

A STUDY OF METAMORPHOSIS IN MIZO FOLK NARRATIVES

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A STUDY OF METAMORPHOSIS IN MIZO FOLK NARRATIVES

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**A Study of Metamorphosis in Mizo Folk Narratives**” is the bonafide research conducted by Malsawmdawngzuala under my supervisor. Malsawmdawngzuala worked methodically for her thesis being submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of Mizo, Mizoram University.

This is to further certify that she has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the M.Phil regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University.

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DECLARATION

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

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Mizo**.

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CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

The term metamorphosis is derived from the Greek word “*Metamorphoun*” which means ‘transform’ or ‘change shape.’ According to Joseph B. Solodow, Metamorphosis is,

A process by which characteristics of a person, essential or incidental, are given physical embodiments and so are rendered visible and manifest. Metamorphosis makes plain a person’s qualities, yet without passing judgment on them. It is and this constitutes a central paradox of the poem a change which preserves, an alteration which maintains identity, a change of form by which content becomes represented in form (174).

“Metamorphosis can mean a rapid transformation from one object to another or a distinct or even degenerative change in appearance, personality, condition, or function. The concept of metamorphosis is commonly used in pieces of literature to describe an extreme change in character or form.” (n.p)

From these definitions, we can say that metamorphosis is a changing form or a shifting shape of something for reasons or situations to create a new structure. It may be the internal or external change, visible or invisible as well. It can be concluded that any change in the living organism or non-living organism which have changed it into something else by its nature or the situation.

According to Allan Dundes “The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is it could be a common occupation, language, or religion.” (n.p) This is one of the most well-known definitions that emerged in the 20th century had risen. During the 19th Century, when the term ‘folklore’ was coined, it was only referred to European peasant. It was, however, growing larger and larger. The term ‘lore’ can simply define as wisdom or knowledge of the people.

Folk narrative are a type of the folklore that has been passed down orally from generation to generation. An ancient times, the entire body of folklore was transmitted orally. As results, some of the definitions have work well with folklore, exactly dating back to the 20th century. According to Benjamin A. Botkin, “Folklore is a body of traditional beliefs custom and expressions, handed down by largely by word of mouth and circulating chiefly outside commercial and academic means of communication and instruction.” (n.p) It implies that people’s knowledge had been passed down from generation to generation, as well as a sense of obligation and survival necessity.

“Although the word folklore is more than a century old, no exact agreement has ever been reached as to its meaning. The common idea present in all folklore... involves the dances, songs, tales, legends, and traditions, the beliefs and superstitions, and the proverbial saying of peoples everywhere.” (Thompson 403) It is clearly shows that no one needs to be aware of the précised long practice. With knowing the rich customs and traditions, one may discover some leading voices of the particular folk narratives as well.

According to Abbott, “Narrative in a limited sense is a kind of storytelling in which a narrator addresses a narratee or as the telling of some past events” (187). This definition stresses the telling of a story by a narrator, emphasizing a linguistic phenomenon and excluding visual or musical narrative forms.

According to Barthes, the narrative is, “...present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds.” (237).

Elliott Oring also states that “Narrative is another word for the story... Narrating is a method by which experience is transformed into a verbal account. Experience is recapitulated by matching a verbal sequence of statements to some sequence of events that is purported to have occurred. (121)

Every group of people has different folk narratives, which act as the vitals for the life of the groups. All the narratives may not comfort by the different cultures, but, as for belonging groups, it usually has a deep meaning beyond the literary text. Like every culture, the Mizo also has a folk narratives like folk songs and folk tales inheritance from their ancestors which are pass down from generation to generation. All the narratives had been reflected the Mizo culture and custom, history, beliefs, and observances. It also has a great impact on reconstructing their moral values.

According to the rich Mizo folk narratives, have found different kinds of Metamorphosis such as *Kungawrhi*, *Keimingi and Hualtungamtawna*, *Lalruanga and Keichala*, *Thimzin*, *Rahtea*, *Pafa Hruai Bo*, *Tumchhingi and Raldawna*, *Chawngmawii*

and Hrangchhuana, Arsi thawnthu, Ngaite-i, Rairahtea, Tlingi and Ngama, Mauruangi, Unau Fanghma \o zawng, Lasiri and Lasari & Thangsira and Thangzaia, etc.

Various tribes from all around the world have their own unique oral tales of their own culture. These tales originate much earlier than their written script and were passed on orally from their ancestors. As such is the case, these type of oral tales are passed on from one generation to the next.

The oral narratives that can be found within one's own culture are a reflection of the cultural values and approaches towards life in general. They act the medium through which their religious, superstitious as well as ethical beliefs are based upon. Their oral tales shows the culture's belief systems, about the after-life, their day-to-day life and activities; it shows the true nature of the community at that particular time. It acts as a great source for influence and a source of history for the future generations. Not only is that, the oral literatures also one of the best and most contributors to the literature on any given culture. This is why every cultural narrative, folk tales of any given culture are considered to be a treasure-house and ought to be respected and preserved with utmost care.

The oral narratives that are passed down can be of many varieties: animal tales, romantic tales, supernatural tales, super-human tales, comedic and humorous tales as well as moral and ethical tales. There are also tales like that are quite improbable. However, all of these genres and different forms of tales can be seen within cultural tales.

One of the cultures that have the richest forms of literature around the globe is the Greeks. They, too, like many other cultures have improbable and unnatural tales.

However, it has to be noted that all of these improbabilities are made to be probable within the realms of literature. As a matter of fact, these so called improbabilities do not act as a negative force but increase the value, power and worth of the Greek literature itself as they contain one of the richest and finest forms of literature; the reason for this is that these forms of literatures are a pure and unaltered reflection of the profound human life as it has. These types of improbable and unrealistic forms of narratives and tales can be found in abundance among several cultures all across the world. Among them, this study conducted in this dissertation shall focus on the metamorphosis between man and other living beings. The dissertation shall focus on the Mizo tales and narratives that contain the elements of metamorphosis.

1.1. Who are the Mizos? :

The earliest traceable origin and history of the Mizos is said thus by B. Lalthangliana: “The Mizo people are the descendants of the Mongolian tribe, originating from the large-scale group of the Tibeto-Chinese, a branch of the Tibeto-Burman. Our ancestors were located within the southern part of China, northern part of Tibet, in Kansu district, now south of Taolanchou, within the banks of the T’ao river. They are part of the Tibeto-Burman tribe that originated, along with many other tribes, during 2000 B.C. Then, from the border of Tibet and Burma they followed the banks of the Hukawng, and the river Chindwin that led them into the southern location where they settled” (1 & 2).

Within the Mizo folk narratives, there are more than twenty narratives that deal with metamorphosis. The most popular is the metamorphosis into the stars. The various

tales that deal with metamorphosis have extremely very different forms and styles of narration. Some of the metamorphosis that can be seen deal with the transition into different beings in the after-life. Though it is another form of metamorphosis, these types of tales of transition in the after-life can also be drawn into the realms of reincarnation and can be traced and studied in the same manner. However, the research would heavily focus only upon the elements of metamorphosis. Four Mizo narratives where there is a transition and metamorphosis of *keimi* will be taken into consideration in this study, along with tales of metamorphosis in other animals and insects.

Though the Mizo culture is not as old as time, it is impressive that the ancestors have various kinds of narratives that deals and talks about metamorphosis. This helps a lot and helps to proof in knowing the mindset and creative thinking capabilities of the Mizo ancestors. This is why a deeper and in depth analysis of the narratives of metamorphosis is required which in the aims of the research and achieves to do so.

1.2. The Elements of metamorphosis in Mizo folk narratives:

After careful studies, the elements of metamorphosis are found in twenty five Mizo folktales, such as : (1) Thimzin Thawnthu (2) Kungawrhi (3) Lalruanga Leh Keichala (4) Keimingi Leh Hualtungamtawna (5) Hlawndawhthanga (6) Ngaitei (7) Mauruangi (8) Rahtea (9) Rairahtea (10) Unau Fanghma \o zawng (11) Tlingi Leh Ngama (12) Zawlpala Leh Tualvungi (13) Tumchhingi Leh Raldawna (14) Chawngmawii Leh Hrangchhuana (15) Lasiri Leh Lasari (16) Thangsira leh Thangzaia (17) Siruk or Laizawn Paruk Thawnthu (18) Khiangte Zawng Zim (19) Chhohreivung (20) Dingdi Puan Tah (21) Zangkhua (22) Hrangkhupa Selu (23) Si Kawi Kap (24) Pafa Hruai Bo and (25) Lawnglaih Leh Zuntei Nu.

These Mizo folk narratives where the element of metamorphosis is found can be divided into six parts:

- 1) The tales of the dark ages
- 2) Tales of the mythical tiger-man
- 3) Tales of the stars
- 4) Tales of animals and insects
- 5) Tales of trees, flowers and materialistic elements
- 6) Tales of ghosts and spirits

These divisions into six main parts maybe described in detail below:

1.2.1. Tales of the dark ages (*Thimzin*): Among the Mizo folk narratives the tales of the dark ages is considered to be very different and worth looking into. This dark age is considered to have happened due to the unusually long occurrence of a solar eclipse. During that time, the earth was enveloped in complete darkness. Due to this unusually long event, there were many changes that had happened on earth and the living creatures.

Due to the complete darkness during that period, human beings were in distress and were completely terrified; the darkness grew metaphorically and literally as well. During the tremendous disarray on earth, metamorphosis happened suddenly on men. Some were transformed into monkeys and baboons. The chiefs and elders who were in a meeting were transformed into a flock of *vakul*, the *thangchhuah pa* with his *diar* and *puan tial* were transformed into a tigers, the young men who were wrestling among themselves were transformed into bears. The young men and women who were helping each other out in the fields were transformed into flocks of *koro* and *vazar*, (i.e birds)

and the ones who were coming from the jungle with torches were transformed into *taumeichher-chhi*.

The *Chawngthu* clans were transformed into monkeys, *Vangchhe* clans were transformed into elephants, *Paite* and *Vuite* clan were transformed into *Chepa* and squirrel, and the *Ralte* clans were transformed into *Chep-chep*. Besides the human beings, their domestic animals were transformed into different kinds of animals and birds. This is the tale of the dark ages that the Mizos had in their narratives.

1.2.2. Tales of the mythical Tiger-Men: There are four tales that talks about the mythical Tiger-Men in the Mizo folk narratives. They are:

- 1) Kungawrhi
- 2) Keimingi and Hualtungamtawna
- 3) Lalruanga and Keichala
- 4) Hlawndawhthanga

The *Keimi* in the Mizo folk narratives can be divided into two types. Three out of the four mentioned tales - Kungawrhi tale, Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna, and Lalruanga leh Keichala - are the tales in which the *Keimi* are genetic Tiger-men. The *keimi* seen in the tale of Hualtungamtawna is different as it is not genetically but transformative metamorphosis that happened by some other influence or accident.

In the tale of Kungawrhi, a visitor roasted the foot prints of Kungawrhi as he was in love with her. Due to this, she fell seriously ill and was dying. Her father got disturbed and troubled as she could not recover at all. In his panic state, he announced that whoever could heal and cure Kungawrhi would marry her. Then the visitor healed and cured Kungawrhi which allowed him to marry and bring her to his home. As a big

flowing river had to be crossed on the way home, the visitor turned into a tiger, which was when he was discovered to be a *keimi*.

His transformation into a tiger was seen by an old woman who hurried home and reported the incident to the villagers. Kungawrhi's father grew panicky again and announced and promised that whoever returned his daughter to him would have her hand in marriage. Then, this was when Phawthira and Hrangchala were volunteered to the mission to rescue Kungawrhi, which was later successfully completed after the *keimi* was killed.

