women were not deprived of expressing their thoughts, desires and sorrow, even though they were subordinate to men. A distinctive mark about *Hrangchawn Hla* is that it is rich in vocabulary and well adapted to the situation of women in terms of composition. The episodes of misery are expression of Hrangchawn's confrontation of the prevailing inequity and depiction of her courage.

¹⁸ The lines of the songs have been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

Hrangchawn songs are short composition expressing plight and misery. Hrangchawn, the only sister of seven slaves married the eldest brother of another seven slave brothers. Even though prosperity was prophesied for the family of the seven slaves, after their marriage misfortune overtook both the family and all members from both the family died one after the other. Hrangchawn whereupon was despised by the entire village thinking that she was a curse. A large famine followed and when her husband set out to buy grains he also died. That very night she lost her baby also. In such a state of bereavement she did not have anyone to console her and bore her pain all by herself. Devoid of any compassion, she puts forth her contempt in her song.

*“Ka lenruolin awikieng thla an fam,
Phungruol aw, tawnlaihah leh
Kim takin lung ang an van bum;
Laira riengnun awikieng thla kan fam,
Phungruol aw boten e, tliekhatin,
Ralah ni thlir e.”*

[When my friends lost their husband,
Relatives and friends gather to console them;
A poor soul like me is despised and left alone
When my husband died,

They witnessed my plight from afar.] (Keivom 57)

As Hrangchawn is left to grieve alone in isolation when her husband and child died, she despised those who refuse to console her as they regarded her blasphemous. The remorse of death and abandonment by the people of the village is an aggravating situation for Hrangchawn. The mental trauma that she suffers is a despicable emphasis of hatred and discrimination. Hrangchawn fails to derive the sympathy of the community in the hour of grief and desolation. Her expression of misfortune in the song is an event where Hrangchawn exposes her confrontation. The exposition of her plight through her song suggests her resistance to the existing prejudice towards a woman. Hrangchawn’s grievance and struggle is against society that considered her blasphemous and opposes the biased attitude.

Tuoni Hla (Tuoni's Song): Tuonpui commonly known as Tuoni was the daughter of the chief of Khawkhum village. Through her songs Tuoni narrates how she was chased away like a bird along with her parents from their village Khawkhum and following the course of Tuiphal river they came up to Sortui village where they did not find a place to stay. While they were in Sortui, she was courted by a handsome young man named Neilal. Tuoni was so beautiful that the village womenfolk enquired as to whose daughter she was. The young girls of the village envied her as she was courted by the most promising young man of the village and began conspiring against her, informing Neilal's parents that she was leprous like a frog skin and thus despised her. Tuoni on learning the contemptuous attitude of Neilal's parents was prompted to explain thus,

"Neilal chun le Neilal zuon,

Tok ang phar mi tih;

Tok ang pharna loten keima Tuonpui,

Pumhril ka hlina a nih"

[Neilal's mother and Neilal's father,

Says that I am leprous like a frog;

I Tuonpui, not leprous like a frog,

The pale colour of my neck is caused by the necklace that I constantly wear.]

(Keivom 53)

The above lines express the defiance of Tuoni as she was mistaken to be leprous by Neilal's parents. The humiliation and disgrace filled her heart with contempt as she faces the confrontation to prove the groundless accusation.

Neilal and Tuoni were not destined to stay together. After they parted, Neilal pursued Tuoni till her village, Khawkhum. As it was time for him to depart he started to his beloved Tuoni that he would come back to marry her when *kokcha* will bear flower. Since *kokcha* is weed that never bear flower, Tuoni and Neilal were separated forever. The pain in Tuoni's heart thus expresses as she weeps-

"Khawkhumah min Tuoni that an hril,

Sawrtui min Neilal that an hril;

Hrai chawi lo ruol di in then ta maw,

Nawi nawi e, kei chu hring naw ning."

[People speak of the charm of Tuoni,
 People speak of the charm of Neilal in Sawrtui;
 Parted, never to get married,
 No, no, I shall not survive.] (Keivom 56)

The plight of a woman who is unable to marry her lover is a severe blow to her. She was unable to accept her destiny and grieves in pain. The intervention of Neilal's parents is actually directed towards the father because they are responsible in decision making especially when it comes to match making. Had the parents of Neilal not intervened in their relationship she would have been happily married to Neilal. Tuoni loses all hope of survival after she parts from Neilal as evident in the line- "*Nawi nawi e, kei chu hring naw ning.*" (Keivom 56) [No, no, I shall not survive.] Even though it was difficult on her part to leave Neilal forever, yet she refused to comply when Neilal's parents called her back. She could not reconcile the contemptuous remark she received from Neilal's parents and remained adamant in her decision which was an outright confrontation to the injustice she was made to endure.

After the songs of Tuoni there has been a dearth in the composition of songs by women after they dispersed from Burma as noted by L. Keivom in *Hmar Hla Suina* [Detailed Account of Hmar Songs]¹⁹. It was only after the advent of Christianity that restored the practice of composing songs among women. In the further analysis of the songs composed by women in the pre-Christian times it is significant that the songs played an important role in conveying the social and traditional history of women. They sensitize issues related to women and raise questions addressing the position and social attitude of women. Women are found to articulate their opposition to social injustice and give voice to their creativity. A situation arises when they express their anguish and predicament in the form of songs they composed and sang in the state of depression and frustration. It may be noted that women refuse to recline in silence and eventually locate their voices through the composition and narration of their lives. In this manner they could overcome self-isolation and discovered means to express themselves that has left an enriching note

¹⁹ The title of the book has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

towards the history and culture of the time. Through their expressive tradition, social ideas and knowledge they articulate opposition to social injustice and give voice to their individual needs. “Don’t tear yourself apart like that with choices imposed to you.” (Irigaray 211) Since women face confrontation and cannot take liberty at certain levels they must learn how to speak and walk through obstacles.

It is evident that there is resentment and ill treatment of women from the account of the lives of the women composers in the pre-Christian society. Their songs are expression of their anxiety and disillusionment. Chawngmuok, from a village in Ngente, was well-known for her ability to compose folk songs of every nature. Chawngmuok, also popularly known as Hmuoki had a suitor whom she intended to marry. But the family moved to another nearby village before they got married which caused her misery as she longed for her lover and sang of the old village thus-

*“Kan Ngente khuo nunnuom a e,
Thla ki fan hman ka hngil ma lo ve.*

[Our Ngente village excels in all areas,

I shall not forget till I die.] (Bapui 2009, 111)

This song presents the yearning of a woman that is unfulfilled as she has to follow the decision made by the family, where the men were in control towards such a decision in shifting to a different village and thus bearing the separation that saddens her. The helplessness of the woman as revealed in the song is characteristic of a melancholic expression of her longing.

It is accounted that she often looked back towards the old village, and began singing as she thought that she saw her lover in spite of the distance between them.

*“A saw hmarah ka lungdi an leng
Nemrang puon chawi a laitak saw.”*

[Yonder to the North, I saw my lover roaming

He is the one holding a cloth and standing in the middle.](Bapui 2009, 111-112)

Here the longing for the lover becomes so intense that she imagine to see and feel his presence yet is unable to do anything about it. The longing and desperation emerges

in the words which seemed to be the only means to express her feelings, even though she finds no consolation to overcome her loneliness.

Later, Chawngmuok married Thuilal in the new village. Even though they had never met before they loved each other and were blessed with three children. However, their happiness was short-lived as Thuilal died at a very young age. And she was widowed. In her utter bereavement she stopped taking care of herself and her body. Her children often requested her to stop mourning for their father and she would reply

*“Ka chawi ban hi Thuilal ka kuona siktui bing ang la nul rawi ie,
Ka sakruong hi, ka tuonsam hi ie, hrieksa hainbing ang la nul rawi ie.”*

[I will not wash my hand with which I held my Thuilal, I will not wash my body

I will not comb my hair, I will do it later on.] (Bapui 2009, 112)

Chawngmuok was so talented in composing songs that the names of almost every person in the village were already included in her songs. Finally there were only two persons left who had not been named which prompted the men-folk of the village to take stern action against her. The two men were summoned to bury her alive as it would be a crime to kill her. This foolish action was taken to prevent her from composing songs about them. They were of the opinion that if she composed all the songs there would be no more songs left for the future generation to compose. So they went to the house of Chawngmuok while she was cooking arum and when she saw them, she began to sing-

*“Thintinrum le Zansiel a te u,
So bal ka suong, thal tui ang lo hngak ro ie.”*

[You, Thintinrum and Zansiel, I am boiling arum, wait for it to cook,

Please wait patiently as one who waits for water in winter.] (Bapui 2009, 112)

So it was decided that she should be buried alive and dug a grave, pushing her inside with some food and a set of gongs. While they were filling the grave with the loose soil, she composed yet another song and it was said that on hearing the song, the young men augmented their work and rapidly covered her up with the soil. Ultimately she remained unheard with her last song. Even though Chawngmuok

wanted to escape the ordeal, she was helpless. The fear and condemnation that she suffers aggravates her agony as she meets her end in the hands of her opponents.

It is said that Chawngmuok survived the ordeal for seven long days as the people could hear her ringing the set of gongs. After the seventh day the people could not hear any more sound and she was declared dead. An act of discrimination and oppression is evident in the life and songs of Chawngmuok who was supplanted by the men folk of the village for the talent she possessed. Chawngmuok's spirit is undaunted by the physical torture she sustained. The nonchalant disposition in the hour of affliction is an exposition of the audacity and courage of a woman in withstanding patriarchal domination.

Chawngmuok's courage is unflinching as she resolutely clinched to her effort in ringing the set of gongs repeatedly for seven long days after she was buried. It is also a revelation of the perpetual spirit that could not diminish her talent as she managed to compose her final song while she was being buried. It is also an insinuation towards the unfair punishment enforced upon a soul that was considered inferior. It was difficult for the men to allow a woman to expose her talent in composing songs. In their opinion it was a threat to society as she would compose all the songs without leaving any opportunity for the coming generation. Even though Chawngmuok's physical being was buried they could not annihilate her inspiring vigour.

Patriarchal decree poses as a challenging factor for women, where they adapt themselves against such pressures and demands. The account of Chawngchirh another well known song composer exposes the nature and modes of opposition rendered in the disturbing situation where she is able to withstand the cataclysm of gender discrimination through her songs and in her life as well. Chawngchirh is also popularly known as Bapuinu. The village of Bapui was a small hamlet subject to the larger village of Zampi, where Tusing Faihriem was chief. The chief asked all his subjects and protectorates to be shifted to Zampi, which of course, the Bapui village refused. On hearing the refusal, the chief sent his soldiers and captured the young daughter of the chief of Bapui. After some time had passed, the mother of the girl Chawngchirh, decided to win back her daughter. She gathered courage to confront the hazardous attempt of rescue through her songs. The following autumn she sets

out in her journey towards Zampi and resonates her songs in praise of the chief's sons, admiring them of their possession of huge wealth and riches. On hearing this, the chief was pleased and welcomed her to stay in his house for the night with great festivities. The chief decide that he should give her a mithun and somehow when she came to know of it, she sang

*“A Siela in mi pek khane, a kei ding kan um nawh,
Suoka hringte mi pe unla, a man kal zai rel de ni.”* (Bapui 2009, 115)

[If you grant me a mithun, none amongst us can manage it,

Instead give us the humble slave, and she will manage to walk on her own.]²⁰

On hearing this, the king was pleased and decided to let her daughter go with her the next morning. However the queen was not happy and in place of rice for the midday meal, she picked a big arum for them. When Chawngchirh opened the bundle of food she stated

*“Fapang hman sis sari laiah, Bapui thing min fun ta che’
Fang ang ka tha ruol laia e, ret ta choc ho de ningah.”* (Bapui 2009, 115)

[Even though the chief has lots of rice, he packed arum for my meal,

It is embarrassing for me to eat among friends. Yet, I will gladly eat of it.]

Later, on their arrival at home, the young girl related how she used to be mistreated at the captor's house. Hearing this, the mother comforted her daughter saying

*“Hrieka hman um sari laiah, sipui hriek min thi ta che,
Fang ang ka tha ruol laia e, Nemrang, nemngang mi lo ti.”* (Bapui 2009, 115)

[Though the chief has seven pots of oil, he used til oil to apply on my daughter,

Though she was considered lazy among friends, yet in reality no one equals her.]

The songs are expression of the injustice meted out to a mother and a daughter by the chief. It is an aggravating expression of the injustice she faced in the hands of a superior power. Though consoling in tone, it rings to the pathetic condition of the sufferings of a mother and a daughter. Even though Chawngchirh

²⁰ The lines of the songs have been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

was aware of the injustice meted out to her by the chief of Zampi, yet she could not oppose in an outright manner. It was a calculated move when she lauds and praises the king and his sons so that the king would grant freedom to her daughter. Even though she was filled with contempt, she acted wise and expressed herself in such a manner that pleases the king. She was successful in doing so as she impressed the king and set her daughter free.

The episodic turn of events as revealed in the historic account of Chawngchirh's life and her songs is a reflection of the dismal situation she faced along with her daughter. Her songs are expression of injustice she faced against an authority which demands compliance and surrender. Even though she could not react in crisis and misery, her grievance and disappointment are reflected as she narrates her experiences. She expresses her contempt which conveys her resistance against the injustice she was made to endure.

The songs of Chawngmuok and Chawngchirh are further analyzed in chapter four to contextualize their songs and experience as sources of strength in their resistance to patriarchy.

“Women would not be as haunted as they are by concern of their femininity; they would gain in naturalness, in simplicity, and they would find themselves women again without taking so much pains, since after all, this is what they are.” (Beauvoir 766) The historical record of the lives of women as evident from their lives and songs reveals that women are obedient to the feminine tradition and have no intention of discarding them even if they are liable of finding other means of gratification. Their intrinsic feminine quality promotes them towards tolerance, stability and control and it comes to them as natural. They gain in such fortifying values that strengthen them to survive even in patriarchal conformity.

According to Mary Wollstonecraft, a woman have every right to lead a reasonable life free from the discrimination created by society between men and women on the basis of sex, as a woman is first a human being rather than a sexual being.

In tracing the causes that, in my opinion, have degraded woman, I have confined my observations to such as universally act upon the morals and manners of the whole sex, and to me it appears clear that they all spring from

want of understanding, whether this arise from a physical or accidental weakness of faculties, time can determine;... I only contend that the men who have been placed in similar situations, have acquired a similar character - I speak of bodies of men, and that men of genius and talents have started out of class, in which women have never yet been placed. (98).

Women's real capacities can be determined only if they have been given the opportunity to develop their talents. The coming of Christianity among the Hmar in the closing decades of the nineteenth century paved the way for education. As a result there was gradual change in the outlook of women and today the literacy rate of women has significantly increased with a corresponding increase in opportunities for women becoming economically independent. There are women belonging to the different strata of the society where there is a noticeable participation of women in the family and social front. Women have increasingly become the earning members and in some family the main supporters. Among the uneducated women folk we find hardworking women as daily wage earners, running small time business and hold plot of land where they grow crops to sell and support themselves. Among the educated section, the rise in literacy rate among women has made them more liberated and their presence is felt in the different sphere of social life. Despite this fact, patriarchal culture is still manifested in the cultural, social and religious life. Women's participation in politics and religious ministry still stands uneven. In the church women have a separate wing as fellowship and contribute to the administration of the church. Even though women play crucial role in the activities of the church they are not allowed to hold any position in the administration of the church. However women have become assertive about their individuality, about evaluating their status, expressing their problems, dreams and aspirations. The traditional value systems are gradually replaced by modern and western value system. The new forces of modernization and globalization have advanced the position of women socially by the widening opportunities for women in becoming economically independent.

The songs composed by Hmar women in the post-Christian era provided them a space to reflect upon their spiritual inner life in a world controlled by men. The songs seem to incline towards their desperation and inner conflict. It is also a

reflection the position of women in the society and how through their voices they are able to have self-reflection. Christian missionaries themselves came from strong patriarchal society; hence the ecclesiastical structures exercised by the missionaries were grounded on similar ethos in the early colonial or modern period. Even though the advent of Christianity paved towards a redefinition of the position of women in the society based on the refinement of religion and modernization, yet women continued to be mentally entrenched in patriarchy and suppressed to play gender roles. However one cannot deny the intensity of evolution that was already evident in the manner of composition and expression that Christianity has heralded in the lives of women. They are more liberated in their view and more articulate in their expression.

The six gospel songs composed by women, included in this chapter has been analyzed in the context of resistance to patriarchy. The lines of the songs that express the misery of the world are constituted to their experience of discrimination and injustice in the world of men. A woman's world can be evaluated in their daily familial and societal life. Hmar society being patriarchal, issues of subordination and inequality are bound to make their life miserable. The element of despair and contempt found in the line of the songs are expression of the life of exploitation in relation to men. The despicable picture of the world they represent becomes challenging as it is transitory in nature. This further revives their hope to survive and sustain where their mind and being are prepared to confront the iniquities of life. Their resistance to patriarchy is perceived in the manner they compose songs as a prayer to God to deliver them from their miserable life. The sense of longing and yearning reinforce their state of desperation. The principles of Christianity have enhanced their opinion about life and develop means to resist the challenges and remain strong.

Thangsuontling among the Christian women song composer seeks the grace of God upon her misery in the song, *Taplai Bangin* [Ceasing to Weep]²¹

*“Van lal nunnem mi zuk en ta,
Khawvel rinuma kan vai lai hi*

²¹ The title of the song has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

I ram inthieng ngaiin ka tap kan vai

Aw sandamtu mi hung thuoi ta rawh”

[Gracious Lord of Heaven rest your eyes upon me,

As I stagger in this despondent world,

I wail I ramble longing for your divine abode,

My Saviour come close to deliver me.] ²²(*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 200).

The song expresses the misery, tears and uncertainty in the life of a woman that is overshadowed by hardship and misfortune. The very statement that she seeks succor and deliverance emphasize the difficulty that she encountered. She gives a despondent picture of the world as she laments and staggers in life. However, her woes find rest in the consoling grace of the Saviour and revive her hope.

There is a despicable felling of contempt and derision that a woman feels for the mortal world which Darchawngpui expresses in *Lalpa Hnena Ropui* [The Great Victory of the Lord].

“Hi hnuoi taksa thi thei hi chu

Kum hlun ding an nawh Lalpa.

Hnaw chep le hmusitin um in la khawm,

Isu Krista ka nei che Lalpa”

[This mortal flesh bound to die,

Shall not last forever.

Even though I am denounced and despised,

Jesus Christ I have you Lord] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 312).

The mortal world represents the society where she feels the pangs of discrimination and prejudice. It is only the insinuation of the transitory nature of the mortal life that restores her conviction in Christ. It strengthens her to resist as she proclaims that her mortal flesh will soon perish and discovers means to cope with her misery even though she feels despised.

Another song that expresses similar emotion and theme is one composed by Darchawngpui *“Hmun a hang siem ka ta dingin”*[The Lord has Made a Place for Me]

²² The stanza of the songs has been translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study.

*“Hi Khawvel lungngaina le natna buoina rama hin’
Hmun ka nei nawh ie Lalpa, hnuoi rinuma hin,
Ka ta dinga hmun I buotsai
Van Jerusalem thar naw hi chu.”*

[In this world of misery and pain,
I have no place Lord, on this desolate world,
Than the New Jerusalem in Heaven
You have prepared for me.] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu 277*).

This song is an expression of contemptuous feeling towards the desolate world. The regret and scorn is intensified with the assured hope and anxiety of attaining a new home. *Hmun ka nei nawh ie* [I have no place] that follows *hnuoi rinuma hin*, [on this desolate world] suggests a feeling of despondency marked by injustice and devoid of any sense of belonging in the despicable world. Yet the assurance of the New Jerusalem in heaven gives her the feeling of fortitude to challenge the misery of her life.

In Darlientling’s “*Khawvel hi a buoi ta*” [The World is in Turmoil] there seem no respite for their suffering and their safety and well-being seem to dwindle that gives rise to the ardent desire for a peaceful domain as she expresses:

*“I angung ralmuongah
I angung ralmuongah
Leng kar hngakhlain ni tinin ka thlir
Aw Lalpa mi hung umpui zing rawh.”*

[In Thy peaceful domain,
In Thy Peaceful domain,
I stare intently to dwell each day,
Dear Lord be with me always] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu 239*).

She expresses an intense longing for the peaceful domain. The discernible sight directed towards the restful place conveys a feeling of unrest in the present situation and seeks God for protection to appease and strengthen her.

There is an expression of wailing, waiting and longing in the song “*Sandamtu Lengna*” by Runchawng. Such impassioned feeling that finds its way through the words a woman is a culmination of the inexplicable misery that she encountered in

her everyday life *Par ang tuoi ding khawvel rinuma hin* [This wretched world shall wither like flower] No matter how much life offers her on this earth she likens it only to the span of a flower. She resolves a similar temporal feeling for her miserable existence as she communicates:

“Par ang tuoi ding khawvel rinuma hin

I ram ropui ngaiin kan rum a

Mi hung thuoi la aw ka Lal Isu

I kuom ralmuongah min tlungtir rawh.”

[This wretched world shall wither like flower,

I wail, longing for your glorious abode

O Lord Jesus come and take me,

Land me in Your peaceful abode] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 217).

As they loosen up the restrained mind, they are left with a feeling of despise for the world around them. As noted earlier, the songs composed by women reiterate a miserable picture of misery, injustice and pain. However the feeling of disappointment is followed by an enlightened hope and longing that goes beyond their present state of despair. A renewed hope of attaining peace and blessings seem to restore the state of affairs as temporary and gather strength to renew and revive their hope to live and overcome them.

“Sam ang Thena Khawvel” [This World of Separation] composed by Rosiem is yet another expression of mortification addressed towards mankind destined to suffer. It is a way of expressing the deplorable condition that she faces as a woman.

“Thlatu suola an mawl leiin, Thina le lunngainahai hi,

Hnam tin chungah an leng a;

Kei khawm ka chung a tlung hin,

Lungngaiin ka fawn vel ie.

Ka ngai ie Chatuon ram,

Ka ngai ie ka Pa ram khi

Thlarauvin mi thuoi la,

Hmangai hai an chawlina hmun

Min tlun ngei rawh.”

[Ancestors destined to sin, has been doomed to death and sorrow

that prevails upon all mankind.
 When it prevails upon me,
 I am slaughtered in pain,
 I long the eternal Home,
 I long the Home of my Lord,
 Take me in spirit,
 Where the loved ones remain,
 Deliver me there] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 83).

This song is a revelation of the pain in their present life. *Lungngaiin ka fawn vel ie* [I am slaughtered in pain] is an exaggeration of the deplorable situation that make her long for an eternal home as revealed in the chorus that follows – *Ka ngai ie chatuon ram* [I long for eternal home] The longing for the eternal home revives her hope and determination to face the world of pain with courage. She remains firm with the assurance of God's abiding spirit to endure with conviction.

The spirit of endurance and hope that is revealed in the gospel songs of the women composers can be interpreted as a reinstatement of their courage and resolute struggle to overcome their agony. The agony of their life is assumed to have been brought by their experiences of discrimination and injustice that are reflected in the songs. Further, the songs composed by women in the post-Christian era shows that women have started to express their thoughts with the gradual assimilation of Christianity. The songs expose the lament and grief towards mankind with specific mention of the feeling of injustice, discrimination and discontent in their life brought by the pressure of patriarchy. However a distinctive mark of the women song composers in the post-Christian era is that they are marveled by the hope of salvation and deliverance in the after-life. Such optimistic notes were not seen in the songs of women in the pre-Christian period that were poignant with discontent, aggression and injustice that relate a feeling of mortification experienced by the women composers which nevertheless conveyed their audacious purpose in defiance of the stringent patriarchal world. There is significant conviction in the songs of women in the Christian era where the urge to document their expression and experiences are to be understood as a conscious effort by women from which they would be able to view the world in their own perspective. The spirit of liberation that they seek in God

stimulates their urge to express their misery which they consider transitory. They precisely express their despair, their hope and desire which is a revolutionary spirit that strengthens their spirit and makes them mentally strong to confront the pangs of insecurity in the world of men and deliver strength to resist them.

From the above analysis we can arrive to the fact that folk tales and songs give a clue to understanding the position of women in Hmar society. Patriarchal society has compelled women to safeguard patriarchal values in their action and even in their thoughts conditioned by the prevalent ideas and functions of the society. Women were denied social justice and security in the society where men hold control over them. The suffering and challenges are representation of their struggle and will power amidst difficult circumstances, surrendered to the edifice of culture where she is subordinated and manipulated in the name of culture. Even though the sacrifice and contribution of women goes unnoticed and grounded to submissive roles, it leads them to experience a heightened relationship in elaborating her feminine essence. A woman's position may be grounded to limitations imposed upon them in various situations and may be compelled to assume the explicitly gendered stereotypical roles. Yet she finds the conditioning challenging and elaborates her feminine responsibility in bringing out her true essence.

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CHAPTER THREE

Hegemonic Representation: Hmar Men-folk and their Power in Society

The chapter delineates the power and position of men in Hmar society. The traditional songs and festivals are profuse with renderings of the pride, honour and dignity of men. Men in the folktales have been represented as embodiment of masculine power that advocated their hegemony in the overall representation of their power, talent and strength. For men, masculinity is about having a clear sense of gender difference and maintaining a boundary in consciousness and being. The ascendancy of men is further maintained in the manner they expose and use their power upon women. In the representation of the supremacy and power of men in Hmar society, the chapter attempts to bring out the necessity of patriarchal resistance by women who are subdued to a life of subordination and contempt in their relation to men and their mode of resistance is analyzed in the next chapter.

Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant or masculine roles and women subordinate or feminine ones. A man is admired and exalted while a woman is subordinated. In traditional Hmar society, the head of the family is the father. Women are primarily concerned with child-rearing and household maintenance and more importance was given to public than private sphere. In the historical tradition of social institution such as village administration, every village was under the control of a Chief or *Lal*, assisted by a council of elders who are known as *Upa* or *Zalen* or *Pachawng*. It may be mentioned here that all the privileged position in the village rested in the hands of men. The village priest, the village crier, blacksmith and other village officials were the domain of men. Even in the post-Christian era, the Hmar villages follow the Panchayati system of administration headed by a Gaonbura or President of a Village Committee, of male members. Tribe decision according to Hmar customary laws and practices are recognized by the government.

Men and women co-exist for the harmonious growth and development of the society. They share equal responsibilities in supporting the family but at the same time gender difference occur in the family and society at large. According to Gerda Lerner, “The family not only mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to follow it, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order.” (217) Patriarchal

values are thus socialized to the next generation through the family. Gender socialization among the Hmar prevailed from the earliest time. There is significant difference in the socialization of boys and girls. “In its ultimate origin “difference” as a distinguishing mark between the conquered and the conquerors was based on the first clearly observable difference, that between the sexes.” (Lerner 214) While girls are socialized to be more obedient and responsible, the socialization of boys emphasizes an assertive behaviour and seeks attention and dominance for their own sake. A Hmar girl is socialized to be more obedient and responsible, confined to the private sphere of the home. She would help the mother in her domestic responsibilities and taking care of her siblings. On the other hand, in the socialization of boys, *Zawlbuk* (bachelors’ dormitory) was a very important institution in shaping the social life of the boys in Hmar community. It was a place where all sorts of learning and discipline was maintained through a very good system of administration. They learned good manners and social etiquette, trained in various art and crafts, apart from learning the art of trap setting and skills of martial arts. The virtue of *Tlawmngaina*²³ is inculcated at a primary stage. Besides, the elder boys guide the younger ones in performing various responsible tasks. Because of such dissemination of knowledge and skills, *Zawlbuk* institution played an instrumental role in shaping the life and personality of Hmar men. However, there was no such institution as *Zawlbuk* for the girls.

Culture observes the traditional view of man as dominant as they ascribe to particular behaviour accorded to them. In their article “The Politics of Culture” Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan maintains that “In its general sense, culture is also the way people behave while eating, talking to each other, interacting at work, engaging in ritualized social behavior such as social gatherings.” (1025) Culture therefore is important in moulding the perception of people as it is symbolic of the habits, beliefs, behavior and lives of people through the cultural practices that impart meaning to experiences and events. Hmar celebrate a number of festivals with maximum participation of people. It is through these cultural gatherings and celebration that the supremacy of men is rendered. In the hegemonic representation

²³ To be self-sacrificing and unselfish in helping others or do what the situation demands.

of power of Hmar men as depicted in the songs and tales, we find their masculine power not only in the context of gender relations but also in different aspect of life as seen in the number of celebration and festivals held as a mark of their power, strength and honour.

As mentioned earlier, the festivals of the Hmar are organized by individual family or by the whole village where dance play an important part. A number of these festivals have been highlighted to reveal the supremacy of men who are not only powerful but also rich, manifested by the exuberant demonstration of superiority and dignity in the manner they are celebrated. The ceremony is consecrated in performance and observation involving the role played by the distinguished person arranging the feast. The festivals include; *Inchawng*, a family feast is given by a rich person connected with a family worship, the most famous *Inchawng* festival is *Siel-sun*. *Khuongchawi* is also a big feast given by the chiefs and the rich people where the host is commemorated with a pompous procession. *Sahlang Dawm* is another distinctive festival arranged by distinctive hunters and warriors where a big procession along the streets of the village is arranged to commemorate the host. In addition, *In-ei* is another ceremony of success and victory or triumph over the animals killed in hunting, a foe killed in fighting or a successful harvest. Victory dances are performed to celebrate their heroic deeds and valour.

Instances of the mentioned celebration are found in the select folktales in the domain of rich and successful men. In the story of *Lamlir*, Lamlir's grandfather was a very rich man with all comforts and luxuries of life. The grandfather decided to observe *Inchawng* as thanks giving for a tree he planted near his house that reached the sky even though he had ulterior motive for Lamlir in the ceremony. In *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai*, Thawnglai was to observe *Inchawng* and kill a mithun for the community. He would kill the mithun by piercing his spear on the mithun. As a distinctive mark of the occasion, he adorned himself in all ceremonial finery with headgears and performs the ceremonial act of *Siel-sun*. Likewise, in the story of *Thlakur*, Bunglal arranged a big feast of *Inchawng* and invited all the chiefs and officials, far and wide. The grand ceremony was marked by the arrival of rich and notable figure like chiefs and high officials. The adulation associated to their position is evident in the manner they were carried in a palanquin by their servants and slaves

to the house of the host. Similar such instance is found in *Buonhlel and the Fairy*, Buonhlel a professional hunter was so successful in hunting that there was no end of feast at their courtyard as a mark of celebrating his success. Almost every day there would be dances and feasts of *Sa-in-ei* held to celebrate his success in hunting. His sisters came with headgears while others brought the sweetest beer to offer him. These ceremonies as depicted in the folktales reveal the adulation given to the rich and prominent figures in the society. The manner in which it is prepared and earnestness engaged in holding such ceremony account the prominence rendered to the rich and the heroes.

In addition, songs constitute an important part in the culture and tradition of Hmar. Hmar has a record of a number of songs that they sing in observing different occasion for one whole day. It may sometimes not be related to any festival. Yet it reveals their spirit of enjoyment and reverence towards significant affair in their life. Moreover, it serves as an important medium through which the social, cultural and religious history of the Hmar could be apprehended. These songs are transmitted down the generation through oral tradition. Songs and dance accompanied by the choicest wine is a mark of the festive mood of the people in showing their honour and admiration to the person worthy of adulation. The people involved in the celebration put out their demand to the host and on the fulfillment of their demands they bless them.

The language employed in the songs has a social bearing that carry the tremendous tension of man's authority and the basic cultural ideas about the cultural association of man and masculinity. The tradition of domination by men is present in patriarchal ideology and discourses. Man becomes the product of the ideological construction that shapes and controls the mindset of people that gives rise to social and cultural practices. In the festivals of the Hmar, dance played a predominant role in celebrating the feats of warrior and honouring the rich who are predominantly men. The ornamental headgear, *thangsuopuon*²⁴ and turban are used as a symbol of commemorating and honouring the celebrated figure. The folksongs of the Hmar are suitable sources for probing into the subtle and persistent construct of power and

²⁴ A special cloth of warriors, successful hunters and extraordinary or highly honourable people.

dominance of men. Proclamations in the folk and traditional songs are strongly patriarchal, encouraging hyper-masculinity in the celebration of the victory and strength of men. The songs of the Hmar rendered towards the glorification of men are as follows:

Saia ke tet hla: It is a song of pride pronounced by a man named Saia. The manner in which Saia stamps his feet as he moves forward in dance suggests the gravity of his aggressive nature as he expresses his pride and advantage over his illustrious nature and possession. This song reveals the competitive spirit and rebellious nature of the ancestors. The song goes thus –

“A thei sawmfa’ thlaw’

Kum khat in thlaw in in tuolah in hrilh

In hril thiem cheu,

Saia sawmfa’ thlaw’

Kum intina kulhraia ka thlaw’ Tuoinah lo inthang...

A tlei laimi tha, In khat lai in thate

Ti’n tuolah lei ang in hrilh

Saia laimi tha’

Kheri sawn thla diei a, dawthuong zalkhumah,

A muola kan zal.”

[You mortals boast your harvest

Of one year in the neighbourhood.

As for me my successful harvest stands so huge

That it has spread far and wide.

Your arms embrace your beloved

As for me my arms are set to kill my enemies in war.

You use your shield to work in the fields

I use them to fight my foe in the North and South direction.

You speak of vanquishing your opponent’s family.

My enemies are piled up

Like a mountain lying on the ground.]²⁵ (Keivom 20,21)

There is unmitigated exuberance in the description of the mighty and resolute disposition of Saia. He exposes his might in the massive success of his harvest and his audacity and heroism in the terrifying piling up of his enemies like a mountain. He further imposes a challenging note of his undying spirit and determination in going to war. It is a song where the character himself exposes his strength that gives a distinguishing mark in rendering the power and position of men.

Hranglam Hla: Hmars celebrate their victory over a war by lavishly drinking wine and meat for the whole day and night. The accompaniment of dance and song marks the revelry of the people. Among the Hmar dances, *Hrang lam* (Hero Dance) constitute a song known as *Hranglam Hla*, that significantly reveal the ordeal they faced in the hands of enemy they combat during war. It further exposes the battle amongst their own tribe; their competition to gain the status of ‘*thangsuo*’²⁶, their reverence upon certain values and their pain and suffering over adversaries and situation and also the revenge and atrocities they faced.

*“In nuthaihai ruong buon ang inpom karah,
Sermei thau ning, nghalpa bu sawm hlei kan tling;
Ka leibang hei en ve u, chamruala tehai,
Sawilung ruka ka tum sa a tlung zo tah.”*

[When you were in deep slumber embracing your wives,
I held the torch and set out to hunt for the fierce animal.
Look at the wall in my yard,

I have hung the skulls of all the animals I have killed.] (Keivom 31)

A close analysis of the songs gives a picture of the dance performed upon the head of the animal killed in hunting. There is a note on the jubilant preparation of men and women for war and the woeful cry of bereaved families. There is also a rendering of the miseries of mothers. One of the song narrates about a child who ventured out and

²⁵ The lines of the songs has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

²⁶ A person who has achieved purpose in life, especially in consolidating economic status and in bagging wild animals in hunting. Such persons are believed to inherit paradise and to be provided for with rice and meat.

unfortunately killed by warriors out for hunting. The mother's grief on being informed that she should not expect the return of her child is a moment of unmitigated grief.

Hranglam Hla also records the spirit of revenge instilled in the hearts of the children whose parents are killed. It was the days of head hunting where enemies brutally killed each other and the descendants are provoked and instilled towards seeking revenge from a very young age.

“*Toksam par ang vuoi ngawi a kan kel ngai nawh,*

Thlunglu ka lak hma chun zam rel naw ning”

[Toksam flower after it dries up does not fail to bear fruit,

I will not give up until I take the head of my enemy] (Keivom 27)

Hranglam Hla of the Hmar have been rendered since the time they were in Shan country, probably situated somewhere in the Shan state of Burma. (Thiek 64) During this time, the Hmar were victorious over man and beasts. The change and development of a person's life is evident from this song. *Hranglam* is actually a dance held in festival and not an ordinary dance. It is an ancient victory dance performed in honour of warriors and great hunters. The *Hranglam Hla* or Hranglam songs are believed to be among the oldest songs of the Hmar which harkens back to the past glories and miseries of the people in olden days. *Hranglam* is performed jointly by both men and women. While dancing, the warrior enters the ground chanting the hunter's cry and fire gun shots. In the dance people erect a long bamboo over which they hang the head of the animal or enemy they killed. It is performed in honour of the warriors and great hunters.

Hlado: The Hmar had the tradition of singing and composing songs for the expression of their innermost feelings, including songs that may express love and admiration for amorous lovers. Among other songs, *Hlado* have strong patriarchal overtones as they are sung as expression of joy for success in hunting and raids performed by the men, as well as to brag about their victory upon others. *Hlado* is sung on killing an animal and to announce the deed as well as to summon others for help. The nature of the song would convey the type of animals bagged in hunting. Later, at the *In-ei* ceremony, the songs are repeated to tell others of their bravery and

success. A few such *Hlado* songs are mentioned to show the jubilant commemoration of men.

*“Vawm khuoie, huk dur dur lai, tlangah sawlthing a thliek ngai ie,
Valan ie, ka that nin ie, ei khuo ie, sawilung herna che maw.”*

[This young man was often looked down upon by the village folks.

One Day he killed a ferocious bear and relating his deeds, he asked the villagers to change their opinion of him, and to reform their attitude towards him] (Bapui 2009, 110)

*Valan ie lungphang lo ten lentupui hlim ka rawn fang ie
Nghovar ie, tu vul lo ie, ha tha ie, kallai ka thlo chu.* (Bapui 2009, 110)

[This young man being fearless, went up and down the dark forest, met a big boar with white tusks, not reared by anyone, and arrested him in his walk.]

*Ka nu'n ie, ka senten ie, ka nu'n ruo bang mi krpui ie,
Valan ie, ka than in ie, ka khuo ie, sawilung her n ache maw.*

[The young man, the son of a widow, raised up in poverty, was often detested by the young ladies.

One day he went and killed a tiger, and in song he asked the villagers to change their opinion about him] (Bapui 2009, 110)

Most of the *Hlado* are chanted to announce the return by the hunters and from the nature of the song they chant, the people can know the kind of animal they have bagged in their hunt as they sing specific songs that are rendered for different animals they have killed. When the hunters are about to enter the village, they chant the song as a call to the people to receive them at the frontier of the village. The village folks on hearing their joyous return set out to receive them with drinks and food. They are further extolled by the shooting of guns followed by the chanting of *Hlado*.

As the hunters chant their *Hlado* songs, mothers and children on hearing them becomes alert and such was the intensity of the song that even a crying child stops. Whenever a ferocious animal like a tiger or lion is killed there is a special call for the dignified citizens of the village to summon upon the cry and join to welcome them. The rendition of *Hlado* has a tremendous effect upon the entire community. Children

look out in caution to play outside with friends and even men who are all set to go out hunting retreat and stay back. There are *Hlado* composed to commemorate the head of enemies they kill during a war or captives brought called *Ral Hlado*.

*“Laimi e, kan man karah
Sai lien aw nang hmasa la;
Valmi a kan thang chiei e, ngai ula,
Lienkhuo lengna zongin.”*

[When I die and walk along the valley of death
I want an elephant ;
And not the man whom I had killed,
To usher me.] (Keivom 114)

The song expresses his valour among the young men of his village and whenever they kill their enemies in a war they chant –

*“Kei chu e, ka senten e’
Sa le doral ka piengpui e;
Ka dove, remnampa e, thlangchem e’
‘Aikim’ mi ti ula.”*

[I was predestined
Since a very young age
To be successful over enemies in war
I deserve honour.] (Keivom 114)

The song relates how the warrior deserves honour for his bravery. He defeated his foe with his sword and is celebrated with jubilant commemoration. The rendition is specifically uttered to mark the victory of victorious warriors and successful hunters.

Darlam Hla: This song is sung during the performance of religious rites where a family offers sacrifice. They offer prayers to the spirits of their ancestors to seek their blessings for fortune and manifold success. *Darlam* songs not only speak about the pride of the wealthy but also relates about their avarice over material possession that would impress their power and prosperity. Even though it is a family sacrifice it can be performed only by the rich and the wealthy. They have to provide wine and meat to the entire village. For such lavish preparation they are honoured and praised and the song runs with expression of pride. They also compose songs

where there is an audacious rendering of pride in exposing the number of mithun they possess. Those persons who observe *Siel-sun Inchawng* (festival on animal hunting) and *Bu-in-ei* (harvest festival) are regarded exceptional citizens. The family boasts about the regular holding of the ceremony as a mark of their pride and possession. The festival is marked by the ignition of the fireplace that emits smoke as a sign of the incessant observance by the family throughout the year. They tie the skulls of animals or head of the enemy on a high bamboo pole and erect them outside. The erected pole was so high that even the birds could not perch on them which again is a mark of their extolling nature. It was a matter of pride and honour to hold such festival as the hosts enjoy the aura of adulation conferred upon them.

*“Kan tuolhmaiah puiroo ka phun e,
A zikin suo lam a en e;
A zikin suo lam a en e’
Thlanthlaten fu rong a tih, fu thei lova e.”*

[I have set a high bamboo pole at my courtyard,
The stalk faces towards east;
The stalk faces towards east,
The birds are unable to perch on it.] (Keivom 33)

The incredible height of the pole which stands beyond the reach of the birds is suggestive of the position that exhibits the pride of the host.

These overt compositions of songs speak of their immense wealth and enormous respect and honour they acquire amongst the tribe. There are many such victory songs for almost all kinds of wild animals. All animals larger than a hog deer brought reputation to the hunter and are often boasted about when killed. A successful hunter, who is considered *thangsuo*, must have killed, among others, seven ferocious animals such as cobra, an eagle, a hog deer, a boar, a bear, a tiger and an elephant. It is believed that the soul of such a person who is *thangsuo* will be secured to paradise without any hindrance and there he is to be provided with prepared rice and meat.