Like the tale of Kungawrhi, in the tale of Keimingi Leh Hualtungamtawna readers can see the marriage between man and *keimi*. Hualtungamtawna was a *pasaltha* (who could kill lots of animals and had killed numbers of tigers). Due to this, the *keimi* beings were furious at him and wanted him killed. A lady-*keimi* known as Keimingi was married to him. However, plans to kill Hualtungamtawna could not be fulfilled. Later on, Keimingi was found out to be a *keimi*, and a plot was planned by Hualtungamtawna to kill her. At a *khuangchawi* event, he tried to gun her down but failed as he got too drunk and missed his shot. This angered and enraged the parents of Keimingi.

When Hualtungamtawna was about to organise a feast by killing a pig, he sent for the families of his wife. Keimingi's two brothers who came to attend were shot and killed by Hualtungamtawna while they were circling the pig. This led to the disharmony and vengeful feeling between the spouses. When Keimingi was in the early stages of her pregnancy, she wanted to eat from the *Nghalphusen* mountain hoping that it would lead to the death of her husband. Then, Hualtungamtawna set out to do the bidding of his wife which eventually led to his death as the wish of his wife Keimingi.

Even in the story of Lalruanga and Keichala (a *keimi*) the whole villages was fearful of the *keimi* and were scared to go to their jhum. However, as Laruanga was a popular and witty magician, he dared to go to the jhum and soon made friends with Keichala. Being friends, they each agreed to meet both their parents. When they went to meet Keichala parents, it can be seen that *keimi* beings too lived in villages and were all *keimi* beings.

In terms of wit and cleverness, Keichala does not level up with that of Lalruanga. Lalruanga's younger brother who was not as witty and clever as his elder brother was killed and eaten by the *keimi* beings when he visited their village. From then on, the two friends became rival enemies who often hunted to kill each other. However, in the end, Lalruanga was able to win over and killed Keichala.

In the tale of Hlawndawhthanga, the *keimi* were not genetical in nature but rather transformative. When Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers went to jhum and felt thirsty, the eldest Hlawndawhthanga fetched reddish water from a Chilaune tree and brought it for his brothers to drink. Upon drinking the water, they transformed into a tiger and did not even return to their village and remained and roamed in the jungle for three days straight.

A man returning from his jhum saw three tigers roaming around in the jungle. As Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers did not return home, the villagers searched for them and they assumed that Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers were killed by the tigers and their relatives got very worried.

After three days, the brothers returned home eventually. However, they could not tell the truth about their condition. Later on, their sister and father got to know about

their secrets. From then on, they could freely turn into keimi whenever they wanted to. This led them to hunt and kill the domesticated animals within and without their village. Due to this, Hlawndawhthanga's two brother Laicherhnawma and Zahrama were eventually killed.

While fear spread across their village, one wicked stepmother ordered her step daughter to fetch firewood from the forest. Hlawndawhthanga helped the young child and killed her spiteful stepmother. As time passed on, the young child carried the child of Hlawndawhthanga.

He began to woo her from the Vuichhip mountain and he was madly in love with her. On his way to visit her house, he continually eats the domesticated animals of the villagers. As the villagers were annoyed at this, they offered sacrifice to |ialtangi and ask permission from her to kill Hlawndawhthanga. On consideration, |ialtangi agreed to their terms and asked them to set a trap (falpui) in which Hlawndawhthanga met his death due to his mad and blind love for |ialtangi.

1.2.3. Tales of the Stars: Almost of the names of Mizo stars and constellations come from the Mizo folk narratives. According to the Mizo traditional beliefs, all of the stars were never stars from the start but had their origin and history on earth before they turned into stars in the skies. According to the Mizo folk narratives, the stars in the skies were former human beings and animals, with humans being the most in number. Then, for some unexplainable reason, the souls and spirits and bodies of the animals and humans turned into the stars. This transformation of the once living beings into stars can be seen in the tales like: Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana, Siruk (Pleiades), Khiangte

zawng zim (Taurus), Chhohreivung (Orion), Dingdi puan tah, Zangkhua (Great Bear), Hrangkhupa selu (Vega) and Sikawikap (Delphinus+Altair).

As mentioned earlier, these tales about the stars have very interesting plots. There are tales where living beings transformed into stars during the dark ages as well.

The tales of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana is about two lovers who had passed away and turned into stars, while the tale Hrangkhupa Selu (Vega) is about a tale of one of the greatest and most honorable animal, the bison that turned into a star after death. Among the tales about the stars - Zangkhua (Great Bear), Sikawikap (Delphinus+Altair), Kiangte zawng zim (Taurus), Chhohreivung (Orion) and Dingdi puan tah happened during the dark ages (*Thimzin*). Besides, the tale of Siruk (Pleiades) has two versions to its name. One version is that - while six men were digging the ground to a great depth, the ground above them collapsed killing all of them in the process. Then, their spirits transformed into the Siruk. Another version of the same tale is that - in a certain village, six sisters had suitors from the skies that were different and stronger than the earthlings. As the other suitors of the villagers were in no position to compete with them, they become jealous and envious. They eventually became enemies and a war raged between them. The suitors from the skies turned into fire and burnt down the village killing all the villagers. Among the ruins and smokes, they took the six sisters and flew up into the skies and turned into six stars - *Siruk* (Pleiades).

From the various tales of the stars that have been mentioned, it is evident they each have their own unique and vastly differently plot. Besides, the *Thimzin* was very important event and an important event in the transformation and metamorphosis of men and animals into stars. Most metamorphosis into the stars happened after death or during

the *Thimzin*; tales about beings from the skies, tales of war, death and romances can be seen as well in the narratives of the Mizos.

1.2.4. Tales of animals and insects: tales of the tiger-man, tales of the stars and the constellations and tales of the dark ages have had been mentioned so far. The Mizo narratives have element of metamorphosis where transformation can be seen in other animals and insects as well. Such tales are as follows - Mauruangi, Ngaitei, Tlingi leh Ngama, Tualvungi leh Zawlpala, Lasiri leh Lasari, Rahtea, Thimzin, Pafa Hruai Bo and Siruk.

In the tale of Mauruangi, Mauruangi's father murdered her mother by pushing her off into a river in which the latter underwent a metamorphosis and turned into *Thaichhawninu*. The pitiful daughter used to be fed by the fish. In the tale of Ngaitei, the spirit of Ngaitei's father transformed into a giant snake. Besides, this tale talks about a great flood which the people of the Mizos living in hilly areas seldom witnessed, which in itself is to be noted well. The tale of Tlingi and Ngama talks about the abode of the dead where the spirits turned into fireflies and lived on in the land of the dead. Besides, this tale focuses on the immense love that existed between the lovers which the world of the living and the dead could not even seem to terminate.

Moreover, in the tale of Tualvungi and Zawlpala, their spirits underwent metamorphosis and turned into a butterfly which, too, is a romantic tale. In the tale of Lasiri and Lasari, Lasiri transformed into a frog/tadpole. In the tale of Rahtea, he transformed into a cicada when he was on the verge of death and depression. In this tale, readers can find that a giant snake too transformed into a needle. Not only that,

transition of a deer into an old man and transformation of an evil spirit into a tiger can be found as well. Besides this, the tale of Pafa Hruai Bo talks about two brothers in which the elder turned into a *vapual* (Great Hornbill). Siruk tale talks about heavenly beings turning into *vamur* (House Swift); Thimzin tales talk about human beings transforming into monkeys and hoolock gibbon (*hauhuk*), tigers, bears, elephants, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Vakul*), Northern Tree-shrew (*Chepa*), and squirrels.

1.2.5. Tales of trees, flowers and materialistic elements: Mizo folk narratives have tales that talk about transformation of trees, flowers, and other materialistic elements.

The tale of Mauruangi talks about Mauruangi's mother turning into a certain tree (*Thingsiri*) in which she fed and helped her daughter in times of difficulty. The tale of

Tumchhingi and Raldawna talks about Tumchhingi's metamorphosis into a mango; the tale of Thangsira and Thangzaia mentions transformations into natural elements like the waters, clouds and bridges, trees like *fartuah* and *vaube*. The tale of Unau Fanghma To Zawng talks about two brothers in which the elder's big toe turned into a *pasawntlug* (i.e. mushroom). Moreover, the Siruk tale describes the transformation of the heavenly beings into storms, rains and fires.

These metamorphosis that occurred within each tales vary in numerous ways, but what they all have in common is that transformation from one species to the other happened under difficult and unfavorable circumstances and consequences.

1.2.6. Tales of ghosts and spirits: some of the metamorphosis that occurred in the Mizo narratives is often seen in the after-life where the spirits and ghosts of the departed

transformed into another form of being. This kind of transformation is often found in the tales of the stars and other tales as well.

The tales that talk about such kinds of transitions are as follows: Ngaitei in which her father underwent metamorphosis and transformed into a snake; the tale of Zawlpala leh Tualvungi in which their spirits transformed into butterflies; the tale of Tlingi leh Ngama in which the spirits of the lovers turned into fireflies in the world of the dead. In the tales about the stars, there are transformations of spirits into stars and constellations. Such tales are - Siruk, Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana, Zangkhua and Hrangkhupa selu.

1.3. Findings: from the tales that have been collected and mentioned above, some of the findings of this research are thus:

First of all, the *Thimzin* tales dictate many important details. From the title of the narrative itself, it could have multiple meanings based on one's own perspective. Looking at it from the Christian perspective, some scholars linked the *Thimzin* tale to the Biblical stories about Jesus. Just as the earth was in complete darkness in the Mizo tale, Jesus' crucifixion on the cross too led to the darkening of the whole earth. The *Thimzin* darkness changed men, while the darkness after Jesus' crucifixion transformed men from sinners to being saved who received salvation. However, from the perspective of scientific minds and researchers, the solar eclipse could in no way lead to the transformation of men and other animals into another species of animals. Though this might be the case, the Mizo narrative of the *Thimzin* says otherwise. This is why the

Thimzin that had occurred can be considered to be not an ordinary kind of solar eclipse of any kind that had been witnessed before in the natural world.

Due to the solar eclipse that had occurred, there was complete chaos and disarray in the society and among different tribes all across the land. There was a monstrous disaster unlike any that they had faced before. When the Mizo chiefs who had always taken good care of the villages suddenly turned into *vakul*, the amount of panic and problems faced is indescribable. There would be leaders or chiefs to guide and protect the people. Even the sole protectors of the villagers like the *thangchhuah pa* were transformed into a tiger, which was considered to be one of the greatest and mightiest among all animals, even the strongest, bravest and cleverest among the animals. When their strongest and fiercest men turned into the most fearsome animal it can be assumed that it would be such a great disaster for the people of the village, not to mention the fact that everything was in complete darkness.

When some of the villagers turned into monkeys and baboons, while some domestic animals turned into other animals and birds, it must have been completely chaotic and complete mayhem would have had occurred. Besides this, some clans like the Chawngthu transformed into monkeys, Vangchhe clan to elephants, Paite and Vuite clan to Chepa and squirrels, Ralte clan to Chepchep. This could cause serious damage to their fellow men as well as causing problems in tracing the descendant and history of each clan. The Vangchhe clan turning into elephants could have cause serious problems especially if they were large in number as they could be harmful and cause huge problems for the other humans. Besides this, the transformation of the young men and

women into flock of *Koro* could be a huge loss for the community as it would have a seriously huge negative impact on the society.

Though the complete darkness in the *Thimzin* and its effects on other part of the world cannot be known, what is clear and evident is that the Mizos would have had huge problems regarding the occurrence of the metamorphosis in their community suddenly. Besides, there would be complete chaotic behavior within the community which would have a huge negative moral impact on the people of that particular time. Whatever the case, these kinds of improbable and unrealistic tales enrich the cultural literature of a tribe and is worth looking into as it is a great source to study and analyze the psyche and creative capabilities of the Mizos.