As stated earlier the ritualized festivals represented through the songs communicate the ascendancy of men in the social and cultural practices of Hmar. Performance of such victory songs is found in the folktales in commemorating the

victory of successful heroes. In *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai*, Suonvawr's defeat and killing of the monstrous Hriliei is celebrated by the entire village as they gathered to welcome him. The killing of Hriliei was a great achievement for Suonvawr as it was respite for the terror stricken people from the dreadful figure. The warriors as a mark of celebration indulge in absolute revelry and dance proclaiming their pride and celebrate the occasion the whole day. In the story of *Buonhleii and the Fairy*, Buonhleii motivated the young men of his village to a war and through the act of violent plundering of neighbouring villages they took many slaves as captives. They also amassed a lot of wealth from their raid and everyday there would be dances or feasts to celebrate the heroic acts of his subjects. The victorious eminence of men is thus determined by the social practices in the jubilant note of triumph and celebration rendered.

Folktales of the Hmar give a penetrating picture of the ethnology of the Hmar tribe in presenting the life and custom where the social life and issues of gender are clearly apprehended. Hmar folktales contribute to society's notion of gender and analyzing gender discrimination and role of men in the social system and cultural practices and functions as an interpretation of patriarchy in Hmar society. J.L.Fischer in his article "Sociopsychological Analysis of Folktales" states, "If studied carefully, I believe that folktales can be an important index of the ways in which social structure impinges on and moulds individual personalities." (285) The motifs and characters of the tales are adopted with the life and customs of particular community or tribe. Folktales are primarily traditional in nature and culture and may get modified with the passage of time. The patriarchal notions embedded in the social structure are accentuated in moulding the personality and ideas about the superiority of men.

The complex interactions of the historical, psychological and biological factors that are displayed and experienced are manifested in the activities of people that constitute the cultural tradition. Like other kindred tribes of North east India, Hmar men in the early pre-Christian era were motivated towards bagging prized animals in hunting. A recognition which marked their bravery and prowess and also their chase in killing their enemies in war brought them honour and glory. Such men were conferred the status of accomplished hero and celebrated with reverence by the

people. In the traditional belief system of the Hmar, there were three ways for men to reach *Pielral*²⁷. They were *In tienga thangsuo*²⁸, *Ran thangsuo*²⁹ and *Ral thangsuo*³⁰. *In tienga thangsuo* is a person who possesses abundant supply of food at home. Such a person is wealthy enough to hold the celebration of *Inchawng*³¹ and feed the entire village with lavish food as he has a rich store of rice and arum; the staple food of the Hmar, throughout the year. Such a person also observes *Sesun-Inchawng*³² where the entire village folks dine over the mithun killed during the festival. The next, *Ram thangsuo* is a person who is successful in the field of hunting. *Ram thangsuo* is a prominent hunter who has a record of having killed a wild boar, a deer, a bear and wild mithun. A person is also conferred upon the title of *thangsuo* if he has killed a wild mithun, anaconda and eagle, besides the name of the other animals mentioned before. However, a person is fully considered *Ram thangsuo* only if he is able to hold a celebration on the occasion of the killing of such animals. The third, *Ral thangsuo* is conferred upon a person who is successful in defeating the enemy in a war. The prominent warrior holds a celebration upon the head of the enemy he killed termed as *Rallu-in-ei*. The entire community celebrates the head of the slain enemy for the whole day amidst revelry, wine and meat. (Lallungawi 131) For men, it was encouraging to attain the position of *thangsuo* and prepare himself to enter *pielral*. Since they were responsible for the community's welfare they were positioned to nurture what society expects of them.

Men in the select Hmar folktales are represented to be strong, witty and courageous and assumed the role of warriors and successful masters. In their dominating nature they not only command honour and respect in society and other spheres but also a rendering of their hegemonic status in their association to people around them. In the select tales men enjoys the power of ruling and decision making, besides their extravagant pursuit of valour and accomplishment. They were

²⁷ Heaven or Paradise

²⁸ A person who has achieved a purpose in life is called *thangsuo*. *In tienga thangsuo* is a man who is a *thangsuo* at home.

²⁹ A *thangsuo* in the forest

³⁰ A *thangsuo* in war

³¹ A festival organized by the wealthy.

³² A form of *inchawng*(feast organized by the rich) where they kill a prized boar.

passionate about achieving such honour and dignity and thus devote their time and strength towards attaining them and hold forth their ascendancy and excellence.

The main character, Hrangkhup and his son, Suonvawr as depicted in story of *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai* are mighty warriors accumulating honour and power by their vigorous dynamism and influence. The story narrates an unusual attribute of Hrangkhup's encounter with the villagers of Zielung when he was a boy. They tossed the boy upward and positioned their spears so as the boy would meet their spears when it fell down. Surprisingly, the boy dropped in between the spears even though they did so several times and the spears failed to pierce him. Later they even placed their sharp daos in between the spears and tossed the boy but eventually the daos also turned flat the moment it was touched by the boy and was left unhurt. Impressed by such exceptional quality, the king decided to make him his son. As the story progressed we have an account of Hrangkhup's courageous spirit in confronting Thawnglai, a leader of Zielung village who killed his wife in a fit of rage when Hrangkhup pleaded for tax exemption for the whole village.

Hrankhup's dexterity and valiant conflict is revealed in the manner in which he beheaded Thawnglai's mother and the biggest mithun from Thawnglai's shed in one stroke. Hrangkhup expressed pride in beheading Thawnglai's mother and shouted cries of victory over Thawnglai and his men. Hrangkhup's cry that he was the famous Hrangkhup revealed his domineering pride and established fame over his might. He further gratified his pride as he arrogantly announces that he would celebrate his mother's head and stoutly challenged him to be on guard as he was going to behead his favourite mithun. Hrangkhup was invincible as he confronted Thawnglai and his men in his escape route and securely confronted the dangerous attack of his opponents. As Thawnglai and his men could not trace Hrangkhup in and around the shed of mithun, he cleverly made his escape. Thawnglai got enraged in despair and to aggravate the situation Hrangkhup sent a message through a stranger that he would go again to sow a seed of pumpkin on his mother's grave and informed him to be vigilant. Once again Hrangkhup was successful to reach the domain of Thawnglai even though the latter arranged for a strict watch to guard the entry of his opponent but in vain. Both Hrangkhup and Thawnglai were passionate about

attaining power and it is evident in the manner they exposed their strength in their encounter with each other.

The tale continues to narrate the undying courage of Suonvawr, the son of Hrangkhup in the execution of Hrillei who was responsible for the killing of his sisters, aunts and grandfather. Hrillei was mighty and imposing and no one dared to encounter him in his village. Even Hrangkhup restricted Suonvawr to access the particular hill leading to Hrillei's village. Suonvawr however decided to advent in order to seek revenge from the ruthless Hrillei. He mobilized young men in the village for a war against the mighty Hrillei and tactfully devised a plan to strike down Hrillei and eventually killed him. On returning triumphant the entire village celebrated his victory with dance and drink for the whole day which traditionally is called *Rallu-in-ei*. Suonvawr returned home with the tip of tongues of all the enemies he had chopped off and killed as a mark of his jubilant victory. Hrangkhup and Suonvawr's extraordinary ability and unwavering strength is a profuse rendering of the exaltation of men who are not only brave but skillful and adapt in encountering peril and risk.

In the story of *Pawthir and Hrangchal* the description of the strength and valour of man is found in the heroic deeds of Pawthir in rescuing Kungi from the seize of Sairam (elephant man). Pawthir and Hangchal are men who can be conferred the title of *Ral thangsuo* for their valiant performance against the elephant man. The courage of Pawthir is revealed from the instant he saw the basket size footprint of Sairam yet was undaunted. He proceeded out into the thick jungle in search of Sairam. The manner in which he threw a big iron ball across Sairam's house and also split a big rock into two with his spear involved great strength and prowess. As he accomplished them he was sure to succeed in his mission of killing Sairam. Sairam turned himself into a big tusker and ran wild looking for Pawthir who ran away with his wife, but Pawthir daringly mounted on the elephant and severed its head. As Pawthir along with Hrangchal and Kungi proceeded home, they decided to take the shorter route of three days journey even though it was perilous than the longer route of seven days. In their dangerous pursuit they encountered the demons but Pawthir was able to vanquish them all together. Pawthir and Hrangchal were entrusted the task of rescuing Kungi from Sairam by the mother of Kungi who was helpless to put

up any effort in order to save her daughter. Therefore, she had to approach the two men, Pawthir and Hrangchal for the mission and thus succeeded in winning back her daughter. The main priority of men in the Hmar society was to save the people of the village and their crops in the field from the attack of ferocious animals. Such protection rendered toward the community made them successful and prosperous and they are conferred the title of *thangsuo*. The attainment of such a position further rendered them the means of attaining *pielral*.

“ ‘Masculinity’ to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage in that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.” (Connell 71) The personality of men with masculine traits are maintained and found in the select folktales in characters like Lamlir, Lalmang, Lalruong, Tekabareisuon and Rengte. The extraordinary skills and excellence rendered in the description of their characters may be interpreted as a part of their action that advocated the hegemony of men and it exists not only in the context of gender relation but also in the overall structure of power, exceptional talent, victory and strength. The story of *Lamlir* is replete with feats of extraordinary skill by Lamlir and his three friends whom he befriended on witnessing their skills. Lamlir escaped the shrewd plan of his uncle who wanted to kill him, as admonished by a widow and beheaded him. Extraordinary feat performed by three men who later became his friends are accounted where the first man cleaned the intestine of a fly, the second could block the current of a flowing water by his thigh and the third plucked trees and bamboos like a grass by his bare hands. Mention may be made of the great honour proclaimed by the three men upon Lamlir as they considered the action performed by Lamlir in killing his uncle much greater than their incredible skills.

Wonderful account of their accomplishment is further witnessed in their accumulation of bee hives on having the desire for wild honey. The first man gathered seven layers of bee hives, the second, seven hundred and the third reported to have collected uncountable bee hives. He lost his friends as they fell to the spell of an evil spirit when they set out to fetch fire, except for Lamlir who caught hold of the hair of the evil spirit and swung her about the air and died. On rescuing his friends

they dug a deep pond to squeeze out honey until it began to over flow and finished them in no time and drank fifty fathoms deep lake water to quench their thirst. The manner in which Lamlir covered the hole of the wind with a flat stone speaks of the vigour and power of Lamlir as he sat on it. He was blown up above the clouds due to the intensity of the pressure of accumulated wind in the hole. Lamlir however was not dismayed by such extreme expulsion and while he was in the sky he began cutting the branches of the tree from the top bit by bit which was planted by his grandfather to repose him until a branch fell on his thigh and broke his legs. He fell down and transformed into a big serpent, crawling into the deep forest never to be seen again. The delineation of exceptional skills of Lamlir and his friends are extravagant in maintaining the power and ability of men. The masculine traits are a rendering of the expected personality of men in Hmar culture.

Again, in the story of *Lalmang*, Berbawr the chief councilor of the chief, Lalmang is witty and talented in bringing success and fame to the king. By dint of his modesty and astute behaviour he won the favour of the king that aroused a feeling of jealousy in the mind of the other officials. This led to their attempt to misguide the chief against Berbawr several times, yet they failed to convince the king and as a result Berbawr continued to enjoy the goodwill of the king. The manner in which he saved Chawngnieng, with whom he eventually fell in love, exposes his wisdom and courage. She was captivated by the terrifying fantastical figure Sibarnu who devours humans. Berbawr realizes the peril of Chawngnieng's condition and takes up the risk of rescuing her by gathering the pigeon, the bow and the gourd which were the soul, the backbone and the skull of the witch. Berbawr's gallant and heroic attempt successfully relinquished the opponent by destroying the three magical weapons of Sibarnu when she ran after them in their escape. Berbawr further rescued his master with the help of his possession of the living water in curing the princess. Berbawr, thus played a tremendous role in the rescue of his master and further succeeded in his mission of finding a life partner for his master by arranging his marriage with the princess. It was his loyalty and steadfastness that contributed towards his success and achievement. The entire story is a gratification of the wit and power of man. Lalmang's subsequent possession of the magical devise accentuated a higher skill in

him that ignited his impulse in procuring an honourable and virtuous position and conferred him the position of a hero.

Another praiseworthy character that exhibits masculine power and talent is found in the story of *Lalruong*. The account of the achievement and bravery of the hero throws light on the superiority and glorification when it comes to power and strength and his exceptional ability through his magic skills. Lalruong's extraordinary trait is described from the moment he was only three months, when he was in the womb of his mother Zawtleipui. There is a profuse rendering of his exceptional quality during his birth, as he caught a rat under the bed when his mother delivered him. He grew up to be an outstandingly brave and clever boy. His encounter with Vanhrit, reveals his bravery as he caught him red handed and threatened to kill him for stealing his trapped animals. Vanhrit in order to save his life gave him a magic tube and taught him witchcraft, which augmented his potential towards his triumph. Lalruong possessed all masculine strength and bravery by which he was able to assert himself and exercise his power. His supremacy and achievement is further revealed by his magical power. There is also an interesting account of his ability on becoming a famous magician, where he trapped two deer and put them inside a small bamboo tube. He also compressed thousands of tree trunks into small walking sticks and brought them home. Even Keichal (a ferocious male tiger) committed towards Laruong for his indomitable strength and talent. But when Keichal killed Lalruong's brother and ate him up, they became enemies and Lalruong killed him by pinning him down with his spear, nevertheless with a promise of organizing a big condolence feast over his grave by killing the mithun of Dawikungpu, a shrewd magician.

Lalruong in the story is a figure that renders and maintains the gratifying quality of masculinity through his exceptional quality. He possessed the excellence that society expects from a man as he was not only brave and strong and prompt in taking action but he was remarkably witty. Moreover, his bravery is exposed in his encounter with the magician. The manner in which Lalruong responded to the demeaning call of the magician, marked his confidence and ability. When the magician interrogated him if he has come from a crooked hill like a crippled man, Laruong responded, saying

“Ni love khai,
 Piel thinthen tlanga inthawkin ka hung piel thinthen a,
 Muoltluongah ka hung tluong a’
 Kang hringah ka hung hring a,
 Tuidamah ka hung dam a,
 I insungah tek a riel angin ka hung vuong lut a nih.”

[No, not at all,

I come from the sloping hills of the rocky ledged mounts,

Coming through straight hills of Muoltluong,

Coming through green forests,

And crossing the water of life,

I entered your house like thunder bolt and hail stone] (Bapui 2011, 46)

The alarming response highlights the confidence and dexterity of Lalruong. Laruong’s wit and skill is further revealed in his encounter with Dawikungpu. The story narrates how Dawikungpu had taken all precautionary measures to protect his pet mithun as he had already known about Lalruong’s intention through his witchcraft, and both began to exercise their magical power upon each other. Dawikungpu succumbed to death over a wound that was uncurable as he left a lump of flesh of his buttock upon a rock through the magical spell of Lalruong.

Likewise, masculine rendering is depicted in the character of Tekabareisuon in the story of *Paruolsarihai*. The exceptional manner in which he was born creates a significant mark in his personality. Tekabareisuon was born out of a goose berry that his mother took as she was alone mourning the killing of her father and brothers by a Keimi³³. When Tekabareisuon grew up he learned from his mother about the killing of his uncles and grandfather. He turned vengeful and decided to requite for their death. Tekabareisuon’s tactfulness is revealed from the moment he set out in search of the Keimi, as he was able to fulfill the demand of a man who emptied mustard seeds from the basket on the roadside and asked him to recover them without missing even a single grain. He succeeded in doing so and the man said that he would succeed in his mission. He met another man on his way and here too he was able to join the

³³ A tiger that can take the form of a man.

mortar which the man cut into two halves with a special adhesive. Finally, he was successful in killing a fat pig of a widow by a single stroke of his spear, the fat of the pig was extracted by the widow in a bamboo tube and gave it to Tekabareisuon with good advises for his mission. On reaching the village Tekabareisuon encountered the Keimi. His anger intensified on seeing his opponent. He confronted the Keimi tactfully by climbing up a tree and peeled off the skin of the tree and emptied the oil bamboo to make it greasy for the tiger to reach him. As the Keimi attempted to climb the tree, it failed and opened his mouth to devour him. At that moment Tekabareisuon summoning all his strength flung his spear and pinned down the Keimi to the ground and thus avenged the death of his uncles and grandfather.

Again, In the story of *Rengte*, there is a profuse rendering of the masculine power in their encounter to perilous situation and multifarious beings. Rengte's ordeal with the wild peacock, who killed his father reveals the inconsistent determination and courage of a man in killing the peacock. He was later deceived by his own sister who falls in love with the peacock. The courage of Rengte is manifested in the description of his arduous effort of risking his life to go to the thick jungle to hunt down a bear's cub, obtaining a flesh of a tiger's cub and an orange on the brow of a big elephant to cure his sister. He was asked to do so by his sister who wanted to get rid of him in order to marry the wild peacock. However it was not an easy task to surpass the bravery and power of Rengte as he prevails upon the treacherous plan devised to eliminate him.

The story of *Rengte* further narrates the courageous spirit of Khena and Rama, the two sons of Rengte, who chased Kulsamnu³⁴ as she wanted to eat them up at the time of their birth. Rengte had promised Vanhrit³⁵ to give him his sons at the time of offering sacrifice for his wife who was unable to conceive. However, when his wife conceived he met with an alarming consequence as he had to part with two of his most favourite sons to keep his promise. Later when Vanhrit descended to take Khena and Rama with him they were given a choice to take a route, whereupon it was decided by them to take the short cut way which was perilous rather than the long and peaceful route. "Why should we not face danger since we are men" (Dena

³⁴ A female devil or evil spirit.

³⁵ God of wisdom.

143) proclaimed the two brothers and encountered inconceivable perils until they reached the abode of Vanhrit. They further combated Lusaripa (seven headed demon) who abducted Khena's wife Tuizuor and battled with the magic bows and arrows of Lusaripa. In the encounter even though Khena's lap was injured by the poisonous arrow of Lusaripa, he recovered with the help of a medicinal plant obtained by Zawngrenge and Tuizuor.

“Masculinity entails assertiveness, being active, lively, and quick to take initiative.” (Walby 91) Outstanding audacity and courageous spirit of these heroes is a glorious exaltation of the power of man. Men as represented in the folktales are not only strong but also tactful and witty in outwitting their opponents. Their dexterity coupled with their courageous spirit render them successful in their mission and pursuit. The manner in which their exceptional skills are exposed are significant pronouncement of their audacity and brilliance.

Gender based roles is a differentiating factor where men and women are socialized to put up with specific roles assigned to them. The biological man as a dominating figure argues and acts in accordance to male domination on the pretext of psychological, social and cultural conditioning. “While sex refers to physical differences of the body, gender concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females.” (Giddens 158) Culturally the same biological distinction between men and women are found co-existing with great variations in terms of their roles and responsibilities where men and women are socialized to put up with specific roles assigned to them. As such men were positioned to be the bread winner and have custody over property, women and children. Men's dominance over women, children and property in the family and society through patriarchy is further extended in the manner in which they identify themselves, in terms of feelings and emotions and needs different from women and emphasize their potentials that threaten to challenge gender difference.

The distinction created between men and women in Hmar society can be seen through their role in particular social contexts. In Hmar society, the power of men comes from women who are ever present as a figure who are dependent on men for protection and survival. The constant engagement in inter-clan or inter-tribe war impressed the importance and position of men as they were responsible for the

survival of the entire clanship. As men were responsible for the protection of the entire village; the lives of men was not peaceful as they have to remain in constant guard and spend several nights without sleeping. They were courageous and resolute as they remain prepared to face an attack where they may be mutilated or even slain. (Lallungawi 177,178) This was the reason why they were powerful and respected. Moreover, *Zawlbuk* served as a defense for the village. All the young men living together, facilitates them to act together in times of need or emergency. Moreover, men were considered the owner of the private property and by maintaining this hierarchy in the social structure, women are controlled and manipulated. The power and prestige enjoyed by men forced women to act in accordance to the wish and demand of men. Their obsession intensified their power to win them to fulfill their desire and inclinations. Their mindset is so shaped as to view women to be possessed and controlled. In the folktales, men seemed to lack any sense of respect to women and become obsessed to win them to fulfill their desire and inclinations.

In the story of *Thlakur*, Thlakur's possession of Lawnglai can be seen as an overt exposition of control by a man over a woman. Thlakur, the hunter caught hold of Zumtenu who used to play with his animal traps to the surprise of Thlakur as he seldom discovered them collapse every time he goes to check the trap. Zumtenu was no match to the strength of a man and in order to set herself free she promised to do something good for Thlakur. Zumtenu thus exposed Thlakur to the beautiful fairies Lawnglai and Lawngvar and the means to get them. On the advice of Zumtenu, when the fairies came down to the pond to take bath, Thlakur was careful not to face them as their bright face would be dazzling. He hid himself and stealthily stalked behind them and caught hold of the elder one and took her home and married her. Thlakur's obsession over Lawnglai is another instance of the exposition of power by a man towards a woman. Lawnglai refuses to marry him as she does not belong to the human world. However, Thlakur is not ready to accept the refusal and declines whatever confrontation came from her. This compulsive nature of Thlakur shows the aggressive command of a man who takes no notice of the ardent plea made by the agonizing maiden. Later, when Lawnglai left him as she did not belong to the human world, Thlakur exhibited courage and determination in winning her back and every obstacle he encountered seemed to evoke a sense of resolute will power that directed

his emotions and feelings resulting in the successful pursuit of his venture. He made a winged horse assisted by Zumtenu's wizardry to fly to the sky to bring back Lawnglai and succeeded in winning her back.

Another such male character who forcibly takes advantage of a female helplessness is seen in the story of *Buonhleï and the Fairy*. Man's superiority and ruling over women is propounded by Buonhleï's commanding spirit in courting the fairy and finally marrying her is a resolute decision on the part of Buonhleï as he made a forceful attempt to win her even at the cost of bringing humiliation through her nakedness. Buonhleï sought the help of an old man to catch the fairy on one occasion where he steals her clothes and ring while they came down to take bath in the lake. According to the old man, so long as the ring was not given back to the fairy she would not bring any misery and would remain in control. Buonhleï takes advantage and pursues the fairy and deliberately marries her. The helplessness of the fairy in distress had no succor except to surrender to the demand of the man who plundered upon her clothes and ring. In a way her honour and chastity was at stake in the hands of Buonhleï as she did not dare to come out naked and consented to marry him. Buonhleï returned her clothes except the ring, with a request from her never to disclose that she was a fairy.

In the later part of the story, on becoming the wife of Buonhleï she is further tormented by Hrangrum, Buonhleï's brother who became jealous of his brother and made a secret plan to kill him and marry his wife. He ordered his military officer to go to the border under the leadership of Buonhleï and kill him. Buonhleï was however spared as the men brought back the clothes stained with the blood of a deer. Hrangrum pretended to mourn the death of his brother and tried every possible means to win the wife but in vain. At last he sent an order to the fairy that he would be sending his men to take her to his palace and that she should obey and be ready. Hrangrum uses his authority against a woman to fulfill his selfish desire. He did not consider the feelings of the fairy that was still mourning the death of her husband and demanded a fulfillment of his command from the helpless woman.

Siam, from the story *Pawthir and Hrangchal* is another character who cast a spell on Kungi to fulfill his intention of marrying her. In the story Kungi is depicted as a beautiful girl winning the hearts of every young man in the village. But she is

deprived of the chance of choosing her rightful partner due to the conspicuous intention of Sairam. Kungi is forced to accept Sairam as the latter had put her hair in a magic box, captivating her and almost succumbs to death. Sairam releases her hair only after the consent of the helpless mother who in order to save the life of her daughter agreed to give her hand in marriage to him. When the spell was broken and Kungi gets cured, Sairam carries her on his back to his village and is found languishing in the innermost part of Sairam's house. Sairam shows no compassion towards the condition of Kungi and causes her to suffer to the point of almost killing her. He dissipated his magical power to ruin a woman and paid no heed towards her feelings.

Thus, in the social hierarchy men occupied a superior position and legitimize to enjoy power and prestige in the society. Men readily exhibit whatever behavior is required for the attainment of status. The social value that prioritize the power and position of men does not only inform how men think about themselves but also how society views them and prescribe particular behavior about men.

The superiority of man is consistently constructed in a culturally defined set of social behavior called masculinity. R.W. Connell has extended concepts such as hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity, subordinate masculinity and marginalized masculinity for a proper understanding of the different kinds of masculinity. At any given moment, Connell argues that masculinity that is culturally exalted is hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity stands as a standard in evaluating other form of masculinity that has social authority and considered normative. The most predominant form and culturally accepted form of masculinity is hegemonic masculinity, which guarantees, according to Connell, the dominant position of men and subordination of women in patriarchal system where power and dominance is transmitted to men through culture and society. (77) It is thus a cultural conditioning that allows man to act and argue as a dominating figure in accordance to patriarchal standards and impress their superiority upon women.

In the story of *Mauruong*, Mauruong's father in his position as a husband denounced his wife by pushing her into a river and she dies. He does so because he was in love with another woman and wanted to marry her. He was blind to the adultery he committed in the utter manipulation of his position to meet his desire. An

act of supplanting a wife is an exposition of the authoritative power on the part of a man who treacherously misuses his position and plunges into bringing misery even to his daughter who had to endure unrelenting misfortune after she lost her mother.

In the story of *Sawrlai*, the power and dominance of Lalvung is revealed in the manner he decides to take the risk of seeking the stars from the sky. Lalvung was a chief and by dint of his position he was dominating and powerful. In traditional Hmar society, chiefs exercise supreme power in the village who were highly honoured and respected. Such leaders were talented people possessing extraordinary leadership quality. (Thiek 275) Lalvung exercised his authority in pursuing his intended mission, while Sawrlai, being the only girl in the family was left behind in the house. No attention was paid towards her well being as she stumbles under the rule of the men in the family. Sawrlai had to prepare seven packed food for her brothers everyday for Thumte to take them. To aggravate her misery she falls prey to the evil intention of Vawmpahrawng. Vawmpahrawng was another such figure who exhibited his power upon Sawrlai by forcibly taking her away to a far off place. Sawrlai was captured by Vawmpahrawng as there was no one in the house to help and save her. It was not acceptable on the part of the father and the brothers to leave her alone which prompted Vawmpahrawng to take advantage of the situation. Men in their masculine pursuit of fame and achievement do not see beyond their manly aspiration. They seem to think more of their personal gratification and power. The manner in which Sawrlai is abandoned is an act of discrimination as her life turns miserable without having anyone to save her in her hour of plight. Lalvung's hegemony is impressed upon the daughter who was expected to accept the decision of the male member of the family.

In *Sakhilawngdar II*, Pakhattepa, is a widower who married a beautiful fairy that evolved from the dried foreleg of a deer he shot. Upon marrying him, Sakhilawngdar prepares his meal and tidies up the house in his absence. They lived happily until Pakhattepa gradually turned alcoholic and abused Sakhilawngdar for no fault of hers. He does so when Sakhilawngdar sent her daughter to call her father home. The situation worsens until Sakhilawngdar could not bear any longer and leaves the house by turning herself back into a deer and went back to the forest. However, Sakhilawngdar comes back to feed her children. She does not seem to have

any choice against the authority of a man. Pakhattepa is not contented after dishonouring Sakhilawngdar and continued to torment her after she left him. Pakhattepa could not accept the fact that his children were fed by their mother in the form of a deer, so he gathered his neighbours to hunt for the deer and killed the deer. When she transformed into a *Phunchawng*³⁶ tree Pakhattepa called out to his friends and fell down the tree. Finally when Sakhilawngdar turned herself into a mermaid he informed through the village messenger to summon the village people to go fishing by threshing poisonous plants. The whole village came forward on the appointed day with the poisonous plants and killed Sakhilawngdar. Thus, Pakhattepa dominates Sakhilawngdar through his male power. He was not able to reconcile to the fact that Sakhilawngdar left him and therefore paid no heed to the motherly sentiments of Sakhilawngdar towards her children and continued to torment and destroyed her. As stated earlier, men did not show any consideration towards the feelings of women in the selfish pursuit of their demand and maintained their superiority upon them.

Lacan's mirror stage states that, before the emergence of the sense of self the child has no distinction between the self and the other called the imaginary stage, where there is a kind of idealized identification with the mother. The mirror stage is the point of entry into the symbolic order, to the order of patriarchy. It is a stage where the child enters into the language system, the moment where the child separates himself or herself and says I, the point of entry into ego identification, the moment of separation from the mother or significant other. The masculine traits that allow man to act in a superior position is not only culturally conditioned but psychologically rendered. The personality and nature of a man or a woman is internalized and organized from childhood experience.

...that symbolizes the mental permanence of the I, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination; it is still pregnant with the correspondences that unite the I with the statue in which man projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him, or with the automaton in which, in an ambiguous relation, the world of his own making tends to find completion. (442,443)

³⁶ Commonly known as Indian Cottonwood.

The mirror stage is a point of assumption of an image or imaginary. It is a stage where the child has not learned language, so he takes on the image that the society expects of the child. When the child adopts language, the other self image or symbolic image develops that shapes his personality and characteristics.

A child picks up the norms, roles and expectations about his/her gender identity in the roles assigned to them. Gender identification in men begins with the early primary identification with the mother who plays a major role in care taking and other responsibilities pertaining to household affairs. Boys are considered to be strong and autonomous. The physical environment and experiences from the early childhood shapes their self-perception that channels them towards developing perspective and personality that becomes a constituent part of his personality. Men associates with the superior particulars of the society and culture. He attempts to internalize the components of masculinity both on the psychological and cultural levels. The stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are internalized to such an extent that boys learn to be dominating and aggressive while girls learn to be submissive and caring. Such socialization process associated with gender stereotypes are rooted in patriarchal society. Thus the internalization of the ongoing relationship becomes a constituent part of his personality.

Lalruong psychological growth from the mirror stage is his entry into the symbolic order, the language system that separates him from the female or the mother. He develops this image that assimilated according to the expectation or norms of the society. He thus developed an understanding of himself that made him aware of his individuality. He was socialized to emphasize an assertive behaviour and seeks attention and dominance for his own sake. He associates himself with his father to acquire skills that exhibited a specific boundary to that of women and acquired skills in hunting, laying traps for animals and birds. Lalruong's childhood experience tremendously developed his personality not only as a successful hunter but a powerful magician as well. Laruong ventured to attain masculine recognition by negating himself from whatever attachment he considers unmanly and prove his audacity to the outside world. The manner in which he possessed the keen desire of learning the art of witchery from Vanhrit exposes his mental set up in acquiring skills

to further extend his power and dominance. Lalruong's perception of the difference in early childhood thus gives a specific rendering of his role as a man.

In addition, for a Hmar young man, *Zawlbuk* was the first institution that separates him from the young girls in learning and adopting masculine skills and discipline. From a very young age a boy perceives the difference and as he develops his mind towards a psychological perspective different from a girl as found in the statement by Nancy J. Chodorow,

Psychoanalysis clarifies for us many of the issues involved in questions of difference by providing a developmental history of the emergence of separateness, differentiation, and the perception of difference in early childhood...Moreover, psychoanalysis gives an account of these issues from a general psychological perspective, as well as with specific relation to the question of gender. (101)

Men in Hmar society were psychologically prepared to a life of heroism and power as they learn the skills of warfare in the institution of *Zawlbuk*. In the story *Buonhlei and the Fairy*, Buonhlei's entry into the symbolic order marks the beginning of his socialization process. Buonhlei is brought up in an environment where he was exposed to all the skills and art of warfare from an early age. His physical and mental temperament was shaped towards heroism, mastery and power. Buonhlei in the story is represented as having acquired the skills on various warfares. He can be seen to have inculcated similar skills he adopted from the *Zawlbuk* institute to teach the young men of the village. He trained the young men of the village to handle shield, sword and arrows and thus he was in constant exposure to feats of accomplishment. Under the leadership of Buonhlei the men plundered their neighbouring villages and brought many captives under them. Their successful achievements were celebrated with feasts and dances and were bestowed honour and respect. Moreover it may be said that Buonhlei's mentality was prompted by such powerful exposition of success and admiration that resulted as a determining factor in his pursuit of the fairy. His mentality was determined by such domineering disposition that he was driven by prospects of achieving success in every pursuit. His psychological being was so shaped that he refused to comply to any situation that failed to meet his expectation

and desire. He becomes adamant in his passionate pursuit of the fairy and seeks the help of an old man to get hold of the woman he wanted as a wife.

Thus, the gender based attitudes presented in the folktales and songs reveal how patriarchy associated men to control, possess and dominate in the Hmar society in the past. The cultural conditioning of dominance, aggression and ambition of men is a representation of male hegemony and their power in the society.

Patriarchy in the present situation still remains a structure with basic system of domination and exclusion in the social set up. The patriarchal ideology and hierarchical assertion of superiority constrains the gender ideology of women that gives priority to men in almost all spheres of life. It has historically dominated the world and has prevailed in most societies and has influenced the attitude of women regarding their rights, responsibilities and duties. It may however be noted that the development in the status of men in the present century are integrated to the social and cultural tradition, where the prevalent ideas of modernization and advancement functions and shapes the attitude and behaviour of men.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony explains how the dominant ruling class manages to make its rule acceptable before it resorts to direct force upon the subordinate group they victimize.

The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.(145)

The dominant groups through 'spontaneous consent' of the subordinate group maintain their dominance through negotiation of the dominant and dominated group in a political and ideological consensus. The consent of the dominated group secure the rule of the dominant class that induce in the minds of the dominated class a set of ideological beliefs and ideas towards their consent and approval that serves the interest of the dominant or ruling class at the expense of the subordinate group. It is an implication which suggests that the most prevailing ideas in society become dominant. Gramsci's picture of society provides a complex homogeneity of political, cultural, economic, public and private attitudes and practices. Therefore, culture and

the whole idea of consent becomes an important means in the representation, production and interpretation of practice and control without the use of force and coercion.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of spontaneous consent contributes to the idea that the Hmar women also automatically consent to hegemonic patriarchy without coercion. Although women are educated and more modernized than in the past, rules made by men are unchallenged and consented upon without question. The consent of women reveals that the social values accorded to men are internalized not only by men but by women as well in contemporary Hmar society.

In Hmar society, patriarchy in the present situation exists with the assimilation of modernity in control over the political, economic and knowledge systems. Patriarchy has become a social agreement where men hold dominance with a spontaneous consent of women and mutual understanding maintained to a large extent. Women are trained to produce and imbibe their roles and reinstate patriarchy and patriarchal interests. This may be understood as manipulation of reality that serves man's interest. At the same time Hmar men are also socialized by modernization to have a considerate attitude upon women and appreciate them. Patriarchy in the Hmar society today has assimilation of the modern ideas and concept. In the traditional Hmar society men were conferred the title of *thangsuo*. Men, in order to attain the position of *thangsuo* had to prove his feats in head hunting or killing ferocious animals. Those were the realm of ability to showcase his strength and dignity and strive towards attaining them. However in the present Hmar society men need not show their strength or expertise to become a *thangsuo*. In today's scenario accomplishment in the field of education, career or extraordinary skill and achievement (even for an uneducated man if his sons or generation excels) are regarded as *thangsuo*. Men need not impress upon their dominance and power through head hunting or winning trophies in war. Men have further conceded to the rights and cause of women. Men turn and rely on women for nurturance and emotional support, besides practical need and service. Even women cannot separate themselves from men as both men and women are included within the whole context of patriarchy.

The delineation of male power reveals the elevated status of men in Hmar society. It looks at the overt exposition of dominance in their behaviour and how they think about themselves in relation to women. The existence of patriarchal power and control in Hmar society demonstrate how important it is for women to resist patriarchal control in order to attain self-control, developing their individuality and social being. The modern Hmar women, with the advantage of modernization have brought positive impact in their lives and outlook. Women have become educated and employed. They are experiencing the advantage of participating and exercising roles in community organization and social activities. However, there are areas where women's participation remains neglected. The Hmar patriarchal society, with all its adaptations and changes still poses noticeable delimitation in constituting provision for women. In the ecclesiastical order, a Hmar woman is barred from becoming a church elder and is not ordained as pastor. Even in the political realm, women's participation is not encouraging. A woman's political participation demands a radical and outspoken figure. Hmar society still does not seem to sustain the image of a woman in such a radical figure. Considering the limitations involved, it is important for women to resist the pressures of patriarchy.

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Chapter Four

Resistance by Hmar Women through Silence and Songs

This chapter seeks to problematize patriarchal resistance by women through the analysis of women characters in the folktales and songs composed by women in the pre-Christian and post-Christian context. The resistance of women has been rendered in chapter two, where women survive through compassion and solidarity. The determination of women has been represented as their strength in resisting patriarchal pressure. In this chapter, resistance to patriarchy by women has been analyzed through their silence. Silence has been interpreted as a voice of resistance that provides them the means to survive. Resistance to patriarchy is also delineated through the songs of women in the pre-Christian era where their voice of resistance is apprehended in the iniquities of life they expressed and finding their individual means to resist and challenge them. Likewise, the gospel songs of the post-Christian era conceptualize the power they perceive from the divine assurance of eternal life. The elevated spirit and hope strengthen them to resist the challenges of patriarchal world.

Folktales relating to the lives of women define gender roles and responsibilities of women. The tales are based to analyze the roles and meaning of gender in the lives and experience of women in the society that attend and interpret women and their concern. The existence of dichotomy, hierarchy and sexual orientation are the different standards of control accorded to women in maintaining the domination of men in the pre-Christian period. Even though men did not show any sense of respect towards women, the women characters in the tales finds a way to assert their strength in their resistance against such pressures. Their virtues are uniquely feminine, adapted to the prescribed social role. However they face these critical situations with courage and dignity and manage to retain their identity in a male dominated society. The social and cultural construction of gender refers to the way sexual difference is created. Women give importance to men's authority in the private and public life yet they are able to accede to their roles within the structured patriarchal norms. In their challenge against patriarchal structure, a woman is considered passive and silent. Yet it gives a new meaning of self assertion and establishment of her identity.

Michelle Barrett in “Ideology and Cultural production of Gender” talks about the ideology of gender, the knowledge system, values and beliefs that constituted women’s oppression as natural which is crucial in understanding the position of women in society. “For if sexual practice is the area in which systematic inequalities of power between men and women are played out, then all men are in a position to exercise this power (even if only by mild pressure rather than brutal coercion), whether or not they are inclined to do so.” (45) The concept of social inequality prompted by cultural dominance gives specific rendering of men’s control over women. Men controlled not only the public life but also the private sphere as decision makers. Women on the other hand are submissive in nature. They internalize the categorized images of femininity to meet the expectation of society. Man’s ascendancy and power in traditional Hmar society is evident in the folktales where men were positioned to exercise their power over women. Women are insecure and in constant fear of being attacked by enemies and wild animals. Therefore they are in constant need of man’s protection and rendered subordinate to them which further made them silent and submissive. It is not because of their inherent humble attitude or personality, but because of the different standards of control that the women characters encounter for which they are faced by alarming consequences. It is under such domination that the women in the Hmar folktales are rendered silent and submissive. They are tolerant in spite of being abandoned or forced to meet the demand of men. It is under such cataclysmic pressure women characters are seen to grapple such situation and challenge them by being internally resistant.

Throughout history women has been represented as relegating to a secondary status in society and securing the values of society throughout their lives. Thus from a cultural point of view a woman is seen as a figure to be controlled, manipulated and dominated. Men in their control render women silent and put forth their superiority over them. A woman is considered to be less virtuous than men and inculcated upon to meet to the need of others, who is ever ready to give than to receive. Therefore it is a result of social programming that shapes the virtue of women. Helene Cixous in her essay “Sorties” conveys that “woman is always on the side of passivity” (230). Even though a social programming may concede to the passivity or submissive

nature of a woman, yet her reticence and restraints accord a tolerant and benevolent side of her nature. The condition in which women bind their speech may not only be explicit but also an indirect indication of their revolting spirit. Silence or traditional submissiveness does not direct to passivity or weakness, but it is an evocative situation where they are about to explode their resistance.

Although in reality, women have to struggle in order to challenge the domination of men and are expected to abide by the values and norms of patriarchal society, yet in their own way through their silence and determination, they try to obliterate the limitations and existing boundaries. Their ability in rendering emotional strength survives their challenge to overcome difficult situation. A woman maintains specific spaces to keep to patriarchal standards. The superiority of men is impressed upon them rendering them passive or silent. But amidst this passivity or silence there is a rebellious note that tells us that they have not accepted their fate and challenge to grapple with their suppressed feeling.

Women in their challenge to different levels of confrontation tend to frustrate patriarchy through conformity. They use silence to resist patriarchy, as it is in their muteness that they conform to their specific gender roles as a means of subverting control. As a cultural theorist Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, challenged the legacy of colonialism. Her critical discourse questions the status of the subaltern women in the society and their empowerment. The term 'subaltern' encompasses people from the lower strata of the society. The essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is a vindication of the apprehension of the women in India who practices sati (widow sacrifice). Spivak uncovers the double oppression of native women caught between dominations of native patriarchy and imperialist ideology of west. "In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 2120). Her theory formulates that the subaltern can speak but her voice is unheard as others do not have patience to listen to them and were made to believe that they belong to the inferior rank. For a subaltern they have no control over how they are represented. The constitution of silence may specifically suggest means by which there is control over women's behaviour. It is men who commit that the virtue of women is associated with silence and is a means to control them. Women are expected to be silent and it may be so

that the condition is stressed upon them and at the same time their silence may be seen as a response to the prevailing situation.

In view of the implication characteristic to expression and silence in the context of gender and power relations it is crucial to understand how women are forced to silence by men. In both the literal and extended significance silence means not being heard or being vocal and women are victims in a culture which subdues her and treats her as an object. In a patriarchal society, there are a number of factors that work against women, leading to their marginalization and consequent subordination. In their challenge against the domination of men, women struggle as they are expected to abide by the values and norms of patriarchal society, yet in their own way through their silence and determination, they try to obliterate the limitations and existing boundaries. Their ability in rendering emotional strength survives their challenge to overcome difficult situation. Silence in the Hmar women characters of the folk tales reveals the predicament of a woman within the structured standards. It also represents the various aspects of the overwhelmed mind. The overwhelmed mind of Mauruong's mother is revealed in her deliberate effort to play her role as a mother. As she was killed by her husband who in sheer exploit of his authority and control culminated in her pathetic end. However, Mauruong's mother stood against the destiny decided upon her as she turns herself into a dolphin and *Phunchawng*³⁷ tree to provide nurturance to her daughter, Mauruong turned frail and unfed after her mother passed away. It was painful on the part of the mother to come to terms to the injustice that she and her daughter had undergone. The manner in which she makes her return in the metamorphosed form of a dolphin and a tree reveals a silent tenacious effort to strive and demonstrate her provocation and ignite her effort to fulfill her responsibility as a mother that was at the same time nurturing and challenging. Therefore, even though her physical being has been conquered by her husband she was able to gather herself to recuperate and revived her spirits to persist till the last hour.