The next tale would be the tales of the *keimi*. From the main four divisions of the *keimi* tales, the various elements of romances, panic, fear, communal problems, friendship and enmity can be found. Apart from this, the *keimi* tales deal with the relationship between man and tiger, and their hatred towards oneself can be clearly seen and witnessed through the tales. What is evident from here is the impossibility of one with different taste, likes, and behavior to coexist in harmony and in a peaceful manner. Even though the *keimi* beings and human being may sometime interact and tend to live in close harmony, it can never last long until the end. Though there are *keimi* tales that have romantic tales, the lovers never end happily as they never have a happily-ever-after ending. It always ends in a disruptive nature or death one way or another in the end. This proves that the *keimi* beings and human beings are not made to be in close relation to each other.

Because the *Keimi* are immediately ferocious and dangerous for a normal person, their discovery as a *keimi* being automatically evokes and invites fear and resentment, which resulting in resentful and restlessness and fear-stricken behaviors among the people of the community. When Kungawrhi's father found out that his son-in-law was a *keimi*, he immediately wished to rescue his daughter asking for the brave and courageous young men to help him recover his daughter. He was such in a desperate situation to get his daughter back that he promised her hand in marriage if they could return her safely. Even in the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala, when the villagers had heard that there was a *keimi* in the forest, they resented and feared going into the forest and avoided it at all cost. Even in the tale of Hlawndawhthanga the community's panic and restlessness upon the discovery of the three tigers in the forest can be clearly seen.

Hence, in every tales of *keimi*, readers can see that death followed it. Tales like - Kungawrhi, Hlawndawhthanga and Lalruanga leh Keichala have their main characters met their death as they were *keimi*. Moreover, in the tale Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna the main hero Hualtungamtawna too met his death. From here, it is evident that *keimi* tales consist of death and restlessness among the community. Though there may have occurred some cross species relationship, it is evident that they were now meant to live in harmony for a long period of time in any case whatsoever.

The third would be focused on the tales of the stars and constellations. The Mizo ancestral passing down of the tales about stars differ in various versions but they can be put together under the umbrella of the tales about the stars. One of the versions of the tale Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana and the Siruk tale can be clubbed into a romantic tale. Tales about enmity and war as well as difficult times too can be seen in the Mizo

narratives. However, such harsh times and hardships are the means through which true love is brought out between the characters which prevailed until the end. Though such is the case, all of the romances do not, however, end in a manner that the readers wanted. Sometimes, the love which they hold on to becomes the cause of the death of some of the characters which can be seen in some of the romance tales of the Mizos.

The effect of the event of the *Thimzin* can be found in abundance in the tales of the stars. In Mizo narratives, the period where most of the metamorphosis occurred was during the *Thimzin* which acts as the origin and source of many of the tales of the stars and constellations. These tales include - *Khiantge zawng zim*, *Chhohreivung*, *Dingdi puan tah*, and *Zangkhua and Si Kawikap*. These star tales are the result of the *Thimzin* event that can be found in the Mizo narratives. Besides this, it has to be noted that in the tales about the stars that originated from the *Thimzin*, many of the Mizo cultural practices and customs can be seen. Some of them are - Visiting and wooing of the ladies, *kawikap*, weaving of *puan*, raiding of villages and hunting expeditions can be found in plenty.

In one of the versions of the tale of *Hrangkhupa selu* and *Siruk* metamorphosis into stars can be found to have occurred after death. It can be surmised that death is one of the most important factor that lead to the process of metamorphosis.

The metamorphosis of animals and insects into other beings can be found again during the *Thimzin* which brought about the transformation of many men and animals into other form of living beings. *Mauruangi* deals with transformation into fish while *Tlingi leh Ngama* deals with the soul's metamorphosis; *Tualvungi leh Zawlpala* and *tlingi leh Ngama* are romantic tales that too deals with transformation. Tales of

Rairahtea, Rahtea, Lasiri leh Lasari and Pafa Hruai and Mauruangi deals with the element of the hardships that man is faced in the community, the sufferings and pitiful conditions of the orphans are explored in depth. But all of the characters that had underwent hardships and difficulties were saved from their troubles and worries once metamorphosis occurred.

The next one would focus on the metamorphosis that occurred in other living beings like plants, trees, flowers, weather. Tales like - Tumchhingi leh Raldawna and Mauruangi deals with transition into plants, mango and *thingsiri* (i.e. tree) respectively. In these tales, the characters' transformations into the plants are a great way in which they can help their beloved partners.

In tales like Thangsira leh Thangzaia transformation into the waters, weather and bridge can be found in which the characters hid from the dangers that they were about to face. The transition into *fartuah* and *vaube* at the end of the tale signify the belief and faith in the necessity of union until the end of time. The Siruk tale mentions beings of the heavens who transformed into natural elements like the winds, rains, and fires which signify the importance of protecting one's love from harm and danger and can be utilized as a means of weapons to ward of enemies. Tales of Unau Fanghma |o Zawng where the elder brother lost his big toe is about a refuge that ran from their enemies. This contains elements of war and raid which caused tremendous suffering, loss and pain to the people affected by such.

The tales that deal with the transformation of the soul into stars are Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana which is a heartbreaking and touching tale about two lovers. The tale Ngaitei deals with the soul of Ngaitei's father which underwent

transformation into a snake which had cause flood causing huge trouble for the villagers. But his act was not an act of evil but was only due to his love for his daughter. This tale is about a father's deep and undying love for their child ever after death. In the tale Tlingi leh Ngama, readers can see that there was a passage that connected the land of the living and the dead. This too happened due to the immense love that existed between the two lovers. What seems to be the most important case when it comes to the metamorphosis of the spirit is that they include the element of love in it (which the Bible considered as the greatest gift of all). Besides all of these, as it involves the spirits, one of the most important factor is the inevitable death that has to occur before the transition of the human body do being a spirit. All of the tales of the spirits that involved metamorphosis can only occur due to the presence of death beforehand, and is closely associated with death.

All of these tales concerning metamorphosis have these themes in common - romance, death, enmity, war, the pitiful life of an orphan, the deep sorrow and grief and the attempts to break out of it, accidents or curses, life after death, miracles and deceit.

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CHAPTER 2

Classification of Metamorphosis

There are different classifications of Metamorphosis according to which the change takes place. The Metamorphosis that can be seen in the Mizo narratives also differs vastly with the different stories and tales. Their plots and themes differ greatly

along with the time that each story was set; the moral teachings and the life lessons too differ greatly. However, this study shall consider them all under the umbrella of the element of Metamorphosis.

It had been mentioned earlier in the previous chapter how different cultures from various parts of the world too had their own unique tales of Metamorphosis. Thus, these tales cannot be neglected and put in the periphery of the literature of the world at large. Many historians, archeologists have found various evidences of metamorphosis in their findings in the historical sites, scriptures as well as sculptures and carvings. One of the most complete and significant evidence of metamorphosis can be found in the tombs of the pharaohs, the pyramids and other historical monuments surrounding them. At these sites, numerous carvings that indicate the occurrence of metamorphosis can be found from the countless hieroglyphs. There are many writings and carvings depicting the metamorphosis between man and animals. Theriocephaly, meaning a being having the body of a man and the head of an animal, can be abundantly found in the carvings of the Egyptians of the past. From this instance, it is evident that the stories and tales of metamorphosis had been well known in various parts of the world.

There are numerous instances of metamorphosis even in the tales of the Mizo folk narratives. While some of the metamorphosis that took place was beings that could transform both into human beings and other animals, there are permanent transformations that took place where those that underwent metamorphosis did not transform backing to their human form. Some transformed into animals and insects, plants and weather, stars and rivers. Just as their transformations were different, so were the reasons behind their transformations. This chapter shall focus on the types of the

transformations and the inter-species transformations that took place within the Mizo narratives.

These different tales of metamorphosis depict the beliefs and superstitions of the Mizo ancestors while also depicting their imaginations, fantasies and religious beliefs as well. This is why this chapter shall deal with the study of the various types of the metamorphosis and the inter-species transformations that took place. Besides this, the chapter shall also focus on the depiction of the Mizo beliefs, superstitions, imaginations, fantasies and religious beliefs within the nuances of the Mizo folk narratives.

2.1. Keimi: First, we will be discussing the tales of the *keimi*. It has to be known that only the Mizo culture is not familiar with this tale. Some cultures of the different parts of the world have their own *keimi* tales as well. Places like the Thailand, Philippines, Burmese, etc. and different parts of the North Eastern States of India each have their own versions of the *keimi* tales. Different cultures of the Mizo, Garo, Kuki and Manipur each have their own unique *keimi* tales in their narratives. Thus, it can be clearly known that the *keimi* tales is one of the very important metamorphosis tales across different cultures across the world, with being more popular among the people living in hilly areas.

Although it is unclear as to why the *keimi* tale is more popular among the tribal people living in the hilly areas, it can be assumed that it could be due to the same heritage or ancestry of the long lost past. Besides, there are some cultures that consider these tales to be more than just tales and accept them as true events and true/real life stories, more than mere tales.

There are differences in versions of the same stories or tales of the same origin due to the difference in the geographical area where such tales and stories are told. For instance, in the European metamorphosis tales, mermaid tales can be found while North Eastern parts of India that comprise of hilly areas has different types of tales like the *keimi* tales, with no trace of the likes of mermaid tales. The continent of Europe has a vast ocean as well as plains which leads and affects their stories. Therefore, tales of sea creatures can be found in their tales. Meanwhile, it is impossible for the people living in hilly areas to have tales that involve the seas of sea creatures. This is because the geographical area is not located near the seas. Therefore, having mermaid tales is impossible while having *keimi* tales is very much in line with the geographical area. Thus, there are differences in the metamorphosis tales in every different parts of the world depending largely on the geographical area. However, this factor is not the only factor that influence and determines the metamorphosis. A large part of it is dependent on the imaginations and fantasies of the people of a certain area.

In the Mizo folk narratives the *keimi* tale can be seen in these four tales:

- 1) Kungawrhi
- 2) Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna
- 3) Lalruanga leh Keichala
- 4) Hlawndawhthanga

Among these four tales that deal with the metamorphosis of the *keimi*, the tale of Hlawndawhthanga has metamorphosis incident that can be said to be accidental or magical that occurred not by choice but rather by mere chance. The other three tales -

Kungawrhi, Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna, and Lalruanga leh Keichala are the metamorphosis of *keimi* that occurred by choice and occurred willingly as it was due to the gene of the *keimi* species within the tales.

2.2. Therianthropy: Venetia Laura Delano Robertson defines “The belief that a person has a deep spiritual or mental connection to a certain animal...Therianthropes believe that they possess the spirit/soul of an animal or the mentality of an animal, either through reincarnation, mergence, or other means.” (P.7).

Therianthropy is the term used for those kinds of metamorphosis where a man can transform to another species with the ability to reverse back to the human form. The *keimi* of the Mizo folk narratives can be said to be in this category as they can transform back to their human state after their animalistic transformation. These transformations are not periodical that can occur only on the full moon night, or the night of new moon. However, these transformations in the Mizo folk narratives are all voluntary and can occur at the will of the persons.

The tales of Kungawrhi, Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna, and Lalruanga leh Keichala are all *keimi* tales with the *keimi* genes being passed down from their ancestors and were naturally born with it. However, the tale of Hlawndawhthanga is not likewise as the metamorphosis into the *keimi* occurred accidentally. After their change, whatsoever, they could transform to their *keimi* state or human state at will and are not much different from the other tales that had been mentioned earlier

2.3. Theriocephaly: Theriocephaly is the term used for the type of humanoid beings that have all the physical features of a man but with the head of another species of animals. There are various other cultures of the world that has these types of metamorphosis - Greek mythologies have the existence of a minotaur, a humanoid being with the body of a man and a body of a bull. This type of metamorphosis is calling the theriocephaly. There are no such kinds of theriocephaly in the Mizo folk narratives.