Further, Mauruong's father was responsible for the plight that had befallen Mauruong, first by separating Mauruong from her mother and thereafter giving full

³⁷ Commonly known as Indian Cottonwood.

authority to his second wife to deal with Mauruong, resulting in her endless misery. Mauruong's maturity and forbearance is revealed in her silent determination to overcome the obstacles and injustice. The mother becomes a pillar of strength for Mauruong against the ruthless reaction of her father, who convinced and summoned the people of the village to kill Mauruong's mother. It is the consistent silence of Mauruong and her mother that makes the tale fascinating. Their silence exhibits both the power and powerlessness of women. They were powerless against the resolute action inflicted upon them yet empowered to resist the calamity in silence. Thus their silence may be interpreted as protest that provides for their survival and strength. In addition, their silence conveys complex emotion, a struggle to resist their suppressed situation.

Silence is a means where a woman functions within limitations and derives strength to survive. Their silence though suggests their submissive nature but it may be interpreted as their means of expression in the authoritarian order and conveys their resentment towards men and one that conceals their true inner thoughts from men. "If we have learned anything in our coming to language out of silence, it is that what has been kept unspoken, therefore *unspeakable*, in us is what is threatening to the patriarchal order in which men control, first women, then all who can be defined and exploited as "other". All silence has a meaning." (Rich 308). Sawrlai's maturity is marked by her definite choice, self sacrifice and autonomy. In the story of Sawrlai, the authorial resolution of the father towards the daughter posed as a threat for the daughter as she patiently bears the decision of the father who decided to venture out with his sons in seeking the stars. The daughter is left behind to look to the household needs and prepare food for them every day during the entire mission. Sawrlai calmly embraces the situation even though the idea of staying alone in the house was challenging. Her power emerges from the sacrifice of her own freedom in the hands of Vawmpahrawng who abducted her from the house, learning that she was alone. Sawrlai did not have anyone to rescue her and she had to fall prey to the malicious stratagem of the shrewd magician. Yet she scrupulously continues to carry on with her responsibility and restores the life of her brother Tlumte and her own life from the shrewd magician, Vawmpahrawng. Sawrlai's condition may be seen as one where a woman struggles to give meaning to her silence. In the utter exploitation of

her position as subordinate amongst her brothers she emerges as more powerful than any other person in the tale by reviving the lives of her brothers and father. She derives her strength amidst the challenging state of affairs, even though she restrained herself from being vocal about the ambiguity of the circumstances that she was put to endure. Her inhibition to action or speech though contributed to her agony, yet she shouldered her misfortune and was successful in restoring back what she lost by virtue of her strong will and perseverance. Upon securing freedom from the clutch of Vawmpahrawng, Sawrlai sprinkled holy water on the dead bones of her father and brothers who were killed in the course of their mission and revived them. Thus, Sawrlai accomplishes a great deal despite the fact that she was abandoned. Sawrlai's perseverance plays a great deal in restoring the lives of those who abandoned her. Sawrlai's role is a deliberate statement of maturity where she attains her autonomy in the midst of oppression and retains her power in spite of her position.

Likewise, Kungi from the story of *Pawthir and Hrangchal*, silently submits to Sairam even after learning that she was absorbed by his deceitful spell which almost ruins her. The manner in which Kungi silently follows Sairam, on releasing her from the spell to marry him and further slogging to his service by sacrificing her own freedom is a blatant symbol of the role of women in an oppressive domain. Kungi becomes a source of patriarchal delight to Sairam as she fulfills her conventional role of a dutiful wife even though she was filled with contempt. Her misfortune and agony augmented her determination as she tirelessly waits to terminate the man who was responsible for a despicable turn in her life. The willingness to take on the responsibility by Kungi is an assertion of her maturity and endurance. A woman may be powerless in her silence yet the power of her silent submission encourages her to function within set limitations and prescribed roles. Kungi's silence ultimately asserts her determination to survive in her misery. Kungi finally emerge as a strong willed woman as she goes beyond the grief and suffering that is forced upon her to attain psychological victory. Kungi's determination pays off as she is restored back to freedom on being rescued by Pawthir and Hrangchal. Later in the story, Kungi suffers treachery in the hands of Hrangchal who tried to depose Pawthir, the man responsible in the rescue of Kungi and wanted to marry her.

She was able to fight for her cause whereupon she relentlessly took a firm hold and succeeded in marrying Pawthir in the end. Kungi finally emerges as a strong willed woman as she goes beyond the grief and suffering that was forced upon her to attain psychological victory.

Luce Irigaray in her essay “When our Lips Speak together” states that from what exist in a patriarchal view of a woman, a woman will speak as they are taught to speak. She urges women to be more attentive to her being and not be distracted by norms and habits. She stresses that women first and foremost are women and they do not need to be produced consistently by men. The internalization of the traditional custom of Patriarchy teaches a woman her social, domestic and moral expectations and follows the expected norms of femininity. Such internalization gives a dynamic meaning to her silence, which imply not her obedience but are expression of her opposition to patriarchal standards as asserted, “Our strength lies in the very weakness of our resistance” (Irigaray 215, 216).

Sakhilawngdar’s lack of resistance in marrying Pakhattepa is an occasion where she emerges as a loyal and merciful wife and delivers strength to confront the coercion of her husband. In the story of *Sakhilawngdar* the beautiful maiden Sakhilawngdar, emerged from the dried foreleg of the deer killed by Pakhattepa who was exceptionally beautiful unlike the earthly maidens. She captivates Pakhattepa by her beauty to the extent that she was bound to marry him even though it was against her wish and silently fulfills her role as a wife and a mother. However she abandons her husband when he turned a habitual drunkard and started insulting her. Sakhilawngdar strengthens the idea of a woman belonging to her husband by appropriately fulfilling her role as a wife. Her beauty turned out to be the reason for her suffering. Even though she should be defending her right to be independent and not comply with the wishes of Pakhattepa, yet she is incapable of doing so because the man who forces her to a marriage is adamant in his pursuit. She passes on the idea of female oppression as she is deprived of marital bliss and suffered abuses from her husband for no fault of hers. The gift of beauty endowed her only to arouse desirability in the man but deprives her of her independence “Women however resentful must perform task that require reliability, responsibility and nurturance” (Chodorow 29) Sakhilawngdar achieves the competency to act and uphold her virtue

as a mother. She has been tormented mentally for leaving her children behind that compelled her to come back in a metamorphosed state to nurture her children. Even though she silently suffers and controls her emotions, the complexity of her silence can be seen as her power that emerges from her emotional strength as she continues to stand as a pillar of support and courage for her children. Her silent submissiveness is perhaps an effective means of tolerance in a tyrannical society.

A woman's submission to the compulsion of a man and her ultimate resistance is evident in the story of *Buonhlel and the Fairy*. We find a disparity between two brothers over a beautiful fairy in the story where the beautiful fairy is forced to accept Buonhlel in the first place in order to save her self-esteem and clothe her naked body. Buonhlel had stolen the clothes of the fairy while she was taking bath in the lake in order to possess her. The manner in which she surrenders to the demand of Buonhlel places her in a submissive position. Yet the power embedded in the action of the fairy upon a forced marriage and fulfilling the role of a wife and mother shows the integrity and strength of a woman in accepting a life oblivious of her own choice and the fact that she belonged to the world of the spirit. The determination and will power of the woman is further revealed when Hrangrum, the brother of Buonhlel compelled to marry her by killing her husband. The very act of Buonhlel's wife in leaving her children behind to save her honour and dignity by going back to her own world places her in a difficult position. It was a tremendous step on the part of the mother to leave her children and challenge the injustice meted out to her. Her escape reinforces the idea of a woman challenging the issue of women's oppression in patriarchy and derives an alternate path in her struggle for autonomy.

In the story of *Thlakur*, Lawnglai is oppressed to a forced marriage by Thlakur. Her patience and deliberation is revealed with the turn of events, as she goes back to the fairy world only to be fetched back by Thlakur with the help of Zumtenu. Her misfortune increased when her uncle Lawngpum converts her into a frog and put her inside a hole in the middle post of his house. She was however rescued by Zumtenu and later gave birth to a son. Lawnglai is faced by unrelenting misfortune first as a wife then as a mother, yet she survives them. She persevered even though she was greatly afflicted by the turn of events and derives means to

survive. She forsakes her own world for the second time to be united with her son and husband. It is significant that Lawnglai is stringent in enduring the difficulties and is able to secure her position amidst the tormenting situation. Lawnglai's silence may be interpreted as her resentment towards men. Her silent and strong determination shows that a woman can persist and adapt even in a calamity.

Women need potential to grow and fulfill her roles and not deprived to exercise her ability. "...for a woman, as for man, the need for self fulfillment - autonomy, self realization, independence, individuality, self actualization - is as important as the sexual need, with as serious consequences when it is thwarted." (Friedan 263) A woman's autonomy is greatly afflicted when it fails to meet their individual aspirations and desires. Even though they may be seen in a derogatory role in the culmination of their goal, yet it is suggestive of their determination and strength. For a woman it is challenging to defy the world of power and strength of a man. So it is necessary to find means for self- actualization of their independent desires and motives. Women in the folktales retaliate for the wrong or offences inflicted upon them and take revenge. Even though it may appear incriminating in their position, yet it consummates the idea of their stability and command over the situation that elucidates their strength that eventually results in their victory and retaliation.

In the story of *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai*, Suonvawr possessed exceptional skills and strength for which he was able to defeat the mighty Hrillei, who was a terror to the village and there was no one who could threaten his authority. The mother turned revengeful on the killing of the son in the hands of Suonvawr and in order to avenge for the death of his son she decided upon a plan to outwit and defeat him. She pretended to admit defeat upon the might of Suonvawr and surrendered to make peace with him. Accordingly, she proposed a peace accord with Suonvawr and promised safe conduct to him in their kingdom. In spite of the vehement objection from his father and sisters, Suonvawr decided to go as he was confident enough of his safety. As cautioned by his father, upon reaching the appointed place Suonvawr refused to drink the specially brewed wine offered by Hrillei's mother and contemptuously threw the earthen pot of wine on the floor. However a drop of the wine accidentally splashed on his lip, which Suonvawr licked and found it very

sweet. Soon the wine, however small its quantity might be, began to enter his brain and veins, making him unconscious and ultimately he passed away. The story thus ended in the victory of a woman where a powerful figure Suonvawr who was successful to even defeat the mighty Hrillei; known for his might and insurmountable strength, perished in the hands of Hrillei's mother.

The rivalry between Lalruong and Dawikungpu in the story of *Lalruong*, upon the supremacy of their magical power culminates in the death of Dawikungpu after several attempts of encounter in challenging to overthrow their individual skills. Supheikak, Dawikungpu's sister is tormented by grief upon the brutal killing of her brother and decided to acquit by winning over the magical power of Lalruong and defeat him. Supheikak committed herself into the confidence of Lalruong until she declared to have conceived Lalruong's child. She further convinced him to reveal the extent of his power until she shrewdly overpowered him after continued attempts. Ultimately, Supheikak imprisoned Lalruong until he becomes frustrated and refused to eat and died.

In the story of *Paruolsarihai*, Tekabareisuon's mother turned despondent for several years upon the killing of his seven brothers by a Keimi³⁸. Her affliction and grief culminated when her son Tekabareisuon attained a formidable age to avenge the killing of his uncles. The mother's grief was finally compensated when her son succeeded in killing the Keimi. Tekabareisuon's mother bore the pain and terror of her grievance for several years. Her determination and tenacity incidentally sustained her purpose until she gathered her son to compensate for the affliction caused by the gruesome killing of her brothers. A woman was no match to confront the Keimi so she waited till the opportune time to instill her resolution upon her son and succeeded in bringing justice to her loss through the killing of the Keimi.

Even though a woman is represented as passive and weak, her power emerges from her intelligence and emotional strength, working within the structure to express their hidden desires and clinging to their freedom. Men seem to have a dominant position not only in public but also in private sphere and perhaps undermining the strength of women. Wollstonecraft writes,

³⁸ Tiger that can take the form of a man.

I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt. (13, 14)

The epithet of weakness that is ascribed to women becomes elemental in constituting the required esteem and dignity in them. They turn contemptuous once they attain the strength to condemn those enshrines of pity and love associated to their being. Even though silence is often seen as a sign of women's submission to patriarchal authority, yet it may be stated that silence is not merely a sign of absence of voice or power but it also signify resistance to hegemonic power. In their silent suspension they become more vocal about their pain and psychological trauma, their subjugation, and inability to communicate.

Therefore, the analysis of the patriarchal resistance by women characters in the folk tales reveal that they are strong with craftsmanship and persistence in culminating their aggravation for a justification of their cause. They challenge the command and mastery of men and devise their action with wisdom and acumen. It is no mere achievement for a woman to win over them and may be accounted as a sheer delineation of their defiance towards a provocative cause. They are committed in their purpose that strengthens their mind and spirit to attain a contented resolution.

In the pre-Christian society the silence of women was regarded a moral attribute of femininity, as it was not acceptable for women to speak on certain subjects or speak publicly at all. The moralistic silencing appeared normal for women who were traditionally confined to the private sphere of life. The composition of songs by women is one medium where they could voice their experience and innermost feelings. Despite various constraints the writings of women through their songs facilitate the raising of questions regarding the notion of patriarchy and identifying the mode of resistance shown by them.

While looking at the songs written by women in traditional pre-Christian society, it is evident that they compose songs not to derive any pleasure out of it but as a means to communicate her feelings and observation of the world around her.

Their position as women in a rigid patriarchal context enforced various restrictions and imposed limitations on them in various situations. However these women did manage to leave behind a lyrical record of their lives, thoughts, and feelings. This enabled the transmission and perpetuation of cultural values and history of their lives where gender becomes is an important factor and the songs can be documented as products of a society that merge the position of women in the patriarchal domain of men.

In analyzing the voices of women as their resistance to patriarchy, the songs composed by women in the pre-Christian era can be seen as a powerful measure in communicating their feelings and experience through their composition. Through their songs they would sing about their frustration and desires. These songs are document to the fact that women have sought various strategies to voice their ideas and concerns and to overcome social and traditional obstructions. Tuoni's song among the *Lohma Hla*³⁹ and another song from *Semruk Hla*⁴⁰ has been analyzed as voices of resistance by women against injustice and discrimination.

The songs composed by Tuoni as narrated in chapter two expresses the unfulfilled love of Neilal and Tuoni as she was defamed by Neilal's parents to be leprous. Neilal's parents on learning the truth wanted her back but Tuoni had already decided to leave the village along with her parents. Neilal was persuaded by his parents to bring back Tuoni but in vain and expressed

*“Lala nang in siengna hning Sorlai li and thuk,
Kei kan siengna khawntang ram ang pawn;
Zai ie chamruol ang ei tin”*

[Neilal your parents belong to a reputed background of Sortui,
Compared to my parents who are like emigrants;
So let us part like good friends.] (Keivom 54)

Neilal and Tuoni were not destined to be together in spite of the true love between them. Tuoni suffers humiliation on being regarded a leprous by Neilal's parents. It was a heavy blow to her dignity and image and decides to part. Her decision is an outright revelation of a woman's protest in defending her self-respect and modesty.

³⁹ Songs relating to agricultural life.

⁴⁰ Love song composed by young lovers.

The most popular *Semruk Hla* relates the greatness of Khuongpuithlurh, a famous chief of the Pakhuong clan. His name is referred in the song of *Sikpui Lam* and those sung during the threshing of rice grains. This particular *Semruk* song relates the treatment of discrimination that Dari's wife receives from her in-laws. After their marriage Dari's wife could not conceive for which her in-laws wanted to separate her from their son. The daughter-in-law in defiance declared that she was not barren and that she would give birth to a child as great as Khuongpuithlurh.

*“Dari chun le Dari zuon,
Rilthang laiah se ang ni som;
Hrei lam siel and a sal e’
“Pa khuo lam zong roh” ti mi.
Hrai lem siel ang ka sel naw ning,
Khaw zo ril ang la ching naw ning;
Ei chawitir Khuongpuithlur hai,
Chem lo zawlah la ngam a ta.”*

[Dari's parents in the middle of the night

Make a declaration that I cannot conceive

“Go back to your parents” they said.

I replied, I am not barren

Like the barren land where trees and plants cannot grow

The first child in my womb will be

Like the great Khuongpuithlurh.] (Keivom 76)

The determination and courage that a woman confronts in front of her husband's parents is a sheer exposition of her determination. The manner in which she was condemned to separate her from her husband was a severe blow to her dignity. The courage and resistance is delineated in her reply where she daringly declares and challenge them stating that her womb will be fortunate to conceive her first child as great as the famous Khuongpuithlurh.

The songs of Chawngmuok in the pre-Christian era is an expression of the determination of a woman who is impervious of the fear and danger even in the face of death when the men are burying her alive. The powerful note as a gesture of rebellion and resistance is not recognized by men. The composition of songs by

women arouses a feeling of contempt among the men as women are not expected to be vocal.

Men in their ability to exert power could suppress and annihilate the position of women. It was not acceptable on the part of men in the society to tolerate the popularity of the woman song composer as her talent posed a threat to the surmounting appeal and recognition that she attained through her songs. The fact that she became so advanced and popular alarmed them and they decided to bury her alive. Her existence would mean that there was no need for the power of men as she could attain a position through her intelligence and secure a position that could challenge their rules and regulations. As Chawngmuok was laid down alive to be buried she remained composed and gathered efforts to hear out her final song.

*“U haiate, nau haiate u,
Thatak te khan mi zuk chil ro ie”*

[O my foolish elder brothers and younger brothers,
Just fill the earth over me very nicely] (Bapui 2009, 113)

The burying of someone alive is extremely brutal. Yet Chawngmuok was not afraid and gathers courage. Her bold confrontation is revealed as she suffers in the hands of the two men who bury her alive. It is an impassioned call as she suggests them to fill the earth upon her properly as they bury her. The men wanted her to suffer and prolonged her misery. She found a voice amidst the fear, the pain and the tormenting ordeal in the powerful note,

*“Bir bui angin zal auk thlak ila
Hring khuoah siel ang zuong suok ila”*

[I wish I were able to dig like a mole, then I would have come out
At another village like a bull] (Bapui 2009, 113)

The above song speaks of the courage of a woman in confronting the injustice meted out to her by her undying spirit where she gathers strength to take the form of a mole in preparing a hole and come out alive like a bull. She seems undaunted by the action of the two men as she prevails upon the peril with great courage and daringly faces in the pit prepared to bury her.

However, Chawngmuok is not a victim as she continues to face the atrocity and did not want to reveal that she was afraid as her opponent who gathered all

means to prolong her suffering. She continued to compose songs as she waits her end. Her endurance reveals her true strength that we remember her even today as she remains immortal through her songs.

The account of Chawngchirh, popularly known as Bapuinu may be accounted as the audacity of the lady in facing Tusing Faihriem, the chief of Zampi who had captured her daughter as the village of Zampi refused to obey his orders as mentioned earlier in chapter two. After some time had passed Chawngchirh decides to win back her daughter and attempted the feat through her songs. The deliberate attempt of a woman in her purposeful mission is evinced in the lines as she prepares to set out. She is optimistic in her expression and mentally strong to face the ordeal. These lines reflect the language of femininity in protest that involves ambiguity to express the dilemma in order to confront the anxiety of new possibilities.

*“Kei aw zai hman lo fe tan la,
Zampi tung tai ang an thieng;
Sieli zai le chung vakawlin
Khuo la rawn fang de ningah.”*

[Let my song go ahead of me, the hills of Zampi looks fresh like cane
I will come later with sweet songs and bird songs and will go through the
village] (Bapui 2009, 114)

The deliberate attempt of a woman in her purposeful mission is evinced in the lines as she prepares to set out. She is optimistic in her expression and mentally strong to face the ordeal.

When autumn came she started her journey towards the hills of Zampi where she finds a very steep hill ahead of her. She felt very lazy to ascend, but the prospect of winning her daughter back urged her to proceed as she sings -

*“A khi tung khi hraw da tang e, Zampi tung khi hraw da tang e,
Sum le rel puon a umna khi, tui khawm pheii la man chan rei aw.”*

[I will not ascend like climbing; I will not go up to get money and clothes,
But I will make the steep ascent as a plain path] (Bapui 2009, 114)

The songs of Chawngmuok relate her optimistic attempt to win back her daughter. Even though the ascending hills posed laborious, yet she gathered courage and strength as she prepares herself to go ahead and climb the hills and raced as

though it was a plain path. She is consistent in her purpose, even though she knows that she could be killed in her journey alone amidst the dense forest. Her silent fortitude and conviction gives her courage and strength as she prepares herself to go ahead. The physical discomfort of the mother was futile to mitigate her enthusiasm as she ventures to attain her daughter. She reinforces her determination to succeed in her mission even though the prospect posed challenging for her.

When she arrived at the house of the king she started praising the wealth and glory of the king saying-

*“An sungin ka hei en khan e, an sesawng sum ang khu thloi,
Parva hman lengna nei nawi a, rakhen khuo lo ieng ta che.”*

[The house and the inside speaks of wealth, the coral covered by clouds, Piegons are flying about. It truly is Rakhen village itself.] (Bapui 2009, 114)

On hearing this, the chief, his sons and all the village people gathered around her and she composed a song in praise of the king's sons-

*“Lalsaktuthlu, Lamthlangtuthlu, Sumreia Jharinsawne
An mitlum Keltemenga e, sumraza hawl inkawi e.”*

She named all the five sons of the chief and praised them saying that [they commanded huge wealth and riches.] (Bapui 2009, 114)

Hearing this, the chief was pleased and welcomed her to stay in his house for the night and great festivities were held. Chawngchirh through the songs of adulation secured the admiration of the king. It was no mere achievement for a woman to impress upon the authority of the king that culminated in winning back her daughter. The narrative further reveals that the king decided to give her a mithun to express his gratitude which she declined in exchange of her daughter. The situation aroused a feeling of contempt in the queen who packed a big arum instead of rice for their midday meal, which was embarrassing for Chawngchirh to unwrap among friends as arum was a meager meal. Further, the exposition of the king's prejudice in the manner they mistreated her daughter is an exposition of the frailty of the supremacy of the coveted world of the king. Her tribulation and successful accomplishment strengthen the competency of a woman who employs her talents to resolve the dispute.

The songs written by women establish gender and patriarchal issues and emphasize resistance to patriarchal structures and hierarchies embedded in the society and culture. It may also be documented as expression of their disappointment and can be understood as a conscious endeavor to highlight their personal feelings and apprehension. Their expression bears witness to their perspective of the world they live, their courage and strength in sensitizing issues related to women. It also suggests that though they were controlled by the decision and order of men, their persistence and efforts reveal their strength that emerges from their determination and emotional strength.

Luce Irigaray in “The Power of Discourse and Subordination of Women” states that women can express themselves in a male dominated society through creative language. Such expression can help women to voice their identity and recover their position from exploitation. Lullabies are creative language through which women express themselves as a means to suggest the inherent quality of a mother. “...for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.” (76) It is through such language that women affirm their social visibility and challenge their subordinate condition even though deliberately assuming feminine roles by “demanding to speak as a (masculine) “subject,” that is, it means to postulate a relation to the intelligible that would maintain sexual indifference.” (76) Pregnancy, childbirth, nurturing along with other obligation under the protection and control of men makes them capable of handling circumstances even though they are considered subordinate. Women inherent quality can be perceived in performing such traditional tasks. Lullaby sung by mothers is a genre dominated by women along with the tradition of telling tales and stories by mothers and grandmothers. Lullabies are compositions that express love that enhances a feeling of relaxation in the child. It serve as a means of considering the history of the voices of mothers to lull their babies to sleep, where they artistically communicate with their child using poetic symbols and signs, metaphors and comparison in expressing their love, wish and advices with all the virtues and values for the welfare and interest of the child. Mothers are responsible for the transmission in the oral form that has been inherited traditionally from one

generation to another. Hmar women through their expressive tradition articulate cultural dissemination and give voice to their creativity and aesthetic values.

*“A chung a maleng maleng a tla,
Bawite arbawm lo chawi rawh. Ta bulu lulu.”*

[Up from above, the eagle is flying and looking for prey.

Take in Bawite’s chicken coop.] (Bapui 2011, 83)

A sense of protection resonates in the mind of the child being lulled to sleep, where the prying eagle lurks for its prey. The calming assurance of the mother’s lullaby gives him a sense of protection as she addresses the care for the safety of the child’s chicken coop from the clutch of the eagle. The imagery of eagle is suggestive of the peril that the child could encounter but surmounted by a sense of security, as the child peacefully dozes off to sleep in the arms of the mother. The mother’s voice here instills a sense of confidence and protection in the mind of the child.

*“Pang ding ding a e, Lalngo pang ding ding a e
A vakawl uo zuong lam uo, sim vakawl uo zuong lam uo,
Bungpui lera an fuk a, an chang sawidim sawidim e,
Vakawl uo sup uo, sip inthang vel uo, vel uo
Lalngovin a ke a khai dut dut e.”*

[Stand up Lalngo, stand up.

The cranes are coming from south.

They sit on the banyan tree, and shake their plumes.

The cranes are dancing round and round.

So also is Lalngo dancing round with raised legs.] (Bapui 2011, 82)

The above song is an urge to persuade the child to hasten the child to action. It is exemplary of a mother’s wish to enliven the spirit of the child to edge forward enamoured by the things happening around him. It also speaks of the energizing determination of a woman in her role as a mother towards encouraging the child in the initiation of strides as he grows up. She tries to instill the spirit of gratification as signified in the behaviour of the cranes.

*“Arasi tan maikuong tan, ran ratlei r idem dem
Suonglung chung a belawi hna them piel piel.
Piel kha, piel anhni, piel anthum, piel manli, piel ranga,*

*Piel aruk, piel sari, piel ariet, piel akuok,
Piel sawmin ki sawmthat ngawi ngawi tie.”*

[I cut the stars like the stems of gourd. The bean stalk on the stone is fading...one, two...I kill you with ten strokes.] (Bapui 2011, 82)

The manner in which a mother invigorates the spirit of enthusiasm and ambition in the child to conquer the star is no mere determination of a woman. The star is a metaphor for achieving exceptional skill and position in life. The series of attempt from one to ten to win the stars is suggestive of the unwavering attempts to achieve their goal

*“Thlapa puon nipe pe, arasi ’n a lak tak,
Arasi puon nipe pe, thlapa ’n a lak tak.”*

[O Moon, give me clothes. The stars have taken it.

O Star, give me clothes, the moon has taken it away.] (Bapui 2011, 83)

Stars and moon in their stellar position are often used as metaphor to suggest the enormous nature because of their impervious abode. They are contemplated to be divine and powerful as they behold them from their mundane existence. The chase of asking clothes to the moon and stars for the child in the words of the mother is to impart a feeling of delight in the mind of the child. It articulates the unwavering attempt by the mother to obtain garments for her infant that put across the emotional attachment of a mother towards her child.

Through the tradition of lullabies mothers also enhances a socialization of gender indifference as no levels of discrimination are contained in the words of love that the mother pronounces. Through lullabies, women can be seen as figure that herald a deep-rooted sense of belonging to one’s culture in the child and maintain stability or discipline the child towards an outstanding future. Thus, through the oral transmission, mothers in their feminine roles play significant role in the dissemination of cultural knowledge while at the same time it facilitates in imparting and sustaining the mother tongue. The attachment resulting in their role as a mother through reproduction, childcare and housekeeping are apparent and necessary to challenge the domesticity of their gender and break the system of patriarchy and transform patriarchal relations.

The context of the songs composed by women in the post-Christian society in relation to gender can be interpreted as their resistance to patriarchy. The emotions of depression and contempt expressed in the songs are a result of patriarchal oppression that they encounter in their lives, making their world miserable. Their resistance and strength is perceived in their assured hope of attaining everlasting peace. The songs by Christian women form a part of literature and also can be seen as a product of a male dominant society. In the book *Thlirna Tharin* [New Perspective] by Lallungawi, a statement of Mrs. Runchawng, one of the song composers have been given stating that her songs were deemed frivolous by the men of her times yet her inner urge prompted her to express her inner feelings. (211) Her bold and courageous effort in proclaiming the spiritual zeal through the composition of songs proved to be a significant step that paved the way for other women song composers that followed her and found its way in the form of gospel songs included in the hymn book *Independent Kohran Hlabu*. It further enables to conceptualize the change in patriarchal system with the passage of time where women voice their position and also the way they have shown resistance to it. It has allowed them to create a space to give a new meaning to her life. The coming of Christianity evolved a change in social pattern, assimilation of new ideas and attitude. Women came forward to question and seek new identity and became more vulnerable about their struggle. Their burdened life on earth may be interpreted as their feeling of insecurity and oppression in the world of men. The songs are imbued with Christian elements of invoking a prayer to God to attain salvation from their miserable existence. They feel safe to express their discontent and secure means to survive in their context.

In the Christian era, the hymn book *Independent Kohran Hlabu*, [Hymn Book of Independent Church]⁴¹ published in 1931 and 1932 comprise of seventeen women song composers, even though the practice was not continued in the later years, it expresses their spiritual delight and contempt for the transitory world. A number of gospel songs composed by women reveal the passion and the effort they gathered in expressing their desire and longing for the eternal world. This longing is suggestive

⁴¹ The name of the book has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

of their feeling of contempt towards their mundane existence where society accentuates their subordinate position.

The Christian concept of the world is one where man is doomed to sin and the contemptuous existence is but transitory with an assurance of heavenly bliss in eternal life. The Christian elements and belief is a characteristic note in the songs composed by women in the Christian era. It stands as a differentiating mark compared to the songs composed in the pre-Christian era marked by injustice, failed marriage and social discrimination devoid of compassionate expectation as evident in the songs of *Chongngo Hla*, *Tuoni Hla*, *Zawlchawng Hla* and *Hrangcham Hla*. However, the songs of women in the Christian era bears the pain and suffering of the bleak world as transitory, against which they renew their spirits for an eternal bliss in the heavenly abode of God.

As mentioned in chapter two, the select gospel songs written by women express their life where they feel slaughtered and seek God to deliver them. The yearning and hope of salvation in after life restores their peace. This hope strengthens them to resist and survive in crisis. In this chapter the six songs express similar element of hope as found in the songs mentioned in chapter two. Yet, it is marked by the elevated spirit of peace, glory and happiness. The spiritual elevation provides them renewed hope against the anxiety of the world to withstand and resist the anguish of discrimination they encounter in their lives.

In the song composed by Darhnieng “*Ka tlung pha chun*” [When I Reach the Abode of God]⁴², there is an underlying pain and desperation against a cherished hope of everlasting happiness. The pain and sorrow as expressed in the words of the woman song composer is a catastrophic hint of the misery she faces as a woman in society where she is rendered subordinate.

“*Sandamtu kuom ka tlung pha chun,*
Nat le lungngai um ta naw nih;
Lawmna par angin vul a ta,
Tuoi ni hrim hrim um tan aw nih.”
 [When I reach The Saviour,

⁴² The title of the songs has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

There will no longer be pain and despair;
 Happiness shall bloom like a flower,
 Which shall never perish]⁴³ (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 252).

The song expresses the victory and salvation she will attain in eternity against the desolate world of pain. The pain and despair is caused by the injustice and discrimination that she faces in the society. The perishing world of pain reinforces her urge to seek God. She seem to be delivered from all anxiety and pain through the mental preparation and aspiration of a renewed life.

In Luiu's "*Lalpa Kuomah*" [Near to God] disparity and discord is heavily felt by women in their lives in the governance of the earthly kings, for which they denounce their reign. An egalitarian order can be apprehended only in the benevolent rule of God.

*"Chun chawlna hmu tang in tih,
 Lalpa rorelnaa chun;
 Hnuoi Lal ang ni ta naw nih,
 Tu khawm dang ta naw mei nih,
 In ang sengin leng ei tih."*

[One shall find perfect peace,
 Where the Lord reigns;
 Not like the kings of the earth,
 None shall be discriminated,

And reside in perfect equality] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 337).

It is only in the benevolent reign of God that one can find perfect peace. The very statement, *Tu khawm dang ta naw mei nih, In ang sengin leng ei tih* [none shall be treated different and dwell in perfect equality] is one that is suggestive of the differential treatment they experience in their lives. The positive assurance for heavenly deliverance restores their hope to survive and help them in reviving their stability and courage.

Runchawng's "*Mi Tin Lawmna*" [Everyone's Happiness] abides the concept of daylight as an everlasting blissful existence set against the gloomy picture of

⁴³ The stanza of the songs has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

night. Night is synonymous to their dismal existence. The yearning for perpetual peace in the radiant abode of God is powerful that strengthen her to resist and sustain.

*“Tuoi el ta raw se, hi hnuoi rinum hi
Mi hung thuoi la aw Lal Isu;
Zan um nawna I rama chun.*

*Chu hmun ka hang tlung ve pha le chun aw,
Ka umna hi ngai ta naw ning;
Chawlin hang leng tang ka tih ie.”*

[Let this wretched earth perish,
And deliver me Lord Jesus;
To your perpetual abode without night.

When I reach that land,
I will not long for this place;

For I will rest in peace] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 202).

A deliverance where there will be eternal peace and light aggravate their contempt for the world with an assurance that the present malicious existence would be long forgotten and left behind. The very hope restores her spirits and develops strength to attain eternal peace and bliss.

The song “*Chu ram inhawi zie chu*” [How Peaceful is the Land] by Hrangawikim is filled with expression of the beauty of eternal home. The songs express optimistic hope, and longing for heavenly bliss and deliverance that is set against a contemptuous feeling for the world. The frustration in her dismal existence brings out the misery and turmoil that she endures which reinforce her spirit as the song resonates the beauty of eternal home.

*“Lungngaina le buoina khelah,
Ram mawi tak el a um;
Chu ram inhawi zie chu ka hang thlir a,
Lungngaina le Buoina hrim a um ta nawh.”*

[Beyond this misery and chaos,
There is a beautiful place;
I gaze at the perfect bliss of that place,

Where there is no misery and chaos.] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 103).

The very thought of the perfect bliss that they would attain in the heavenly home make them regard the earthly pain transitory. The undying hope lent their heart to find means of survival and strengthen their soul as they wait for afterlife bliss.

Lalrohnem “*Ka ta a nih*” [The Lord is Mine] tunes to the happiness and contentment that the composer is seeking for in the restful domain of God. In utter realization of despise and contempt towards her present misery, she resurrects her hope. It is thus revived with renewed vigour that sustains her pain and is able to grapple with them for the hope becomes her strength to have a taste of blessing in the present state.

“Aw hmangaitu ka lal ditum

A ropuina hai leh a hung nawk pha;

A ram mawiah mi thuoi a ta,

Chatuonin lawmin leng ka tih.

[O Gracious Lord my Beloved Lord,

When He comes back in all his Glory;

He will take me to his beautiful abode,

And happily stay there forever] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 29).

The song by Tirko Zingi in “*Hring Inluon Ram*” [The living World] is an earnest desire of the woman to forsake the world of pain as she expresses-

“Hnuoi lungngai in rumnahai,

Suoksan ka nuom chatuon ramah;

Kan rimna khawvel ram hi maksanin,

Ralmuongna rama chun.”

[This earth filled with misery and affliction,

I long to abandon for eternal home;

Leaving this miserable world that has afflicted me,

Towards a peaceful abode.] (*Independent Kohran Hlabu* 290)

The pain and affliction that is expressed in the lines delves into the miserable condition of the composer. It is certain in her expression that the only place that can secure her from her discontent is in the eternal home of God. This assurance revives her hope and strengthens her spirit. She is filled with courage to express her

contempt towards the world of men that have tormented her life and longs to abandon it.

The common element of peace, longing and deliverance expressed in the select songs intensify the spirit of courage and strength. The voice of resistance is empowered by the cherished hope of peace and positive element of eternal happiness. It may be noted that in locating their voice, women in the post-Christian era discovered a route towards self-expression and put down on their isolation. "She will go beyond the given by the way she expresses it; she will be truly an artist, a creator, who gives meaning to her life by lending meaning to the world." (Beauvoir 785) It is apparent that the songs of the women express their grievance and give meaning to their life which has been sustained by a positive and optimistic aspiration. The songs further deliberate their courageous spirit amidst a life of condemnation, while sustaining resistance in their own way.

Although silence in women may render women inferior to men, their silence may be interpreted as protest, providing means of survival in a male-centered world. Their outer composed nature makes them internally resistant. Women discover the diverse possibilities that silence holds as a means of expression in their resistance against patriarchy and social oppression. Silence in women may be seen as their power to have control and render them strong because they do not react. They are often more silenced when it comes to speaking. The feminine values of compassion, forbearance and integrity in women are means of their protest and in discovering the diverse possibilities of survival. Their compliant nature is seen as their resistance to social oppression and it matters not whether they succeed or succumb. The crucial note is their fight against limitations on their freedom and exploitation.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The history of the Hmar reveals that for ages women internalize the categorized images of femininity and accommodate to the subordinate status conferred to them in the patriarchal culture. The authority of men seems to influence their mental and physical being that restricts their autonomy and render them subordinate. Gender roles are eventually considered within a family and extend to the society through the process of socialization. Even though a woman's position is imposed with limitations and restrictions, she finds the condition challenging and remains stringent to overcome difficult situation. It may however be mentioned that even patriarchy functions through both compulsion and compliance. Even though men hold important power in all the important institutions of society where women are deprived, it does not imply that women are either totally powerless or deprived of rights, influence and resources. There are various forms and modes where patriarchy makes adaptations to the pressure and demands of women through shifts and changes. Women had an important role to play as they were expected to perform traditionally feminine task and were socialized to be nurturing and responsible.

The folktales and folk songs explored in the study reflect the social and cultural life of the pre-Christian Hmar society where a woman conforms to the gendered stereotypical roles. The social and cultural norms in Hmar context are gender specific that includes the action, attitudes and personality traits of an individual based on biological sex called gender. "Cultural experience and interpretation of gender are created through psychological, social and cultural processes and through relational experiences." (Chodorow 112) Gender roles are eventually considered within a family and extend to the society through the process of socialization. Socialization is a perpetual process of transmitting the cultural beliefs and values of judgement, associated with the functioning of gender stereotypes in social group and communities.

Hmar society being patriarchal since traditional times, women, children and the society at large looked upon men for security and dependence. The predominance of men that was maintained is evident from the manner society glorified them in community festivals and rendition of songs composed and rendered in praise of their

power and dignity. The position of men is manifested in the dignified status of warriors and hunters. The masculine attribute of assertiveness, courage and dignity are exposed towards an outstanding pronouncement of their power and position they hold in the society, as depicted in the male characters of the folk tales. Even if men continue to dominate and control, it is done with the spontaneous consent and agreement of women and mutual understanding. Even in the present time patriarchy is practiced in Hmar society, with some relative improvement, shifts and changes as a result of the coming of Christianity and modernization.

In chapter one titled, “Introduction: A Brief History and Culture of the Hmar People”, the chapter discusses at length the traditional history and culture of Hmar along with the customs and traditions adopted from the oral tradition has been introduced. Account of Mizo and Hmar historians, contemporary writers and linguists have been documented to trace the origin and history of Hmar. It further introduced oral tradition that integrates the culture, tradition and belief system of Hmar. The concept of patriarchy, the existence of patriarchy in the Hmar society and the resistance by women has been mentioned to understand the purpose of the study. In addition, it introduced the select folktales and songs composed by women both in the pre-Christian and post-Christian Hmar society employed to explain women’s resistance to patriarchy. Further feminism, psychoanalytic theory, patriarchal gender relations and views given by contemporary Hmar writers employed in the study had been introduced. A brief mention had also been made on a comparison of the position of women in the present scenario where the influence of Christianity has brought changes in the lives of women uplifted in many aspects through modernization, globalization and modern education even though there is the constant presence of patriarchy in modern Hmar society.

Chapter two titled, “Representation of Women: Their Lives and Struggles as Depicted in the Tales and Songs”, analyzes the lives and struggles of women in the pre-Christian era where women had to surrender to the dominant world of men. Their will power and stability are lived under, survived and functioned under men and their dominance for various reasons. Songs composed by women in the traditional pre-Christian society has been assessed to represent the pangs of subordination faced by them as revealed from the account of their lives. Further, an interpretation of the

yearning as seen in the songs composed by women in the post-Christian era as testament of struggles has been analyzed where the consolation of everlasting grace imbibe the strength they needed to overcome their miserable existence.

The socialization of both men and women mentally shape them to accept and adapt to roles inculcated by society. Women seem to accept their subordinate position and sustain them. Women in the folk tales represented as subservient to man's expectation is evident in the story of *Thlakur* where a woman is positioned to meet the expectation of a man, while man in their overt realization of power and authority designated through patriarchy thinks and acts according to the superior notion. Sakhilawngdar's autonomy is sacrificed for a man who failed to appreciate her emotions. Moreover, the story of *Mauruong* revealed different levels of misfortune accorded to the life of women. In addition, women characters in a substantial position estimated in a derogatory role have been represented to retrieve them from dominance and language by men. Sibarnu in the story of *Rengte*, Kulsamnu in the story of *Lalmang* and Supheikak in the story of *Lalruong* are characters renounced in the dominant world of men for their fantastical existence.

Even though women are pushed to different levels of misfortune yet their psychological being coupled with nurturing spirit strengthen them to survive their roles as a wife and a mother. Buonhlel's wife from *Buonhlel and the Fairy*, Kungi from *Pawthir and Hrangchal*, and Sakhilawngdar from *Sakhilawngdar II* are represented as victims of man's perversity in sheer manipulation of their weakness, yet psychologically constituted to secure the virtues of perseverance and compassion. These women characters chose to sacrifice a part of themselves, their time and independence for their loved ones. The traditional female task reinforced by the acceptance of standards of masculinity resulted in the misfortune and suffering of the women characters. Their maturity is marked by the definite choice on their part as a wife, a daughter and a mother. The psychology of women that prepares them to be nurturing and sensitive to relations has been analyzed from the characters of Sawrlai and Maurong that mentally prepared them to fulfill their categorized roles.