Biology has classified metamorphosis into two different categories - 'complete' and 'incomplete'. Some metamorphosis that occurs has changes and transformations that take place throughout their whole physiology and transform to an entirely new and different animal. This type of metamorphosis is called the 'complete' metamorphosis. Apart from this, there is the 'incomplete' metamorphosis where changes and transformation does not exist and occur on the whole of the physiology of that particular being with the transformation taking place only on some certain area of the species' body. There are no such 'incomplete' metamorphosis transformations to be mentioned in the Mizo folk narratives.

2.4. Reincarnation in Mizo folk narratives: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism are undoubtedly among the largest religion all across the world. One of the most common religious beliefs is that all of these religions believe in reincarnation. They strongly belief that each person will be reincarnated after the death of his/her human form and be reincarnated into another species according to the deeds and actions of each individual during their human life time. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn in their book commented about reincarnation and wrote likewise:

Reincarnation asserts that human persons after death are then embodied or re-incarnates in another body. This way of putting the matter implies that there is some entity that is re-incarnate, something that carries over from life to life (640).

In many local religions, belief in multiple souls is common. The soul is frequently viewed as capable of leaving the body through the mouth or the nostrils and of being reborn, for example, as a bird, a butterfly, or an insect. The Venda of southern Africa believe that, when a person dies, the soul stays near the grave for a short time and then seeks a new resting place or another body- human, mammalian, or reptilian.

Among the ancient Greeks, the Orphic mystery religion held that a preexistent soul survives bodily death and is later reincarnated in a human or other mammalian body, eventually receiving release from the cycle of birth and death and regaining its former pure state.

The major religions that hold a belief in reincarnation, however, are Asian religions, especially Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, all of which arose in India. They all hold in common doctrine of karma, the law of cause and effect, which states that what one does in this present life will have its effect in the next life. In Hinduism the process of birth and rebirth-i.e., transmigration of souls-is endless until one achieves *moksha*, or liberation from the process. *Moksha* is achieved when one realizes that the eternal core of the individual and the Absolute reality are one. Thus, one can escape from the process of death and rebirth.

Jainism- reflecting a belief in an eternal and transmigrating life principle that is akin to an individual soul-hold that karma is a fine particulate substance that settles upon the

jiva according to the deeds that a person does. Thus, the burden of the old karma is added to the new karma that is acquired during the next existence until the *jiva* frees itself by religious disciplines, especially by *ahimsa*, and rises to the place of liberated *jivas* at the top of the universe.

Although Buddhism denies the existence of an unchanging, substantial soul or self- as against the notion of the *atman* it teaches the concept of *anatman*- it holds to a belief in the transmigration of the karma that is accumulated by an individual in life. The individual is a composition of five ever-changing psycho-physical elements and states, or *skandhas*- i.e., form, sensation, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness- and terminates with death. The karma of the deceased, however, persists and become a *vijnana* in the womb of a mother. The *vijnana* is the aspect of consciousness that is reborn in a new individual. By gaining a state of complete passiveness through discipline and meditation, one can achieve *nirvana*, the state of extinction of desires and liberation from bondage to *samsara* by karma.

Sikhism teaches a doctrine of reincarnation based on the Hindu view but in addition holds that, after the Last Judgment, souls- which have been reincarnated in several existences- will be absorbed in God.

There are countless stories and movies that have been made based largely on this belief in reincarnations and make it even harder to grasp the reality of it. There have been many reports worldwide that supports the claim of the existence of the reincarnation which makes it impossible to regard it as mere faith and belief systems. There are some instances in the Mizo folk narratives where metamorphosis of this kind

of reincarnation can be seen where the metamorphosis that took place and occurred can be categorized into the ambit of reincarnation. However, it has to be noted that the Mizo ancestry rather had it passed down as another form of metamorphosis rather than that of reincarnation.

There are some Mizo folk narratives that have both the elements of metamorphosis as well as that of reincarnations which will be focused on the light of the reincarnations. Some of the Mizo folk narratives of the Mizo ancestors that had human beings transformed to another life form after the end of their human life form that had reincarnated into other beings are as follows:

- 1) Ngaitei
- 2) Mauruangi
- 3) Tualvungi leh Zawlpala
- 4) Tumchhingi leh Raldawna
- 5) Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana
- 6) Siruk
- 7) Zangkhuana
- 8) Hrangkhupa selu te an ni.

The Metamorphosis that took place in these tales is slightly different from the the kind of tales that had been mentioned earlier. The reason for this is that the metamorphosis that happened in these tales happened and took place after their respective death and demise. Therefore, it can be categorized as a kind of

metamorphosis that happens due to reincarnation. The metamorphosis-reincarnation tales consists of three tales that deals with the romance of a man a woman. They are:

- 1) Tualvungi leh Zawlpala
- 2) Tumchhingi leh Raldawna and
- 3) Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana

These three tales that have been mentioned can be classified to be romantic tales where the lovers had immense love for their lovers. They were faced with many problems in their humanly lifetime but were unable to express their love and affection for their lovers due to the constraints of the society and the time they were living in. Thus, they were given another chance in their life after death when they were reincarnated as another species. The Mizos believed and had it in their tales that these lovers were reincarnated to express their love more freely without any constraints and difficulties living their lives besides their loved ones without having to deal with their enemies.

It would have been impossible for Tualvungi and Zawlpala to live happily in the world of the living. However, they had a better chance when they were both reincarnated into two beautiful butterflies. This metamorphosis that happened due to reincarnation enabled the two lovers to live happily ever after in the tale. Thus, it can be said that due to the strong and immense love that they had for each other while they were alive, their loved lived and continued onto their reincarnated butterfly lives.

Much like the previous tale that had been mentioned is the tale of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana. Both the villages of the lovers were bitter enemies who were in constant wars and raids. Due to this, the loved shared between Hrangchhuana and

Chawngmawii were put in constant danger. Later, it was learned by the villagers of Chawngmawii that Hrangchhuana had regularly visited her which led to the capture and death of the latter. Hrangchhuana's death was soon followed by the death of Chawngmawii. Their earthly love could not be fruitful and was incapable of blossoming due to societal enmity unless there was an unexpected harmony and peace between the two warring neighboring villages. Thus, their loved continued to blossom and exist after they both underwent reincarnation into the stars where they could no longer be disturbed or separated.

From these tales, the Mizo ancestors can be said to have had thought up of tales for lovers who could not enjoy each other's company due to the societal pressures that existed during their lifetime. They must have fantasized an ideal place for those lovers and came up with such metamorphosis tales that deals with reincarnation where the lovers could enjoy their love for each other. Moreover, from these instances, with reference to the Mizo folk narratives, it is clear that the Mizo ancestors had somehow believed in reincarnation while having them censored and unmentioned in their religious and superstitious beliefs.

Although the reincarnation tales of the Mizos can be related to have been linked to that of the belief systems of the religion like Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism, it can also be said to have been closely related and linked with the resurrections that can be found in the faith of Christianity. Thus, in this sense, it can be said that the metamorphosis-reincarnation of the Mizo folk narratives could be said to be some form of resurrection in the Christian sensibility.

According to Christianity, after-life exist which can be related to many metamorphosis tales of the Mizos as they too are continuation of life in the after-life. However, the resurrections that took place within the ambit of the Mizo folk narratives are largely no longer in the human form, but rather an entirely new species of animals. In the tale of Lalruanga, Lalruanga's brother was killed by the *keimi* clan. However, Laruanga forced them to puke him out again which he then assembled the dismembered body with his magical powers. Although he was no longer entirely the same person, he was made to come back from the dead. Thus, Mizo tales have a kind of resurrection after death had taken place. Likewise, most of the metamorphosis that deals with resurrection have their bodies underwent some changes and transformation after being revived from the dead. This form of tales is considered to be more than just tales as some big and popular faiths too have them in their scriptures. Thus, it can be said that the Mizo folk narratives too have some similarity and connection with the other beliefs of other cultures as well.

Based on what was stated previously stated that the Mizos too had beliefs about the after-life that had similarity with the beliefs of the most common and popular religions of the world like Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity. Though the there are little instances where religious beliefs are mentioned, there are, however, mentions of life after death by the Mizo ancestors which strongly indicated their beliefs in the after-life and the existence metamorphosis that can be linked to resurrection and reincarnation. Besides, the tales of the Mizos without obviously mentioning the presence of existence of religious practices, somehow subtly referenced their beliefs in the after-life into their narratives. This seems to be understood and

grasped only by scholars and not by mere readers. Thus, it can be understood that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives have its similarities with other religious beliefs of the world.

2.5. Escapist mechanism in Metamorphosis: The idea and concept is not a rather new subject in the literary sphere. Its traces can be seen in various forms of literature in poetry, novel, fiction and essay. In general, it can be said that almost all religion has its connection and relation to the concept of escapism. This is because escapism is a way of letting go of the troubles of the world and finding peace and tranquility by means of escaping away into the unknown/unfamiliar world or fantasy world.

Warren L. Young defines escapism as

Escapism is, as other coined words are, a value loaded term- this means that there has been attached to the word and ethical connotation, which, it seems has created a social stigma association. The social stigma appears when the word is used as a noun, or transformed into an adjective as escapist, or when used as the verb in the context of escapes from a situation by creating one which appears to the creator, before he has experienced it, to be better than that in which he finds himself. (377)

It can be stated that most of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives have elements of escapism in them. In all of the tales, there can be seen the occurrence of immense troubles, problems, fear, terror and distress. Thus, it is not uncommon for them to want to escape from their miserable lives and fantasized metamorphosis to change their situations and help them escape. In the tale of Rahtea, as his mother tried to eat his liver and heart, he did not want to return home and remained in the forest to save his life. He did not want to climb down from the tree he had climbed up even though

many of the villagers had asked him to go home to meet his death. Then, in the end, Rahtea eventually transformed into a *thereng* then flew away to his freedom from his wicked mother. The question that could be raised here is why did Rahtea changed into the *thereng*. He was no wizard or magician and had no special ability that would enable him to transform himself into the *thereng*. However, in the tale it could be seen that he had underwent metamorphosis to guarantee his safety from his mother otherwise he would have been killed by her. Thus, he had escaped death as he underwent transformation which is exactly how this tale is said to have the element of escapism within it.

Just like the tale of Rahtea, the tale of Tualvungi leh Zawlpala, Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana which are metamorphosis can be categorized into having the mechanism of escapism within the tale. Thus, it can be stated that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives has elements and mechanisms of escapisms in almost all of them.

2. 6. Various Reasons: The Greeks can be said to one of the richest cultures that have the richest forms of literature and art. They had plenty of metamorphosis representation in their gods and goddesses. There are various instances where humans underwent metamorphosis as they had been cursed by their gods. This led them to under go metamorphosis even though they were not born with it or did not inherit their differences from their parents. These curses are often followed by acts of revenge upon the ones who cursed them. Greek literature has many kinds of tales that involve these kinds of metamorphosis stories.

Though there are plenty of metamorphosis tales in the Mizo narratives they are very different from each other. However, enacting a curse is commonly found in these tales. The tales which involve curses generally does not involve cursing someone who is more powerful than them for revenge or curses on the basis of religious beliefs. There are some curses which are involved with magic and sorcery besides some supernatural forces. Most of the curses that the characters within the metamorphosis Mizo folk narratives are unclear as to why they were cursed; it was not due to some benevolent magical sorcery; it was neither due to their wishes. The metamorphosis occurred mainly due to some unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances that happened suddenly. This is one big mystery that lies behind these changes as it was overwhelmingly chaotic as well as confusing for the ones who had suffered and experienced these changes first hand.