In chapter three titled, "Hegemonic Representation: Hmar Men-folk and their Power in Society" the cultural conditioning of dominance, aggressiveness and ambition of men in the pre-Christian time has been analyzed. The traditional superior

position of men in the society through the observance of festivals and songs has been rendered. Men in their consciousness and being maintain a definite difference from women. In the folktales they have been represented to be figures of successful warriors and masters with adroit qualities of wit, courage and strength. All ritualized social practices, festivals and customs emphasizes the honour bestowed upon the rich and prosperous men of society. Among the festivals *Inchawng* and *Khuongchawi* are feasts arranged to commemorate and honour the rich. *Sahlang Dawm*, *In-ei* which includes *Sa-in-ei*, *Bu-in-ei* and *Rallu-in-ei* are celebrations held in honour of successful hunters and warriors. During such celebrations different kinds of victory dances and songs are performed. There are songs that are sung during ceremonies with pronouncement of masculine pride and dignity. *Saia Ke Tet Hla*, *Hrang Lam*, *Hlado*, and *Darlam Hla* are victory songs encouraging hyper-masculinity in the celebration of the victory and strength of men. Instances of such victory songs are found in the story of *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai* and *Buonhleis and the Fairy* where the victorious eminence of men is determined by the social practices in the jubilant note of triumph and celebration rendered.

In addition, Lacan's explanation of the mirror stage has been used to analyze where the child enters the symbolic order to take on the image that develops and shapes the personality and characteristics of men, well assessed in the character of Lalruong and Buonhleis. Further, men's priority in attaining status and position prompts them to act and behave with courage and audacity. The heroism as depicted in the story of *Hrangkhup and Thawnglai*, and *Pawthir and Hrangchal*, are illustrations of heroes with dominance, power and ambition. Moreover the distinction of masculine behaviour that identifies men in terms of feelings, emotions and needs different from women has been analyzed through the male characters. These men exert their commanding nature that threaten to challenge gender difference have been analyzed through the male characters. Pakhattepa's marriage to the beautiful Sakhilawngdar, Buonhleis's commanding spirit in courting the fairy and finally marrying her, and Thlakur's unrelenting attempt to win Lawnglai are instances of the authority of men to achieve command over their desire and inclinations. Masculinity as defined by Robert W. Connell, as place in gender relation that effect the personality of men and culture has been rendered through the character of Lalhmang,

Lamlir, Lalruong and Tekabareisuon and Rengte. Hegemonic masculinity that impresses domination in accordance to patriarchal standards upon women has been analysed in the character of Lalvung, Pakhattepa and Thlakur. The social values conferred upon men are not only set forth by men but ascribed by women as well. Cultural factors and the consent of the dominated group as put forth by Gramsci has been studied that serves the interest of the dominant class. The spontaneous consent becomes an important means of control without the use of force and compulsion.

In chapter four titled, “Resistance by Hmar Women through Silence and Songs” interrogates women’s stringent efforts to cope and survive with the challenges they experience under patriarchy. Women’s resistance to patriarchal pressures finds a route to assert and voice their strength amidst the challenges of man’s authority and control. The concept of dominance and social order that is maintained results in the subordination and silencing of women. However, in the process of silencing it may be asserted that what should be vocal seem to be suppressed in silence that gives tremendous meaning and enlighten the true essence of women. The unwinding pressure and the manner in which women confront the challenges render them resistant and internally strong. Their endeavour to grapple with prescribed limitations and levels of discrimination are resourced to discover diverse possibilities for survival. A woman is seen as extending and perpetuating patriarchy through the acceptance of the ideology of masculinity. However such qualities are positive evaluation of her inner strength and not compliance to inferiority.

Songs composed by women like *Chawngo Hla*, *Zawllai Hla*, *Zawlchawng Hla*, *Tuoni Hla* and *Hbranchawn Hla*, and those by Chawngmuok and Chawngchirh, contribute towards a record of traditional Hmar society and reliable documents in acquiring and tracing knowledge of the position of women in the past. They are marked by precise renderings of their misfortune that question and establish their arduous nature toward survival. A similar note of pain and despondency though expressed in the songs of women in the post-Christian time, yet it is marked by earnestness towards everlasting grace that strengthens them. The composition of songs by women was one medium where they could voice their experience and innermost feelings. The experience of patriarchal pressure has been compared to the

misery of their life in this world. They discern the difficulties of their life as transitory and derive strength to confront them. The authenticity of such expression reveals the condemnation and suffering they face in life which however are resourced as expression of their resistance.

Feminist theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan have been employed for the purpose of exploration in highlighting the varied forms of oppression subjected to female gender. Psychoanalytic theory has been considered to demonstrate how sexual inequality and social organization of gender are reproduced through transformation in the consciousness and psyche and not only through social and cultural institution. Furthermore some concepts from Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous along with Nancy J. Chodorow have been utilized to consider the psyche of women who experienced certain relational issues and changes that reorganized and threaten their worth. In addition, Gerda Lerner's interpretation of patriarchy from a women's perspective and Sylvia Walby's systematic analysis of gender inequality has also been thoroughly employed to expand the ambit of this thesis.

Women are embedded in patriarchal dilemma and maintain difference where they restrain their own desires and are submissive to men's needs and maintain difference. Therefore women can be said to be the sternest perpetrators of patriarchy. The psychological impact of emotional abuse that is regarded as patriarchal oppression is not always the matter of man oppressing women. It is often woman who rather impose and enforce gendered restrictions upon themselves and may carry on to other women within the family. They may also cultivate indifference and withdraw themselves from distressing situation as psychological defenses. As a result women are accustomed to have patriarchal mindset with a notion that they should act according to men's desires. Thus women sometimes promptly participate in sustaining their own subordination, by upholding patriarchal values and accepting the dominant position of men as more important than their oriented private life. On some occasion they may even blame their resentment upon themselves or other women, shrinking into silence by embracing domestic servility and enjoy the alleged power of man's dependence on her.

On the other hand, women are needed by men to uphold patriarchy to secure their position as men. It is not only in her role in reproduction where she is responsible in carrying the legacy of man, but in upholding the status of men both in the private and public life. It may however be ascertained that the determining element of social life is the reproduction of human beings at the biological level and the production of means of existence at the economic level. Therefore both women and children contributed to the economic assets of men. Moreover women were needed to assist men in social life and execute or follow their decision. Men turn and rely on women for nurturing and emotional support besides obtaining help and assistance. As such women are protected by men as they are self-assured of their masculinity and simultaneously maintain the attributes of gendered specific roles. “And therein lies a wondrous hope that man has often put in woman: he hopes to fulfill himself as a being by carnally possessing a being, but at the same time confirming his sense of freedom through the docility of a free person. No man would consent to be a woman, but every man wants woman to exist.” (Beauvoir 160) Women sometimes actively participate in perpetuating their own subordination, even though the disadvantages of patriarchy may far outweigh any definite emotional or social security. This may be understood as manipulation of reality that serves man’s interest.

The attitude that resulted in the assimilation of the western culture in the name of Christianity gave Hmar women an honoured place in the society. They assimilate and work towards financial support of the family by engaging themselves in various occupations and becoming one of the earning members of the family. Religious institutions have exclusively forged the outlook of values where tolerance towards women has been sustained. Church became one of the developing institutions to educate and discipline women. It became a platform for not only educating themselves but also educating others. “A woman has to exercise great ingenuity, endure many rebuffs and disappointments, to find an education that fits her need, and also make it fit her other commitments as wife and mother.” (Freidan 295) The need for education among Hmar women to enhance her position in the society and at home has dawned upon them. Today the ratio of educated women has

attained an encouraging figure, considering the negligence in the early days when education was first introduced among the tribes.

The change that has occurred by assimilation of western values, manners, languages and lifestyle gave birth to multiculturalism. The impact of modernization and influence of western manners, values and lifestyle ushered in deep rooted reaction to indigenous values. It has contributed in alleviating women from the dregs of societal control. The Hmar have experienced a vast paradigm shift from the pre-colonial to post colonial period. Even though the traditional culture is inherent, yet the westernized culture has made tremendous impact with the advent of Christianity. This resulted in the hybrid practice of Christianity in the Hmar context, where there is assimilation of western culture in the name of Christianity. There evolved a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer's cultural identity.

Homi K. Bhabha basically thinks that the postcolonial and postmodern world is multicultural in background where personal identity and indigenous culture seems in crisis. Bhabha sees hybridity as a problematic of colonial representation and claims it a salient characteristic of colonial culture. The process is continuous and ever-evolving where there is an ultimate degeneration of all hierarchical differences and an articulation of culture's hybridity. "Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules and recognition." (162)

The forces of globalization transmitted a state of hybridity where the cultural identity of Hmar women came to be relegated to a contradictory and ambivalent role. The advent of Christianity and introduction of education has revolutionized the position of women. The transformation also made Hmar women to be more disciplined in different sphere of her life. Hmar Christian woman lead a good life as per the doctrines of the Scripture, which simultaneously affect her role in the administration of the family and bringing up children in spiritual life. Employment, gender equality and gender justice can be apprehended in greater heights beyond their wifely and homely duties to bread winners and wage earners. There are real issues and concerns for women for which womanhood has become assertive about the individuality of women, about evaluating their status, expressing their problems,

dreams and aspirations. The most desirable aspiration for a Hmar woman was the introduction of education. In Hmar society today women holds a much respectable position with significant establishment in the field of education, social and religious fields. The Hmar women today are also playing a dominant role and their education too has not remained neglected as before. In fact literacy rate for women has significantly increased with a corresponding increase in the number of women employed in different sector. With the rise in women's literacy, educated women are becoming aware of the gender equality and an increasingly rationalized structure of administration that widened opportunities for women in becoming economically independent. As a result, there is a great difference in the facial expressions and outlook of educated women and the status of women became more respectable than before. Today even boys prefer educated girls for their life partner. Simultaneously, social stigma on a widow or divorced woman has reasonably reduced.

The hybrid context therefore, redefine, question and liberate Hmar women from strict traditional gender roles. It should be admitted that the Christian missionaries led to undermining of the cultural values that resulted in a tendency to think that anything that was western was good and civilized. Women started to adopt innovative ways introduced by the Christian missionaries that brought radical changes through education. The intellectual freedom provided abilities and talents to self-realization and develop their identity. It introduced preference to humanitarian, secular and egalitarian notions of modernity. Socially and economically, Hmar women began to question and defy their traditional place in the society. Their major aim came in the form of financial and economic freedom which heralded other rights like freedom to choose their marital status, right to have a career or family, and many such individual or integrated choices.

Lalungawi in *Thlirna Tharin* [New Perspective]⁴⁴ expressed his viewpoints regarding the changes that has that has been brought to the life and culture of the Hmar people with the coming of Christianity in 1910. He highlights three important points where significant changes have been noticed in the Hmar society. First, Christianity has transformed the cultural life of the people with all round

⁴⁴ The title of the book has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

advancement. Secondly, it also developed ideas where secular and religious Christian life cannot be merged together, thereby creating a gap between culture and religion. Thirdly, the coming of the gospel has deep rooted effect on the traditional culture where 'Hmar Christian Culture' has evolved in the culture, tradition and identity of the Hmar people. (18-20)

The practice in the church sees women who are appointed by the church authorities as Sunday school teachers in imparting knowledge and discipline to children from the scripture. Even in the adult section, women preferably with theological background are appointed as Sunday school instructors apart from elderly women with sound knowledge of the scripture. Apart from this, every year in the month of September churches hold *Beiruol* (common campaign programme) where topics for sermon and discussions are compiled for the whole month to be taught and discussed in the church. During such programme women are given opportunity to speak and contribute their ideas on the subject when it is given for open discussion. In addition, married women are conferred respect and adulation on Mothers' Day observed in the church every second Sunday in the month of May. On this day the church service is conducted in observance of the special occasion and sermons are delivered to appreciate and respect mothers. Mothers' Day gifts are also handed over to all mothers as a token of appreciation. Mothers' day celebrates the greatness of motherhood, for mothers are otherwise regarded as traditional figure of compassion and service. The consensus prompted by inspiring values commenced the proposal of such innovative practice among the members of the church. It was formally accepted by the church committee and today it is practiced in almost all the church of the Hmar tribe.

The introduction of Christianity also transformed the institution of marriage. The traditional Hmar marriage has become one where there is an amalgamation of both the traditional and modern Christian marriage. The oath and exchange of vows is conducted by the pastor before a whole congregation instead of the village *Thiempu* (priest). However the basic structures of marital rites are retained where all nuptial negotiations and social obligations are maintained and followed before the main nuptial ceremony in the church. In the traditional practice, marriage negotiation and celebration were marked by feasting upon liquor, yet it has now been replaced by

a simple marriage feast and brewing of tea. However other traditional norms and social obligations are still maintained relating to marriage ceremony. Moreover, marriage has become a matter in which the opinion of the girl is sought first as an exercise of her choice and freedom. Marriages are held according to the Christian law and it is further extended to the manner of dress code, decoration, reception and other western code and manners. A Hmar Christian bride wears a gown on the day of her marriage. In the year 2019, *Hmar Inpui* (Hmar Supreme House) imposed a rule regarding the dress code for the bride where it became mandatory for the girl to put on the traditional *Puonlaisen*⁴⁵ along with a white blouse instead of the gown. This rule was enforced to check the existing disparity between the rich and the poor and maintain equilibrium among families who are less fortunate in affording expensive wedding gown. It may be mentioned that, even though a marriage dress code was declared for a girl, no such rule was maintained for the boys and they were allowed to continue with the western suit. However, after much appeal to the supreme house and reasonable consideration the rule was relaxed, which allowed the girls to wear a western wedding gown. Such decision from the supreme house that reconsidered the interests of women shows that women have occupied a considerable position in the community level to voice their choice and allowed to interfere and locate their grievances and apprehensions.

The evolving changes and progressive outlook in various sphere is evidently making progress with the involvement of women getting extended concomitantly. However, the church as a religious institution still maintains limitations in the case of women. Women are deprived when it comes to equality in opportunity compared to men. Women are not allowed to hold leadership positions except in women's fellowship and organization and they hardly have the opportunity to preach in the pulpit during regular church services. Women are also barred from certain activities in the church. In religious congregation women have a separate wing where their contribution and support counts a considerable resource in the administration of the church. Women are appointed as delegates in central conferences, yet mention may be made that women are not allowed to serve as church elders which is carried out

⁴⁵ A ceremonial cloth for girls designed in red and white.

through election among the fully communicant members within the church. Moreover, there is no scope for women to be ordained as pastors or ministers even if they obtain a degree in Theology; the qualifying criteria for entering into church ministry, in any of the denomination under Hmar community. This may be the reason behind the minimal number of women studying Theology. There are only about twenty five women studying Theology among the Hmar, while there is a comparative rise in other disciplines. It therefore reveals that the patriarchal norms are binding force where discrimination still prevails. It also maintains that the new religion imposed could not rule out the nature of governance that was followed in the past.

Further, even in terms of political participation, and decision making, a Hmar woman is still lagging behind compared to their male counterparts and woman's representative in any political decision-making processes is not up to par. Development and modernization are expected to accelerate social and political reforms regarding the status of woman to do away with many of the social barriers which are engrained in the patriarchal culture of Hmar society. Considering the high literacy rate among women, their political role and participation is however yet to assume noticeable significance. Besides, even if they are the earning member of the family they have to depend on men in financial decisions and major decisions in family matters still rests upon men.

Women are imbued with a spirit of revolution and change and began forming association in the society by the name *Nuhmei Thangruol Pawl* (NTP), which later converted to *Hmar Women Association* (HWA) with its central wing in Manipur. The regional wing of N.C. Hills and Karbi Anglong functions separately. The women organization functions towards the upliftment of women and spreading awareness to promote and encourage women in various fields. Seminars, workshop and conferences are held to impart instructions to women to communicate the protection of women's interests; to sensitize women for eradication of social evils, economic exploitation, and promotion of women's education and encouragement of women's participation in public life including politics. As a social organization the HWA also introduced a practice among the women towards the propagation and preservation of its traditional attires. It is significant that since the year 2019, the association has made it compulsory for every Hmar women to wear the Hmar traditional attire to the

church on the first Sunday of every month. Hmar traditional attire has more than forty indigenous designs with specific names. Most of the indigenous fashions are fast disappearing with the passage of time. The recent rule adopted among the Hmar women is an encouraging step towards popularizing the different traditional attire which otherwise are worn only during occasion and festivals. The practice received earnest response and it encouraged towards adorning multiple colours and designs, while retaining the original indigenous pattern. Such renovation added variety and beauty to suit the taste of women of different age group and envisaged popularity and reputation.

The major denomination in the Hmar community includes Presbyterian Church of India, Evangelical Free Church of India and Independent Church of India. A statistical record from such denomination accounts a reasonable number of women members in the local, district and central levels. At the district or presbytery level of the Presbyterian Church, (Assembly, the highest conclave includes women from other tribes) the total member in women fellowship according to the 2020 census hold a record of 5425 members against a total of 5490 male members in the Vongzawl, Lakhipur and Ngaibantlang Presbyteries together. A separate wing for women also operate at the Synod and Assembly level where Hmar women participate from the different presbyteries mentioned above. In the case of the total number of women members at the central level in the Evangelical Free Church of India, about 10,000 women members have been recorded against a total of the about 50,000 total members and 4,200 women members against a total member of 47,000 in the Independent Church of India. The total count is less in the case of the Evangelical Church of India and the Independent Church of India, compared to the Presbyterian Church of India, as the statistics of the women members has been recorded at the central level. It may further be noted here that the statistical record stands for married women as the unmarried girls are included in the youth fellowship. Even though the total number of women members is less compared to the men, there is remarkable participation of women in their respective congregation. Women fellowship takes active part in fund raising activities besides the collection of handful of rice every weekend as contribution toward financial support. The

amount collected is submitted to the head church for administration, missionary support and other obligatory services.

Christianity enhanced the first step of education through the learning of the gospel that shaped the lives of the Hmar women based on the Bible and further paved the way towards self realization and reduced their fears. Church stood as an institution of opportunity for women, even though they were barred from holding the ministerial position. In spite of the discrimination, Hmar women continue to serve and participate in the development of the church which can be perceived as source of their strength in challenging the existing prejudices in the religious sphere. Church is a platform which needed their participation and co-operation. Their involvement and service facilitated exposure from their confinement to take part outside the four walls of the house. An egalitarian notion prepared them to attain fundamental assumptions that guided and transformed their perspective towards life. In addition, the introduction of education facilitated their ability to read and write and further encouraged women to write that gave birth to women song composers which stand as a significant contribution towards literature.

While looking at the songs written by women, gender becomes an important factor. As gender is a social construction, the song composed by women can be seen as the outcome of a male dominant society where they are bound to several levels of restrictions and discrimination. The songs composed by women not only contributed towards literature of the Hmar; but they were also expression that eliminated the traditional moralistic silencing of women and it may be documented as a conscious effort by women to create space for themselves from which they would be able to view the world in their own perspective. “Let the honest heart shew itself, and *reason* teach passion to submit to necessity.” (Wollstonecraft 43) One of the reasons that women have taken up the pen is because it has allowed them to create their own world. It has allowed them to set the conditions of existence free from the direct interference of men. The major preoccupation has been a delineation of inner life, a liberated world view and refined expression.

It further enabled to conceptualize the changing state of affairs in the patriarchal system and identifying the mode of resistance shown by women towards it. In subverting their silence, women engaged in powerful forms of communication

such as song as forms of expression. Through the songs, they expressed their frustrations, injustice and condemnation. The songs are testament to the fact that women have sought various strategies to voice their ideas and concerns and to overcome social and traditional inhibitions. The songs and hymns express their strength, their endurance and hope, to voice their oppression against society and any earthly discomfort. It is also an expression of their intense desire to attain heavenly bliss for which they become oblivious of their present distress and strengthen them to remain undaunted by the pain and injustice they experience in their lives and alleviate them to attain peace and comfort in their spiritual life.

The thesis thus examines how the folk tales and songs of Hmar served as a site for patriarchal discourse, by reinforcing patriarchal ideologies and passivity of women in their representation and social position in the pre-Christian society. The analysis of the position of women has been interpreted in interrogating their struggles and painful episodes of subordination and disgrace. It interprets how women prevail over these very struggles by mustering emotional strength, patience and determination in their resistance to patriarchy. It further analyses the existence of patriarchy in Hmar society in the present context, which has undergone considerable adjustments compared to the traditional past. With the enhanced modern lifestyle, women no longer have to engage themselves in strenuous jobs or confine themselves to patterned traditional roles or responsibilities of the past. It draws conclusion on the present position of women which have been enhanced with the advent of Christianity, education and modernization while at the same time highlighting the domains where women are still deprived. Their resistance is apprehended in their individual anxieties carried out in their psychological struggles, as patriarchy still prevails and deeply entrenched in the mind of Hmar women as evident in the gospel songs composed by women.