There are various reasons why the metamorphosis tales that are seen within the Mizo folk narratives can be said to fall into the genre of metamorphosis. Some of these are as follows:

1. After death change: Metamorphosis that took place after death can be seen in some Mizo folk narratives which have been mentioned in the earlier chapter. There is multiple metamorphosis that occurred in the star myths of the Mizos. These tales are Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana, Hrangkhupa Selu, Zangkhua and Siruk. All of these tales have human characters that underwent metamorphosis after certain characters had died and transformed to stars after death.

Besides this, almost all the other star myths that the Mizos had have a connection to death. This is because the Mizos believed that all of the stars were once people living on earth who had transformed into stars ones they had passed away. All of the stars that

the Mizos gave names to had once been humans and had their own tales. It was believed that almost all of the stars, apart from the ones that have their own origin, are said to undergo metamorphosis into the stars during the *thimzin* era.

In the tale of Ngaitei, her father's soul had transformed into a giant snake. Likewise, the tale of Tlingi leh Ngama had the souls of the lovers transformed into a firefly in the world of the dead. In the tale of Tumchhingi leh Raldawna, it is learned that the Phungpuinu had swallowed Tumchhingi which would have surely killed her. However, Tumchhingi was vomited out again by Phungpuinu and the former underwent metamorphosis into a mango tree. Zawlpala and Tualvungi in their tale too had transformed into two beautiful butterflies that flew closely together happily after their metamorphosis. Their death was followed by Phuntiha's suicide who too had transformed into a butterfly.

2. Magical Change: The Mizos have numerous tales where metamorphosis seemed to have taken place due to the use of magic and sorcery. The reason why Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers changed to *keimi* was due to the magical water that they drank from the bark of a tree. It is obvious that the water they had drunk was no ordinary water as it was magical water that had them turned into a *keimi*. Similar to this can be found in the tale of Pafa Hruai Bo where the elder of the two siblings had turned into a *vapual* after swallowing its egg. This too is another instance of changes taking place out of the ordinary as there seemed to be some sort of magical element in the egg of the bird. Even during the *thimzin* era, the event of the great darkness that enveloped the whole world seemed to have been some kind of very strong magical presence.

In the tale of Rairahtea, the *bahhnukte* was a very powerful magical tool that was used to perform miracles and many wonders which brought many changes. Even in Laizawn Paruk, the lovers of the six sisters were beings out of this world. They could transform themselves into natural elements like storms, *vamur*, eagle, heavy rain and fire. Though it was never shown, within the tale, that they were not sorcerers, it was clear that they had some sort of very powerful magic that enabled them to do what they did. Besides this, in the tale of Lasiri leh Lasari and Thangsira leh Thangzaia, there were beings who could transform into natural elements like bad weather, water bodies, brass ladder, *fartuah* and *vaube*. These tales indicated too that they could transform into these forms willingly which was impossible for being who had no magical sorcery powers. Thus, it was obvious that the metamorphosis that occurred took place due to the presence of magical elements.

3. *Thimzin* Change: One of the most important and memorable metamorphosis that took place within the Mizo folk narratives was the *thimzin* era. It has to be noted that it has its own separate tale besides having multiple star myths. They are - Kiangte Zawngzim, Dingdi Puantah, Zangkua, Chhohrei, and Si Kawikap. These tales all mentioned the occurrence of the *thimzin* which clearly indicated the significance of it especially within the context of metamorphosis. Thus, it can be stated that the *thimzin* was the main source of metamorphosis and the tales as well within the ambit of Mizo folk narratives. This is because there are not any tales which indicated more occurrence of metamorphosis than the *thimzin* tales and might not be false to claim it as a total transformation. Therefore, it is clear that the *Thimzin* was very significant and pivotal in

the metamorphosis tales. It was the most significant occurrence that brought about plenty of transformations within the Mizo folk narratives.

4. Changes due to Misfortune: Some of the metamorphosis that can be seen in the Mizo folk narratives occurred due to some catastrophic misfortune faced by the people. They were metamorphosis which occurred, not due to ancestry or magical sorcery but, solely metamorphosis that occurred due to the immense fear or distress or anxiety that fell upon them. When humans are faced with such troubles and problems, it is often followed by changes in personality or moods, however, never a transformation into some other beings.

In the tales of the Mizo ancestors, there has been metamorphosis that had occurred due to tremendous and terrible hardships and distress faced by the people. In the tale of Rahtea, he had transformed into a *thereng* as he was in immensely terrified and distressed due to the fact that his life was threatened to be ended by his wicked mother. It was only in this way that he could escape from his death by undergoing the process of metamorphosis. In the tale of Lasiri leh Lasari, when Lasari saw that her elder sister was drowning in the water, she shouted with pain and anguish and she eventually transformed into an *uleuh*.

In the tale of Mauruangi, her mother was drowned and killed by her husband as he pushed her into the river. She then transformed herself into a *thaichhawninu* (a fish). This metamorphosis too happened as Mauruangi's mother underwent terrible and tremendous fear, frustration and pain. Even in the tale of Rairahtea, the giant snake that was chased down by the villagers had to transform itself into the size of a needle as it was fearful and scared of being captured and killed by the villagers.

Besides the tales that had been mentioned above, in close and careful observation the Mizo metamorphosis narratives can be classified into two major distinctions and divisions. They can be divided into hereditary or genetic metamorphosis and incidental metamorphosis. Hereditary or genetical metamorphosis: Most of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos are hereditary and genetical in nature that had been passed on through the genetics of their ancestry and previous generations. Some of the hereditary and genetic metamorphosis is the *keimi* tales - Kungawrhi, Hualtungamtawna and Lalruanga leh Keichala. This *keimi* metamorphosis occurred due to the genetics which had been passed down for generations and will likely to continue for the next generation as well.

Besides the *keimi* tales, there are various other metamorphosis tales that occurred at the genetical level. In the tale of Laizawn Paruk, the beings from the skies could transform themselves into whatever they wanted. The same can be said for Thangsira and Thangzia in their tale as the brothers could shape shift whenever they felt like it. Lasiri and Lasari too could change themselves while changing the brothers. They transformed to *dar benvawn*, large water bodies and brass ladder which indicated that their metamorphosis was possibly hereditary in nature.

In the tale of Chhawnlaihawih, their youngest sibling transformed into a dove. Rairahtea's tale had instances within the tale where an old man shape shifted to a deer and another instance where a spirit transformed into a tiger. In this instance, a supernatural event can be witnessed in the context of the spirit which too could be categorized into the category of the hereditary metamorphosis.

Incidental Metamorphosis: In the Mizo folk narratives there are plenty of metamorphosis tales that occurred not out of hereditary or that was genetical in nature. There is metamorphosis that occurred due some kind of unexpected and unexplainable incident that happened to the people though the main reason was never highlighted within the narratives. Though the metamorphosis that took place in the after-life too is an unexpected incident and can be clubbed under the incidental metamorphosis, it shall, however, not be included into this category as the metamorphosis that occurred took place out of the realm of this world. Apart from the metamorphosis that was through hereditary and genetically, those metamorphosis tales that dealt with transformations that took place due to some incidental event are described below.

The first tales among these metamorphosis tales is the *Thimzin* tales. As all the living beings on this earth were living their normal existence there was a sudden complete darkness which enveloped the whole world completely. This caused metamorphosis among all the living creatures on earth. They lose all their identity and transformed into an entirely different species - the humans transformed into animals, birds, insects, *taumerchherchhi*, and many other different species or objects. Besides this, according to some of the star myths like *Khiangte Zawng Zim*, *Chhohreivung*, *Dingdi Puan Tah*, *Zangkhua* and *Si Kawi Kap* these stars and constellations were all transformed into stars and constellations during the occurrence of the *Thimzin* tales.

In the tale of *Mauruangi*, her mother transformed into a fish and a tree which is incidental and not through genetics or hereditary. In the tale of *Tumchhing* leh *Raldawna*, *Tumchhing* transformed into a mango as she was vomited out again by *Phungpuinu* after she had eaten and swallowed her. This metamorphosis that

Tumchhingi underwent too was not inherited through ancestry but due to some mysterious unforeseen incident. In the tale of Unau Fanghma To Zawng, the elder of the siblings had lost his big toe which had later transformed into a *pasawntlung*. The reason behind its transformation is unclear and remains a mystery although what is clear is that the transformation that had occurred was not a genetical metamorphosis. In the tale of Lasiri leh Lasari, Lasari shouted and screamed in fear and distress as her sister was drowning and she eventually transformed into an *uleuh* (i.e. cicada). This metamorphosis too was not done willingly and occurred not magically or genetically but due to some mysterious incident. Besides, in the tale of Rahtea, he transformed into a *thereng* (i.e. cicada) due to his immense fear which too can be classified under the category in the incidental metamorphosis.

In the tale of Pafa Hruai Bo the elder of the two siblings changed into a *vapual* after swallowing its egg. He did not have any magic that enabled him to transform into the bird. It was only due to some unexplainable incident that he was transformed. In the tale of Hlawndawhthanga, the brother shape shifted into a tiger after drinking some mysterious water from the bark of a tree which too is an incidental metamorphosis and not a hereditary and genetic metamorphosis.

Therefore, from the following tales that had been mentioned above, it is clearly known that a number of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives are not hereditary or genetic in nature but rather metamorphosis that occurred due to some unforeseen incident.

This chapter dwells and focuses on the divisions of the many categories of the metamorphosis that exist within the Mizo folk narratives. What is obvious from this

chapter is that the metamorphosis within the Mizo metamorphosis tales is all complete transformations. There are various categories mentioned in this chapter - *Thimzin* transformations, Therianthropy, after death transformations, hereditary and genetic transformations, and incidental transformations, magical transformations, distress transformations as well as reincarnations metamorphosis and also elements of metamorphosis which has the element of escapist mechanisms in it. What is clearly evident from the different categories that this chapter has highlighted is that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos contain different characteristics having their own uniqueness as there existed different kinds of transformations which vary from one another from tales to tales.

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CHAPTER - 3

Characteristics of Metamorphosis in Mizo folk narratives

Any form of literature always has a story or message behind it. It is not without fault if we are to claim that literature is largely based on the stories it tells. Drama, novel, short story, novella, and poetry all have their own stories to tell which the basis of literature is. These stories told through these narratives, at often times, need characters

to act them out. These characters within these narratives all have different personalities and characteristic traits just as the role each of them play differs.

In the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos, there are certainly different characters with each of the narratives who differ from each other in terms of certain locations and periods. Likewise, their significance and the role that they played are different. This chapter shall focus on these differences in characters within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

The characters within a narrative have their own terms based on their characteristic traits, personalities, importance, significance and the role that they played within. They are as follows:

- 1) Main character
- 2) Protagonist
- 3) Antagonist
- 4) Evil character
- 5) Round character
- 6) Flat character
- 7) Dynamic character
- 8) Major character
- 9) Minor character

Besides the ones that have been mentioned above, there are a few side characters or irrelevant characters at times depending on the narratives. But all of them shall not be

mentioned in this chapter and concentrate only on the ones that have been mentioned earlier.

As far as literature is concerned, drama and stories are the genres which can be said to contain the most number of characters within the narrative. The characters are the medium through which the stories and dramas tend to portray their messages while acting as a means to make them interesting and noteworthy to be read and understood and appreciated.

Some of the most common and important characters are described in detail as follows:

1. Main Character: These characters are the major and most influential characters that play the most important part in any narrative.

2. Protagonist: These characters are somewhat similar to main characters. They are the most relevant characters in a narrative. They are not necessarily the good-natured characters.

3. Antagonist: They are the exact opposite of the protagonists and act in contrast to the protagonists causing trouble or problems for the protagonists.

4. Evil character: These characters are the ones who cause mischief, problems, and are the evil doers in a narrative. They usually are evil in nature, cruel, and wicked having no single consideration for others besides themselves.

5. Round character: These characters are the ones who are capable of change and also capable of accepting change as well. They usually undergo a development or

change in their attitude or personality in the end of the narratives they are portrayed. They are also known as dynamic character.

6. Flat character: These characters do not undergo any type of change or development in their personalities whatsoever under any circumstances throughout the narratives that they are portrayed in. Their personalities or behavior remain unchanged neither in the positive nor the negative manner and have a rather single handed characteristics nature. They are also known as static character.

7. Major character: These characters are the ones who play a major and important role or function within the narratives that they exist.

8. Minor character: They are the characters who do not play such a major or important role in the narrative that they exist. However, their existence is necessary for the plot to progress further however small their role or presence may be.

9. Focal character: They are the characters who are neither the protagonists nor the main characters but who the audience or readers feel deeply attached to having developed a feeling of identifying with such characters.

Besides the ones that have been mentioned above, there are other more minor characters within a narrative that does not have a specific role and have no much importance or relevance to the plot of a narrative. However, they shall not be mentioned in this chapter. Just as the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives are all different, so does the character within them differ as well. As metamorphosis occurred in these tales, there are characters that have more than one personality. Some of the

metamorphosis characters that can be seen within the Mizo folk narratives are as follows:

Keimi character: These characters can be classified under the round/dynamic character. It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that the *keimi* characters can be said to be one of the most popular characters with regards to the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos. It would not be wrong to make a statement that the *keimi* characters that can be found within the narratives are more or less likely the same in terms of their characteristics. They have two characteristics - their human behavior and animalistic behavior. They retained their humanistic characteristics when they are in their human form and their animalistic behaviors are all gone. However, as they were not fully human, they do not feel completely secure or comfortable with their human peers who make them draw back from the society, at least psychologically, though their draw back may sometimes not be shown outwardly or externally in their behavior or appearances. The instance where they lived like humans among humans can be seen in the tales like Kungawrhi, Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna, and Hlawndawhthanga. In the tale of Lalruanga leh Keichala, there was an instance where Keichala was introduced to the parents of Lalruanga.

Besides this, it is evident from the tales that there was never any sort of miscommunication or misunderstanding between the two species especially in terms of traditional practices. This can be seen in the tales of Kungawrhi and Hualtungamtawna where there was an inter-marriage between the two species:

Once, Keimingi's parents said to her "go to Hualtungamtawna and if he ask 'where are you from?' tell this to him 'I am a poor women with no place to go wandering around. I would be very glad if i had someone to marry me'. If he said 'yes' you should reply 'yes' too. Then, Keimingi went as she was told to do so. Hualtungamtawna felt that she was very beautiful and pretty and asked him or her. Then, Keimingi did as she was told to do. (23).

However, it has to be noted that the *keimi* although having had their humanistic nature or personality. Still had their animalistic nature which manifested again when they transformed back to their animal form. This transition of their behavior to their respective form can be witnessed in all of the metamorphosis tales of the *keimi*. They had no more humanity and retained all of their animal nature, instinct and behavior when they revert back to their animal form. The *keimi* brothers, Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers often killed and ate the livestock of the villagers. Likewise, in the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala, the villagers of Keichala killed the younger brother of Lalruanga. Similar to the novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by R.L. Stevenson, the *keimi* seemed to have two character traits - that of their human characteristics and animal characteristics as can be witnessed from the *keimi* tales that have been mentioned. As there is a constant and repetitive reversal of their physical form, they continuously undergo a change in their characteristics. Due to this reason, the *keimi* characters can be classified under the category of the round characters.

Flat character: These characters are the ones who have a rather definite characteristic that do not undergo any kind of change or development in their characteristics. These flat characters can be most commonly found within the romance

tales of the Mizo narratives. Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana is a tale about two lovers who were unconditionally in love with each other which they kept alive even amidst many enemies and persons who wanted them separated. They were not bothered about having had a bad reputation and their love for each other could not be ended even when both of them passed away. This love and romance that they had was still enjoyed by them even in the after-life. As their souls transformed into the stars they are said to still continue to show their love and affection for each other by continuing to woe each other in the skies.

Likewise, the tale of Tlingi leh Ngama tells the story of two lovers whose love remained strong as both of them did not change the love they had for each other. Even when Tlingi had passed away, her lover Ngama had crossed over to the world of the dead which was thought to be impossible for a living being. They eventually lived happily together when Ngama joined her in the after-life. This alone clearly portrays their undying or unchanging characteristics they had for each other especially in terms of romantic feelings as their love and affection could last for eternity.

Similar instance can be seen in the tale of Zawlpala leh Tualvungi as the couple's love for each other could not be ended even by death. It was evident that love could flourish even beyond the world of the living and even transcended into the world of the dead. This can be clearly seen as they both transformed into butterflies after their death and continued to live happily and lovingly, having unchanged love and affection for each other.

In the tale of Ngaitei, the flat character of Ngaitei's father is seen with his unchanging characteristics. This was because her father's love for Ngaitei could clearly be seen to be unchanged as her father continued to long for her and missed her deeply. His soul that had transformed into a snake did whatever he could so his daughter could be with him one more time which had caused an unfortunate but yet devastating flood in their village. This depicted the deep love that a parent has for his child and the undying love of Ngaitei's father for his beloved daughter.

Main character: Most of the character that underwent metamorphosis in the Mizo folk narratives was mostly the main character within their own tales. Tales like Rahtea, Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana, Tualvungi leh Zawlpala, Unau Fanghma To Zawng, different Star myths, Hlawndawhthang and other various metamorphosis tales have the names of the main character as the name of their respective tales as they were the ones who were most pivotal within their tales and was largely focused upon them.

Major character: Like what had been mentioned earlier, the characters that underwent metamorphosis are the major characters within their respective narratives. Therefore, they can be categorized under the list of major characters.

Evil character: The metamorphosis contains plenty of evil characters within the Mizo folk narratives. The most common evil characters that can be mentioned are the four *keimi* tales that had been mentioned earlier. They cause unrest, panic and terrible disturbances in the village and among the villagers as well as the livestock. Thus, they can be said to be the most noticeable evil characters of the metamorphosis tales.

In the tale of Tualvungi leh Zawlpala, there was a character called Phuntiha who was an evil character. She was a character who was fully self engrossed and a complete narcissist who had no consideration for others. He did not bother to plant on killing Zawlpala who he thought got in his way of his lover and he eventually succeeded in killing him finally. Thus, he could be categorized under the evil characters as he was extremely cruel and selfish.

Besides, the ones that had been mentioned, there are plenty of other evil characters that exist within the metamorphosis tales. In the tale of Mauruangi, the evil character was Mauruangi's father who had drowned his wife by pushing her into the water, Phungpuinu in the tale of Tumchhingi leh Raldawna, the parents who left behind their children to die inside the pitch in the middle of the forest to die in the tale of Pafa Hruai Bo, the step-mother who attempted to kill her son in the tale of Rahtea are some of the evil characters that existed within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

Antagonist and Protagonist: These types of characters are abundantly found within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives. The characters that underwent metamorphosis within these tales are usually either the protagonist or the antagonist within their own tales. In the category of the main characters are plenty of protagonists. However, some antagonists are the main characters themselves. One of the most common antagonists is the *keimi* characters. The reason for this is that they usually caused panic, unrest and anxiety in the tales that they are mentioned and are portrayed as the main antagonist of each of their tales. Moreover, Phuntiha was also the antagonist in

the tale of Tualvungi and Zawlpala. The characters that have been mentioned above are the most popular antagonists of the metamorphosis tales.

There are plenty of protagonists as well within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives. Some of them are Rahtea, Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana, Tualvungi and Zawlpala, the siblings in the tale Unau Fanghma To Zawng, various star myths, Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers. In some cases, they might not be the protagonists; however, the characters that underwent metamorphosis nevertheless played a major role in the tales that they have been mentioned.

Different types of terrible occurrences, troubles, problems, deaths and even extreme romances are among the common themes that can be found within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives. There seemed to be no tales without any form of problems as most of them deal with hopelessness and being extremely terrified which was the exact result and effect of the metamorphosis that took place within each narrative. The sudden transformation of a normal human being into another living being, especially that of animal, was already in itself shockingly traumatic such that what follows this occurrence was obviously panic and unrest, fear and restlessness in the community among the people. Thus, it can be safe to say that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives had no ordinary or natural plot as it was filled with unrest, panic, fear, terror. They were always rather interesting and intriguing narratives while at the same time being extremely terrific in nature throughout the tales.

Some form of curse followed the metamorphosis occurrence: The metamorphosis that occurred within the Mizo narratives had different kinds of messages

and themes. Some metamorphosis that had occurred was followed by some form of curse and evil. This was evident from the *keimi* as their presence had caused civil unrest, panic, terror, fright and even death among the villagers. Likewise, the *thimzin* event could also be said to be a kind of curse that had befallen upon the society as it changed the course of the entire Mizo history henceforth. It brought many sufferings, pain, anguish and unrest among the people which can be said to be another form of curse. One of the most noteworthy influences of the *thimzin* event was that it brought into existence the myths of the stars within the Mizo narratives. The origin of the stars in the Mizo folk narratives can be traced from the *thimzin* tales who could not be left out in the significance of the *thimzin* tales. Besides, Ngaitei's father in Ngaitei's tale had also caused a huge devastating flood which can also be said to be another form of curse that befell the villagers.

Romance: Some of the metamorphosis tales are about the deep and satisfying romances that existed lovers in the tales. This clearly depicted the strong bond of love, affection and friendship that can be found among men as they could not be ended even by death as it continued to thrive and exist even when death befell the lovers. These deep and affectionate romances can be found in tales like Tualvungi leh Zawlpala, Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana, Tlingi leh Ngama. In these tales, their love transcend even the world of the living and continued to exist even in the after-life as it depicted their metamorphosis in the next world. Thus, it all clearly highlighted the strong love and affection, the loyalty and admiration they had for each other while being very interesting and fascinating at the same time.

Sky-beings: There are a number of tales where beings from the sky (sky-beings) were mentioned in the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives. Mostly, these beings were depicted as having some form of superiority and supremacy over the human beings. These beings that were mentioned in the metamorphosis tales can be seen in tales like *Lasiri leh Lasari*, *Laizawn Paruk* and *Tumchhingi leh Raldawna*. *Lasiri* and *Lasari* were very beautiful and good looking sky-beings just as *Tumchhingi* was in her tale. Most of the female sky-beings were described as extremely good-looking even in the non-metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives. In the tale of *Laizawn Paruk*, the male sky-beings were described to have shape-shifting ability that enabled them to transform into birds, storms, heavy rains, and fires. *Tumchhingi*, in her tales, shape-shifted to a mango tree when *Phungpuinu* puked her out, after swallowing her alive. Readers even witnessed that *Lasari* too had transformed into an *uleuh*. The Mizos had not only believed that beings in the sky had existed but moreover believed that they were superior to men which can be clearly seen from the way the sky-beings were portrayed within their narratives. This clearly showed their belief in the existence of beings that looked like humans, but were superior to them that often made contact with them at times.

Step-mother: The step-mothers that were portrayed within any form of Mizo folk narratives of any genre were always depicted as wicked, cruel, and evil and can all be described as an evil character in all the tales that they have been mentioned. They were often depicted as devising and formulating a plan to kill their step-children. Even if such extreme measures were not taken, they were always shown to be hostile and bitter towards their step-children. The wickedness of step-mother is always correlative and

correspondent to the extremely poor condition of a step-child. Examples of this can be seen in tales like Pafa Hruai Bo, Rahtea, Rairahtea and Mauruangi where the pitiful condition of these children were clearly depicted along with the depiction of the cruelty and wickedness of the step-mothers and the harsh conditions of having to live with them. Though it could not be clearly pinpointed why there were number of these kinds of depictions, it was clear that the Mizos had a very clear understanding of the human life in general.