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CLASS	BOARD/UNIVERSITY	Year of Passing	Division/Grade	Percentage
HSLC	SEBA	1995	I	60%
H.S.	AHSEC	1998	II	59%
B.A.	Gauhati University	2002	II	48%
M.A.	Gauhati University	2004	II	53%
M. Phil	Vinayaka Mission Research Foundation, Salem	2009	II	50%
NET	UGC	2012	Lectureship	

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

List of Publication and Papers Presented

1. Presented a paper entitled, “Folklore Studies in India: Past to Present” at the Three Day National Webinar on Multidisciplinary Approaches to Folklife: Challenges and Perspective, held on 21st, 22nd and 23rd October 2020, in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007.
2. Published an article entitled, “Post-colonial and Gender Issues in Mahesh Dattani’s ‘Tara’ ” in *The Post Colonial Experience: Implications and Possibilities*, published by Book Rivers. ISBN : 978-93-90548-64-4
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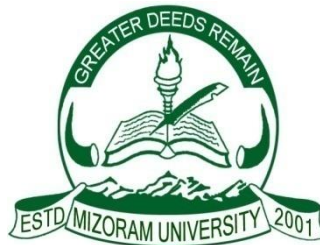
ABSTRACT
PATRIARCHAL RESISTANCE: A STUDY OF HMAR WOMEN
AS REPRESENTED IN SELECT FOLKTALES AND SONGS

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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Patriarchal Resistance: A Study of Hmar Women as Represented in Select Folktales
and Songs

BY

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Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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The Hmar belong to the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of the Sino-Tibeto-Burman family of the Mongolian race. They settle mainly in the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Like many other tribal group, the Hmar have no written historical record in the past. The origin of the tribe can be traced from the oral tradition handed down from one generation to the other. The popular legends and songs of the Hmar speaks of their origin from Sinlung, assumed to be somewhere in south west Central China. The history of the origin of Hmar has been traced as propounded by Mizo historians, namely Liangkhaia's *Mizo Chanchin* [Mizo History]¹ (1938) and K, Zawla *Mizo Pipute leh an Thlahte Chanchin* [Account of the Mizo Ancestors and Their Descendants](2011). Simultaneously, the historical record about their background, exodus, nomenclature, custom and culture has been rendered from the writings of Hmar historian L. Hranglien Songate *Hmar Chanchin* [Hmar History] (1976) and modern writers like Lal Dena *In Search of Identity: Hmars of North East India* (2018) Hrilrokhum Thiek *History of the Hmars in North East India (With special Reference to Assam)* (2013) and Vanlal Tluong Bapui *Assam Rama Hmarhai* [the Hmar of Assam](2007) and Rochunga Pudaite's *Education of the Hmar people*(1963). Account of early British writers like Alexander Mackenzie's *The North East Frontier of India* (2007), Major A.G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis* (1977) J.Lt.Col. Shakespear's *The Lushei-Kuki Clan* (1975) and Bertram S. Carey and H.N. Tuck's *The Chin Hills* (1976) have been included to document on the history, culture and tradition of Hmar among other tribes.

A further analysis of ten pre-Christian secular songs sourced from L. Keivom's *Hmar Hla Suina* [Detailed account of Hmar Songs] (1980) L. Chongtho Hmar's *Hmar Hai Tobul Hla Bu* [The Song Book of the Genesis of Hmar Songs] (1987) and Vanlal Tluonga Bapui's "Folk Songs of the Hmar people of Assam: An Appraisal" (2009) has been studied to contextualize the struggles of women in the pre-Christian tradition and those that render the position of men through the songs sung during traditional festivals. The twelve folktales *Buonhlei and the Fairy, Lalruong, Lalmang, Hrangkhup and Thawnglai, Lamli, Rengte, Mauruong, Sawrlai, Sakhilawngdar II, Pawthir and Hrangchal, Thlakur and Paruolsarihai,*

¹ The title of the books mentioned has been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of the study.

rendered in the original Hmar language and in translation has been sourced from Lal Dena *Hmar Folk Tales Retold* (2018) and two books written by Vanlal Tluonga Bapui *The Oral Traditions of the Hmars* (2011) and *Assam Rama Hmarhai* (2007) to show how men are depicted as dominant, aggressive and ambitious while interrogating the struggles of women characters and how they prevail upon them through patience, determination and emotional strength. In addition, twelve songs composed by women in the modern Christian era has been taken from *Independent Kohran Hlabu* [Hymn Book of Independent Church] (1992) to analyze the anxieties and struggles of modern Hmar women.

Folktales and songs as traditional heritage handed down through generations express the cultural history and ancestry of a tribe. The traditional songs and tales assert about their history in the primitive stage. The significance of oral tradition can be traced from the viewpoint of Walter J. Ong as he states that the orality of people perceives the world as interactive and interconnecting “Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth.”(14) Orality is therefore an entity focused in the field of human consciousness that is analyzed into its component part. Song and verbal expression were indispensable for any occasion or event to express their joy or grief. It created connectivity and harmony among the people and occupied an intrinsic part in their culture and tradition. The oral tradition of the Hmar are account of the daily life, achievements, failures, sorrows, wishes and recollection of deeds and events that have affected their lives. This mouth to mouth transition of tradition includes songs, tales, magical spells and mantras, children songs and various utterances that throws light on their existence and also how various other beings and factors existed, even though the account remains incoherent.

Within the ambit of cultural studies sex and gender are socially constructed rather than nature. “Where culture meant a state or habit of the mind, or the body of intellectuals and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life. This development, like each of the original meanings and the relation between them, is not accidental, but general and deeply significant.” (Williams, xvi-xvii) The habits, attitudes and standards of an individual contribute towards the development and functioning of a society or a community. These practices influence an individual

perception of the cultural institution prompted by the customs, rites and rituals and how it adheres to such interpretations. Consequently, the constitution of man as masculine and woman as feminine is done through the dynamics of culture. A comprehensive knowledge of a subject is possible through the study of the cultural history it is embedded in. While looking at the history and culture of the Hmar, patriarchy is practiced in the family, society and in its custom and tradition. Patriarchy rested on the defined notions of male dominance and interests both in social institutions and in the home. The head of the family, in traditional Hmar society is the father. The customs and practices render women into traditional familial roles. Sylvia Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy* refers to Patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.” (Walby 20) This sociological construction rested on the defined notions of male dominance and interests both in social institutions and in the home. The Hmar ancestors established a village on hills and mountains and led a nomadic life. In such a state men assumed the role of protectors of the village and were considered stronger with masculine power and bravery as they had to play the role of warriors in fighting against enemies or harmful wild animals. In such an environment women were in need of protection and their security was totally in the hands of men. The glorification and celebration of men-folk through the festivals observed like *Khuongchawi*, *Inchawng*, *Siel-sun*, *Sahlang dawm*, *In-ei* are referents of honour towards their bravery and strength. Besides, the songs *Hlado*², *Darlam Hla*³, *Hranglam hla*⁴, *Saia Ke Tet Hla*⁵ are profuse with pronouncement of pride and dignity.

Against such a constitution the position of women in Hmar society in the pre-Christian era has been analyzed through the study of select folk tales and songs. In analyzing the position of women in Hmar society and their resistance to patriarchy the thesis aims to reflect on the lives they lived and the traditions that were followed in the pre-Christian times. Patriarchal resistance in the study is understood as fight by women against the system of patriarchy. It is a resistance put forward by women

² Songs chanted on return of successful hunters and repeated in the *in-ei* ceremony.

³ Song sung during performance of religious rites by rich family holding *Inchawng* and *Siel-sun*.

⁴ Victory dance performed in honour of warriors and great hunters.

⁵ Song that reveals the competitive spirit and rebellious nature of the ancestors.

against a structure and conducted in different ways. In the traditional pre-Christian time, resistance is apprehended in the silent effort of women as analyzed in the women characters of the folktales. In the form of expression, the songs composed by women in the pre-Christian era interpret the enduring nature of women through the agony and misfortune encountered and identifying the mode of resistance shown by them. In addition, the songs composed by Hmar women in the post-Christian era have allowed women to create their own world; expressing the condition of their existence, where the major occupation has been a delineation of their inner life.

Gender is a complex socio-cultural construct, wherein we find the demarcation of the feminine and masculine roles, behaviour, psychological and emotional qualities and performance that conclusively reflect sexual difference. Ann Oakley states, “Gender is the amount of masculinity and femininity found in a person, and obviously, while there are mixtures of both in many humans, the normal male has a preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity.”(159) It further holds the expressions of social inequality and hierarchy associated with men and women in the society and the distinction is maintained to dispute the definite biological or psychological difference. All psychological and sociological factors that go to make up their feminine quality of nurturance and forbearance make them stringent even in the face of a calamity. When patriarchy becomes oppressive, women develop means to gather strength to oppose or resist them. The strength emerges from their silence and their resistance is conducted silently. It also seeks to interrogate how women used their voices through the songs that they composed that are expression of discrimination and how it is used to resist patriarchy. Through their expressive tradition, social ideas and knowledge they articulate opposition to social injustice and give voice to their individual needs. “Don’t tear yourself apart like that with choices imposed to you.” (Irigaray 211) Since women face confrontation and cannot take liberty at certain levels they must learn how to speak and walk through obstacles.

The songs chosen for the study of the difficult circumstances experienced by women in the pre-Christian context include *Semruk Hla* that speaks of the gratuitous treatment meted out to woman, *Chongngo Hla*, a vengeful song that carries the malice of a woman whose parents were killed, *Hrangchawn Hla* that comprises

composition expressing a feeling of discrimination in a state of bereavement and *Tuoni Hla*, a sequence of songs expressing the humiliation of a woman. It is further evident that hostility and ill-treatment towards women of the past is seen as noted in the case of Chawngmuok⁶ and Chawngchirh⁷ suggesting that though they were bound by the decision and order of men, their persistence and efforts reveal their strength that emerges from their intelligence and endurance. Further, the songs composed by women in the post-Christian era use their commitment to God as a means to express their burden in the absence of a safe space. They are strengthened to share their expression and views on how to survive in that context.

The research also looks at the behaviour of men and how they think about themselves vis-à-vis their women. Women no doubt are biologically different from men, yet pressure on the women-folk to transform and uphold gender roles was greater than their men-folk. Gender socialization promotes the habits, attitude, ability and certain standards that contribute towards an individual participation in the smooth functioning and participation in a society or a community. Hence gender socialization is “The specific process of socialization which teaches children their gender roles.” (Bhasin, 13) The expected transformation and conformity by patriarchal rules and socialization impressed upon women was even more complete as elaborated by Beauvoir, “The concept of femininity is artificially shaped by custom and fashion, it is imposed upon each woman from without; she can be transformed gradually so that her canons of propriety approach those adopted by males.” (Beauvoir 762). In the representation of the supremacy and power of men in Hmar society, the study attempt to bring out the necessity of patriarchal resistance by women subdued to a life of subordination and contempt in their relation to men.

Apart from gender studies, Jacques Lacan explanation of mirror stage as gender identification and Chodorow’s concept of inequality between men and women within a social – psychological perspective has been considered to problematize the internalization and appropriation of socio-relational experience specifically in the case of Hmar women. Nancy J. Chodorow interrogates the psyche

⁶ A famous woman song composer in the pre-Christian time, popularly known as Pi. Hmuoki, widely known not only among the Hmar but also among the Lushei and other kindred tribes.

⁷ Another woman composer of the pre-Christian time. She belonged to the Bapui (Faihriem, a Hmar sub-tribe) family and lived in the Bapui village. She was popularly known as Bapuinu.

of women who experience certain relational issues and social change that reorganizes, threaten or confirm their self worth. “Gender differences, and the experience of difference, the differences among women are socially and psychologically created and situated.” (Chodorow 100) Women in their categories as nurturers, role in the family and gendered work maintain a difference in behavior, attitude and emotions. Thus, the psyche of a woman develops through the experience of certain relational issues that is distinct from that of man. In this light the representation of women in the folktales has been interrogated to help further understand Hmar women through folk characters like Mauruong, Sakhilawngdar, and Sawrlai. Amidst their state of subordination, the challenge and courage of women are analyzed through their silence and mild disposition as their resistance to patriarchal standards. Cixous believes that conforming to silence women endorses subjection, disapproval and passivity “Either a Woman is passive; or she does not exist.” (Cixous 230) This situation refutes the course of resolute expression thereby reassuring linguistic expressions suggesting frivolousness and skepticism about their subject. However, it may be stated that silence or submissiveness does not direct to passivity or weakness. It may be a situation where the overwhelmed mind is about to express and react.

Silence is the predicament of a woman caught in the oppressive structure. It also represents the various aspects of the overwhelmed mind, life and nature. Silence in Hmar women is a conditioning that denies them the means of expressing themselves, especially in a culture which does not accept her as equal to men. Even though silence may suggest perfect subjugation of women, yet silence may be interpreted as protest that provides for survival and strength. Adreinne Rich says, “All silence has a meaning” (308) Women’s silence can be interpreted to convey complex emotion; a struggle to resist their suppressed situation, one that indirectly conveys their resentment.

The research thus also seeks to problematize modernity and multiculturalism and their role in alleviating women from the dregs of societal control. The advent of Christianity in the twentieth century brought tremendous transformation in the position of women in Hmar society. Such transformation can be seen in the field of employment, education, political and social life. The role of women is taken to

greater heights beyond home makers to bread winners and women have come to occupy more respectable position in the society. Furthermore, the question of whether, within the ambit of patriarchy, how far women are able to create a world free from dominance and hierarchy. The songs composed by Hmar women in the post-Christian era thus reflect their world view and anxieties brought on by more psychological struggles.

Chapter One: Introduction: A Brief History and Culture of the Hmar People

The introductory chapter discusses the history and culture of the Hmar as adapted from the oral tradition and historical account recorded by Mizo historians, Hmar historians and contemporary linguists and writers. It further introduces the oral tradition of songs and folktales that integrates their cultural traits and history. The chapter gives a brief introduction of the theoretical paradigm employed in the analysis of the chapters like feminism and psychoanalysis. In addition, patriarchy analyzed on gender relation and views adapted from contemporary Hmar writers on the position of Hmar women have also been mentioned. It also discusses important cultural aspects like traditions and customs, belief systems and the specific role of men and women specifically in the pre-Christian context. The chapter further introduces twelve folk tales and ten pre-Christian secular songs where the idea of the position and subordination of women have been emphasized. It however impress upon their enduring nature of women upon the dominance of men and how they prevail upon them. In addition, the chapter also gives a brief overview of the twelve songs composed by women in the modern Christian era in considering their anxieties and experiences to create space for themselves and view the world in their own perspective.

Chapter 2: Representation of Women: their Lives and Struggles as Depicted in the

Tales and Songs

The second chapter analyses the lives and struggles of women in the pre-Christian era through the study of select folk tales. It seeks to problematize the role of men in rendering women to give way to their desire and inclinations. The subordination of women is represented in the stereotypical categories of mother, daughter and wives that render them passive. However one cannot deny the power

and struggles implicit in the women characters, the ability to choose and act even in the position of willed submission. Further, the derogatory terms and position accorded to women characters reveals how language is used to refer to female characters so as to establish a position of authority over sexuality and personality, defined by men. The chapter also analyses the songs composed by women in the pre-Christian era to decipher the enduring nature of women through the agony and misfortune encountered by them and identifying the mode of resistance shown by them. It further illustrates the experience of modern women whose struggles are reflected through their individual anxieties evident in the songs composed by women in the post-Christian era reflecting on their hope and survival as means of patriarchal resistance.

Chapter Three: Hegemonic Representation: Hmar Men-folk and their Power in Society

In the third chapter, the cultural conditioning of dominance, aggressiveness and ambition of men in the pre-Christian era is analyzed as represented in the folktales and songs. The chapter looks at how Hmar social system prioritizes masculinity and patriarchal dominance as seen in its history and how men ascribe to particular behaviour accorded to them through psychological factors and process of socialization. Men in the selected folktales are represented as strong, witty and courageous as warriors, *pasaltha*⁸. The chapter also interrogates the purpose of such cultural festivals like *Khuongchawi*, *Inchawng*, *Siel-sun*, *Sahlang dawm*, *In-ei* celebrated in the pre-Christian times. The purpose was to emphasize importance and indispensable presence of men. The concept of hegemonic masculinity as put forth by R.W. Connell, is gender relations where men and women are engaged in those practices that effects their experience, personality and culture.(71) This further elaborates the dominant position of men and subordination of women in patriarchal system that transmits power to men through culture and society. The power and prestige enjoyed by men force women to act according to their wish and demand. Women sometimes actively participate in the reproduction of their own subordination even though the disadvantages of patriarchy may far outweigh any

⁸ A brave and successful hunter, a hero.

definite emotional or social security. Likewise Antonio Gramsci's theory of spontaneous consent explains how consent is given by the subordinate group to the directions imposed by the dominant group to make its rule acceptable before it resorts to direct force upon the subordinate group they victimize. (145) This contributes to the idea that the Hmar women also automatically consent to hegemonic patriarchy without coercion. Although women are educated and more modernized than in the past, rules made by men are unchallenged and consented upon without question. The consent of women reveals that the social values accorded to men are internalized not only by men but by women as well in contemporary Hmar society. The delineation of male power reveals the elevated status of men in Hmar society. The existence of patriarchal power and control in Hmar society demonstrate how important it is for women to resist patriarchal control in order to attain self-control, developing their individuality and social being.

Chapter Four: Resistance by Hmar Women through Silence and Songs

This chapter interrogates the silence of women through their experience and their response to patriarchal attitudes. It highlights women's attempt to cope with these challenges and assert their strength. Women characters in the folktales are tolerant, abandoned, forcibly conquered by men. The superiority of men is impressed upon them by rendering them passive or silent. Even though silence is often seen as a sign of women's submission to patriarchal authority, yet it may be stated that silence is not merely a sign of absence of voice or power but it also signifies resistance to patriarchy. Such challenges and hardships are also reflected by women composers like Chawngmuok and Chawngchirh and songs composed by women in the pre-Christian period such as *Semruk Hla*, *Chongngo Hla*, *Hrangchawn Hla* and *Tuoni Hla*, which are testament to the fact that women have sought various strategies to voice their ideas and concerns and to overcome social and traditional obstructions. Even though silence is often seen as a sign of women's submission to patriarchal authority, yet it may be stated that silence is not merely a sign of absence of voice or power but also signifies resistance to hegemonic power.

A number of gospel songs composed by women in the post-Christian era has been ascertained that bears the pain and suffering of women in this bleak world against which they renew their spirits for an eternal bliss. Such assertion is seen as

their strength in grappling with the situation. An egalitarian order can be apprehended in the benevolent rule of God. The longing for heavenly deliverance restores their hope to survive and help them in reviving their stability and courage. Women discover the diverse possibilities that silence holds as a means of expression in their resistance against patriarchy and social oppression.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The concluding chapter recounts and sums up the analysis of the preceding chapters. The chapter furthermore constructs and redefines the experience of patriarchy by the women in the traditional past and in the modern contemporary times while also elaborating on their struggles and resistance. The gender based analysis of folktales and songs, the traditional female task reinforced by the acceptance for survival that resulted in the misfortune and suffering of the women characters. The value systems had also undergone sweeping changes. Traditional value systems have been replaced by a more modern hybrid world view and western value systems which have prompted women in this post-Christian time to create space for themselves from which they are now able to view the world through their own perspective. However, there are several domains where women are considered subordinate. In the present context the internalization and acceptance of patriarchy by Hmar women involves a positive evaluation and not compliance to inferiority. They evolve conscious effort to create space for themselves from which they are now able to view the world through their own perspective while being aware of continued anxieties and struggles under limitations of patriarchy.

Glossary:

Inchawng: A festival organized by individual family. The word “chawng” means wealthy. The Inchawng festival is a big feast given by rich people, usually connected with family worship.

In-ei: It is a ceremony of success and victory or triumph over the animals killed in hunting, a foe killed in fighting or a successful harvest. The festival held in connection with the killing of wild beast is called *Sa-in-ei* and those with a good harvest as *Bu-in-ei* and victory over an enemy or head of foe is called *Rallu-in-ei*. During such celebrations different kinds of victory dances are performed. These victory dances are performed to show honour and respect as they celebrate their heroic deeds and valour.

Khuongchawi: It is a big feast given by the chiefs and the rich people. In this ceremony the villagers prepare a big litter in which they carry a big drum with the host or his youngest son and his nephew. A pompous procession is made from outside the village up to the house of the host passing through the streets of the village. The host or the entertainer throws away cornelian beads and other ornaments to the young people who scramble for the gifts.

Sahlang Dawm: It is a festival arranged by distinctive hunters and warriors. When a big *Siel-sun* is performed by the prominent hunters and warriors a public feast is arranged by the host and during the ceremony all the villagers prepare a big litter in which they carry the host with the skulls of all the wild animals and human beings he had killed. These skulls are the trophies of the hero. The people participating in the ceremony make a big procession along the streets of the village to commemorate the host.

Siel-sun: One of the most famous Inchawng is *Siel-sun* (piercing mithun). There are two kinds of *Siel-sun*: (i) *Sun-fang* where only one mithun is killed, (ii) *Sehmai-tuok-sun*: where two mithuns are killed. The festival lasts for two to three days. Dance, song, eating and drinking follows. The young would rock the house of the

host violently as they sing until the host and his family members come out to fulfill their demands. As their demands are granted they would bless the host with songs of blessing. Siel-sun is a pompous entertainment given by generous and very rich people.

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