Thus, they used these kinds of narratives, though without full disclosure, to warn against the dangers of having illegitimate children. Therefore, it could be said that with censorship, the Mizos formulated these kinds of narratives to undermine and reduce the number of orphans in the community.

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CHAPTER - 4

The Impact of Metamorphosis in Mizo Society

The instances of the metamorphosis that can be seen in the tales of the Mizos have many impacts in the society. With reference to the time these narratives originated, the metamorphosis tales can be said to have one of the greatest impacts on the Mizo society in general. Moreover, the transformation of a human being into another species is already out of the ordinary in a sense. Since that is the case, the metamorphosis of a man into that of another species absolutely had had its impact on the society without a doubt. One of the many reasons for this is that, during the time setting of the tales, it can be known with certainty that there would not have been many dwellers in a village. Some villages are so small that all of the villagers were well accustomed to one another apart from the young children. Due to the villagers knowing each other well, what had happened to one of their members was quite well known and easily spread throughout the village. Besides, looking back into the lifestyles and daily habits of the villagers during that time, there was complete transparency with one another, with their neighbors and the whole villagers as well. This was why the villagers were quite aware of each other even to small details like getting sick to details of one's death and other news. This was why any extra ordinary event or things that had happened spread quickly throughout the village easily.

In the Mizo ancestral practices and customs, evil spirits known as *huai* were extremely feared. The *huai* were believed to have had some kinds of evil power causing

tragedies and disasters upon men; they were believed to be being sole bringer of bad omens and curses over men. Due to this strong belief system of the supernatural evil spirits, the Mizos lived in constant fear of them. They had lived their lives in such a way to avoid angering them, as to anger them was believed to be cursed with their wrath. Any incident that was out of the ordinary was believed to be supposedly caused by the evil spirits, as they strongly believed that the *huai* lived in places and locations that are out of the ordinary. Due to this, the Mizos had often offered sacrifices and ceremonies to appease the *huai* which was considered sacred and was performed with utmost seriousness. When any kind of metamorphosis had occurred in their village, it can be known that the villagers would have been living in constant restlessness and fear stricken atmosphere would have had grabbed the whole, but small community.

There are numerous Mizo folk narratives which had an element of metamorphosis. These narratives of metamorphosis had had different impact on the society which shall be highlighted in detail hereafter:

Grief and Anguish: Among the Mizo folk narratives which had an element of metamorphosis, there are various underlying motifs - among the first and the most noticeable of them all would be grief and anguish which was suffered by the people alike. In the tales of metamorphosis that the Mizo ancestors had, it can be safe to say that almost all of the tales had the theme of grief and anguish on a large scale in them. The societies always get affected by the metamorphosis that had happen which definitely caused great distress, torment, misery and suffering among the people.

First of all, focus shall be given on the metamorphosis tales that deals with the mythical *keimi*. In the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala, it can be seen that due to the presence of a *keimi* at their jhum, the villagers were scared to go to their fields and were fear-stricken and avoided going to work in the jungle. The main activity and mode of daily bread for the Mizo ancestors was to go to their fields. But, due to the *keimi* at the jungle, they could not attend to their daily source of food which is at their jhum. As they could not cultivate their fields, their plants and rice could not produce enough source of food for them which caused a serious problem for the whole villagers.

In the tale of Kungawrhi, readers can witness the fright and distress that an old woman had faced when she saw a *keimi* which made her ran home in fear. She then later told Kungawrhi's father about what had happened who decided to bring her back. He promised to give away Kungawrhi's hand in marriage for free if they could return her to him. This news that he had declared spread throughout the whole village. Two brothers, Phawthira and Hrangchala then volunteered to go on a mission to rescue Kungawrhi. From these instances, it is clear that the whole community in the village were troubled and terrified as soon as they had learned that Kungawrhi's husband was a *keimi*.

Even in the tale of Hualtungamtawna, when his wife Keimingi was discovered that she was a *keimi* all along, complications followed. Even the *khuangchawi* which had always been celebrated and organized with enthusiasm and merriment had to be organized with acute sense of uneasiness and vexation. It was at this ceremony that Hualtungamtawna tried to shoot his wife Keimingi, which fortunately was unsuccessful. Even though the *khuangchawi* event was one of the most revered and taken with much seriousness among the Mizo cultural celebration, the fact that there was an assassination

attempt and a gun being shot at such an important event clearly demonstrated how the effects of metamorphosis (the presence of *keimi* in this case) traumatized, disturbed and brought terror and agitation among the people within the community.

In the tale of Hlawndawhthanga, when the three brothers of Hlawndawhthanga mysteriously transformed into tigers, their families along with the whole community was immediately filled with terror and fear. The whole villagers abandoned their daily works and duties started to look for the three brothers for three days straight. They were hoping to at least find and recover the corpses of three brothers who did not return from the jungle while also searching for the tigers that was reported to have roamed the jungles. The three brothers who had undergone metamorphosis caused serious problems in the village as they started to prey on the domesticated animals of the villagers. It is clear that the village was filled with distress and fear of the tigers as they could no longer attend to their works in the jungle.

Hence, from these, it can be surmised that the *keimi* in the folk narratives of the Mizos caused grief and anguish among the people as the occurrence of metamorphosis which leads to the presence of *keimi* correlates to the people suffering and living their lives in hardships filled with restlessness and fear.

In the tale of Ngaitei, readers can see that the soul of Ngaiteii's father had transformed into a snake. The snake had missed and longed for Ngaiteii so much so that it had caused a big flood which almost emerged the whole village in the water. It can be understood that the loneliness of Ngaiteii's father causing the flood had cause great misery and loss for the people of the village. Mizo narratives had seldom the appearance

or the mention of any kind of flood which makes the tale of Ngaitei one of a kind and noteworthy. In addition to that, in the tale of Tumchhingi and Raldawna, readers can see that the ogre named Phungpuinu caused immense confusion and bafflement among the people.

There was complete chaos and disorder in the community especially in the tale of *thimzin*. As all the leaders of the village had turned into a flock of *vakul*, it was clear that there would have been mayhem and madness which filled and occupied the whole of the community. This was not the only incident, but some of the people turning into several monkeys would have brought a huge commotion and disruption in the community. Besides this, the *thangchhuah pa* who were considered as the greatest and the most honorable of all the people of the community too were not exempted from the metamorphosis that had happened. Since they have metamorphosed into tigers, it could be clearly known with certainty that the community was no longer safe and peaceful; the whole people of the village would be full of fear and dread. Even the young men who were playing wrestling suddenly changed into bears. This added to the panic and terror of the villagers as the young men played very important roles in maintaining peace and comfort in any village. As the young men had turned into fearful bears, the community was in complete fear and all kinds of maintaining ordinary lifestyle were out of the question, and were no longer possible at any point.

The young men and women working at the fields metamorphosed into a flock of *ko-ro*. The young men and women having turned to birds inevitably caused great loss and complication not only in the community but to their own relatives who remained to be human. The people who carried torches transformed to fireflies. Seeing and

witnessing all these problems and transformation happening suddenly within the community, the people who were left untransformed suffered from immense trauma as their brothers, sister, fathers and daughters, families were transformed into different animals. Besides, one of the biggest problems and troubles comes when a whole clan transformed into animals. The Chawngthu clan changed to monkeys, Vangchhe clan to elephants, Paite and Vuite clan to *chepa*, and the Ralte clan to *chepchep*. When a whole clan transformed into animals and birds, it was clear that the other clans would have lived constant and never-ending in fear and uneasiness. It can be the community life and activity would never be the same, ever again. On top of all of these, the remaining people who did not transform into animals lived in perpetual discomfort and anxiety, living their lives in constant traumatic stress as they had to deal with their post traumatic stresses and the many disorders that follow. They were scarred, hurt and haunted for the rest of their lives, not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually as well.

The domesticated animals too were not exempted from this state of metamorphosis during the *thimzin*. Their transformation into several birds and other animals unavoidably led to economic crisis within the community. The community needed a long period of time to recover and recuperate from the trauma and suffering that they had witnessed on a large scale, and the time factor needed for them to reclaim normalcy is quite uncertain. This is why it could be said with clarity and certainty that the metamorphosis that had happened in the community as seen in the narratives of the Mizos had undoubtedly a negative impact which had caused great suffering, pain, grief and anguish among the people of the community.

The impact on food supplies: In the Mizo folk narratives that had an element of metamorphosis in them, readers can see that there was a negative impact on the food supplies when people changed to animals. First of all, in the *Thimzin* tales (which arguably contributes most of the metamorphosis tales), it is clear that the transition that had happened due to the long and unusual solar eclipse had a clearly negative impact on the food supplies of the community. As the chiefs and the leaders of the community had turned into birds, this directly impacted the social administration and function of the community. There were no leaders to assign plots of land for the people to cultivate, which immediately affected the produce and yield of their fields. Besides, the domestic animals that the people had too were all turned to birds and animals. Due to this metamorphosis, their economy as well as food supply was immediately affected in the worse way possible.

Apart from this, the young men and women, the men who were playing wrestling, the *thangchhuah pa*, the torch bearers, Chawngthu clan, the Vangchhe clan, Paite clan, Vuite clan and Ralte clan were all metamorphosed into animals and birds. This adversely effected and had a negative impact on their families as they could no longer work to earn the food and consumption supplies for their families. Some families could no longer continue to look after their fields due to insufficiency; their family members were scattered and driven due to the metamorphosis that had happened. This was why it was evident that the whole community having lost its main workers had their food supplies stopped altogether, which in turn had a negative impact on their food supplies.

In the tale of Ngaitei, when the soul of Ngaitei's father turned into a snake, it caused a huge flood as it had missed and longed for Ngaitei. The flood which was never seen before was such a big flood that it had almost submerged the whole of the village. It is clear that the flood would have destroyed the plants and crops of the whole village. Their livestock, properties and life savings were all destroyed by the destructive flood. This had caused huge problems in terms of their food supplies and commodities. Hence, it can be concluded that in the tale of Ngaitei, the flood which had happened due to the effect of the metamorphosis caused and yielded a negative impact on the food supplies of the community.

In the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala and the tale of Hlawndawhthanga, readers can see the presence of a *keimi* at the fields of the people of the community which made them scared and unable to attend to their fields. The main and basic source of food supplies for the ancestral Mizos was their fields which yielded food for them. Due to the presence of a *keimi* at their fields whatsoever, they could not attend to their fields which adversely affected their daily works and activities in their fields which resulted in less harvest from their fields. Thus, it is obvious that the presence of a *keimi* which was the result of a metamorphosis directly had an impact on the economy and surplus produce of their fields which directly affected their supply of food and commodities

In the tale of Tlingi and Ngama, readers can theorize that there were not enough food supplies in the world of the dead. It can be said that had faced difficulty in food supplies and none of the people in the world of the dead could be fat and they were all thin. This was because Tlingi's should only become fatter with fat and muscles only after Ngama had put some food in the grave of his deceased wife Tlingi. Readers can

clearly see that food needed to be supplied from the world of the living to the abode of the dead from the tale of Tlingi and Ngama.

Death follows: Death is depressing and heartbreaking for all human beings and other living creatures alike. It causes great suffering and pain to all who had to experience the loss of their loved ones. Especially in the Mizo community, the grief and heartache of the death of one of the members is deeply felt by the whole community. Whenever a person dies, whoever it might be, a serious and solemn funeral was held for a whole day, some even for a whole night depending on the time of death. Though everyone was engaged to work in their fields every day, nobody ever went to work but rather chose to respect the dead and console the family of the deceased. Death had a great impact on all humans and is very heartbreaking, especially among the Mizos as it affected the whole community.

The Metamorphosis tales that can be seen in the Mizo folk narratives commonly have the theme of death in them. A normal human being transforming into another form of living being is always followed by death. From here, it is clear that any type of incident that had happened and occurred which is out of the natural order and is out of the ordinary (metamorphosis into another species in this case) disrupts the natural order and is often followed by death.

1. In the Mizo folk narratives that deal with the presence of *keimi*, death is the common underlying motif that is found throughout the tales. There could never be any kind of long lasting peaceful and meaningful relationship and harmony between human species and the *keimi* species.

In the tale of Kungawrhi after they people had faced many problems and difficulties, Kungawrhi's husband who was later discovered to be a *keimi* was killed. In the story of Hualtungamtawna and Keimingi, readers learn that Hualtungamtawna met his death on the plan conspired by his wife Keimingi (who was a *keimi*).

Likewise, in the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala, though Keichala (a man) and Keichala (a *keimi*) were close friends at the beginning of the tale, it did not last till the end of the tale. From here, it is clear that any kind of harmonious friendship or relationship between a man and a *keimi* cannot be fruitful nor have a positive yield. The two friends who were very close and friendly with each other became worst of enemies, and Lalruanga eventually ended up in killing the latter. Death plays an important theme and motif even in the tale of Hlawndawhthanga. His two brothers - Laicherhnawma and Zahrama who had metamorphosed into *keimi* were gunned down and killed by the *pasal\ha* of their village. Not only was that, but a wicked stepmother of a young girl killed by Hlawndawhthanga, when he was in his transformed form, for the latter's protection. Eventually, Hlawndawhthanga himself was killed in the end of the tale. In all the Mizo folk narratives that have *keimi* in them, death follows it in the due course of time as mentioned in the above passages. It has to be noted that not only death follows these tales, but it mainly occurs in the *keimi* species, though there were some deaths of humans as well.

It can be concluded that in the tales concerning with *keimi*, the human species and the *keimi* species were not meant to live as spouses, as friends or as any other meaningful relationships. The reason for this is that in all the tales of Mizo narratives

that have *keimi* in them readers can see that there were enmity between the two main species and the occurrence of death as well, specifically on the *keimi* species.

Besides this, what can be seen in these tales is that the human species always overpower or over think the *keimi* species. Though the latter may sometimes be fearful and threatening to the people causing huge problems and sufferings for the humans, the human species in the Mizo folk narratives always become mightier than the *keimi* species. Though the Mizo ancestors believed that the *keimi* were mightier and feared them to the extreme, it always turned out that the human species came up on top of them and proved them that they are better and mightier which can be seen in the *keimi* tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

2. In the tale of Tlingi and Ngama, Ngama's wife Tlingi passed away much like both the main characters passed away in the tale of Tualvungi and Zawlpala. Moreover, in the tale of Tumchhingi and Raldawna, Tumchhingi was swallowed and killed by Phungpuinu who later met her death in the end of the tale. In the tale of Lasiri and Lasari, Lasiri too met her death. Rairahtea's tale too mentioned that Rengtea killed his sister when he learned that she had an affair with a *ramhuai*. Rengtea too was later killed by Phingnu and Phingpa at the end.

In the tale of Mauruangi, Mauruangi's father killed his wife by dumping her into the water. She then later metamorphosed into a fish. Much like this, the tale of Rahtea indicated that Rahtea lose his humanity and underwent metamorphosis and turned into a cicada. Moreover, in the tale of *thimzin*, several humans were seen transformed into different kinds of animals. This transformation of several humans into animals can be

assumed to be similar to death as they were no longer humans anymore. The reason for this is that they had no longer the characteristic or nature of a human being anymore. Therefore, they can be said that they met their death in terms of being a human. Besides this, in the tale of Ngaitei, readers can see that her father had passed away too. In the tale of Pafa Hruai Bo, the elder of the two siblings had turned into a *vapual*. All of these transformations are like that of death as they were no longer human anymore like the transformations that had happened in the *thimzin* era.

3. In the Mizo folk narratives that deal with the stars, it is known that the stars in the skies were not stars at the beginning but were once humans who had lived their lives on earth. Even in this Mizo folk narrative that deals with star myth, death once again was an important factor that can be seen. The tale of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana is one of the most popular star myths that the Mizos had. Even in this tale, both the main characters Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana passed away. The *Siruk* (Pleiades) tale too mention about the occurrence of death. *Chhohreivung* (Orion) tale talked about a man digging and hunting for a rat that was bitten and killed by a tiger. The *Zangkhua* (Great Bear) tale mentioned the death of Khawlawia. The tale of *Hrangkhupa selu* (Vega) too mentioned the death of a certain tiger and a gayal.

In the Mizo folk narratives, death is one of the most common themes throughout the metamorphosis tales though the reason for this still remains unclear. However, from this, what is certain and can be established is that the sudden change or metamorphosis that occurred in the lives of men usually brought about negative results rather than positive ones, and is closely associated with death. One of the most plausible reasons for this may be that metamorphosis defies the Creator. Metamorphosis brought to a shift in

life form, from one species to the other, and defies who and why the Divine Creator had planned creation initially. Since death is one of the most common and underlying part of metamorphosis tales in the Mizo folk narratives, it can be concluded that earth and the living beings in it should remain in place and in order just as how the Creator had created it in the first place. To meddle with the divine creation brings death and destruction; the forces or supernatural occurrences that led to metamorphosis is always followed by death in one way or another as it directly disobeyed the natural flow of life on earth.

Sympathy and Terror: In the Mizo folk narratives that contain elements of metamorphosis, there are varieties of elements of sympathy and terror within the countless tales, the element and theme of terror being more prevalent among the two. When a whole lot of their fellow men suddenly turned into different types of animals and birds, sympathy and terror enveloped the whole of the community. The people were surprised as well as shocked; they were all in a state of terror and immense fear. However, though this is the case, the ones who had lost their families and relatives suffered great loss and pain. They were filled with pity and sympathy for their families that had metamorphosed into different animals and birds. Therefore, it can be clearly seen that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo ancestors clearly had elements of sympathy and terror which encompass the community on a large and long scale.

In the tale of Kungawrhi, when an old woman saw that Kungawrhi's husband was a *keimi*, she was filled with fear and horror. She then hurried and ran home quickly to aware and informs the villagers about what she had witnessed. When she had reached the village, she was so scared and shocked that she fainted. R.L Thanmawia wrote

likewise: "... she was completely horrified, and she hurried home as fast as she could, she was filled with terror and fell into Kungawrhi's father, then she fainted" (85). Even in the tale of Hualtungamtawna, Hualtungamtawna's brother was horrified by Keimingi (*keimi*) who was the wife of the Hualtungamtawna. In the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala, all the people of the community did not dare to go to their respective fields due to the presence of Keichala (who was a *keimi*) in their fields. In the book *Mizo Thawnthu* by Nuchhungi & Pi Zirtiri, it is written thus: "Moreover, in those times *keimi* frequently used to roam around in the fields, this was why the people did not dare to go and work in their fields" (117). Accordingly, in the tale of Hlawndawhthanga, the villagers did not dare to attend to their fields. As the three brothers of Hlawndawhthanga drank mysterious water from a hollow wood and had metamorphosed into tigers, they usually roamed around in various villages threatening the peace of the villagers. Due to this, the villagers could not and dared not attend to their fields to work for their safety from the three tiger, who were in fact Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers who had turned into tigers.

In the tale of Tumchhingi and Raldawna, Tumchhingi was so scared and terrified of Phungpuinu that she gave in and sacrificed herself to the former. In the tale of Unau fanghma \o zawng, as the brothers were so scared of the enemy raiders, the elder brother had lost his toes in their flight from the enemies. In the tale of the pitiful Rahtea, Rahte's stepmother tried to eat Rahtea's liver and heart which drove him to run away into the woods as he was filled with fear and was terribly frightened by his stepmother. When Rahtea reached the forest, he had climbed up the *thingsiri* tree and decided not to get down anymore. Even when the villagers tried to ease his pain and tried to talk to him to

climb down from the tree, he refused to listen and obey them. He chose to remain in the tree, far from the reaches of his stepmother, as he rather chose to remain in the tree rather than meeting his stepmother who was in the village waiting to eat him. As Rahtea chose to remain in the tree as he was filled with fear and terror by his mother he had eventually metamorphosed into a cicada at a later point of time.

Besides the tales that have been mentioned, there are plenty elements of fear and played an important role in the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo ancestors. In the tale 'Laizawn paruk' (six sisters) there were instances where beings from the heavens raided a village, and transformed into fire. They first burned the house of an old woman, and later burned down the whole of the village. The immense fear and pain that would have been suffered by the villagers when their whole village got burned by a great and frightening fire from the skies could be clearly witnessed from these scenes.

In the metamorphosis tales of the *keimi* and the tales of the stars and constellations that the Mizo narratives shows that the people of the village would have lived their lives in fear and depressive state. It was much more so in the tales of the *keimi* as they were scary and fearful for the villagers as they were capable of harming them. In these tales, unless the *keimi* was killed, the people were restless and continued to live in fear and terror by the *keimi*'s presence. In the *thimzin* tales, it can be seen understood that the Mizo people living in the society would have been overcome by fear and panic. In plenty of the stars and constellations tales, readers can see the events and effects of the *thimzin*. These *thimzin* incidents and events brought a lot of fear and panic in the hearts of the community during that era. During this era, a lot of metamorphosis had happened among the people. But the changes and transformation that had happened

was in random. Nobody knew who or what and when metamorphosis was going to happen. As this was the case, the people were fear stricken and could not live their lives in peace anymore. They lived in constant fear and panic as they had no idea if or when they would be transformed. So, it can be safe to say that the people of the community during that era lived their lives in constant fear and uneasiness.

Though the element of fear can be seen throughout the metamorphosis tales, the element of sympathy and pity can be seen in the metamorphosis tales as well. In most of the Mizo metamorphosis tales, the main characters usually were in a pitiful and sympathetic situation where it becomes easy for the readers to sympathize with them. In the tale of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana, though there was a war between their two villages and raids often took place, the love between the two main characters grew ever strong. The love they had for each other remained strong though they were enemies; the hatred and enmity between the two villages could not put an end to their mutual love. Eventually, they were both killed by their fellow villagers when their relationship was discovered. Then, both their spirits metamorphosed into bright stars in the sky. The love and affection shared between the lovers though in times of war which ended in them meeting their death brought sympathy and pity for the two. It not only brought sympathy and pity for the other members of their village, but it also inevitably brought sympathy and pity for the readers of their stories.

In the tale of Lasiri and Lasari, readers can see that the lovers who were deeply in love with each other had to part ways due to a malicious sham and falsehood. Due to this, readers read this tale with sympathy and pity for the characters. In the tale of Mauruangi, Mauruangi's mother was pushed into a river by her husband. She later

metamorphosed into a fish. The state and emotional disturbances that Mauruangi had gone through, the troubles and problems that she had to face make the readers sympathetic towards her. In the tale, Mauruangi's mother who had turned into a fish was caught and her meat was distributed among the villagers. It was in this instance the element of violence can be seen. However, it must be noted that all of the villagers did not have the same mindset as there would probably had been some people who had sympathized Mauruangi and decided not to eat the meat of the fish. So it has to be noted that the tale of Mauruangi had been passed on by the Mizos with the element of sympathy and pity in them.

In the tale of Tlingi and Ngama, there are instances where a human being had an affair with another human being who had crossed over into the land of the dead. This passionate love that was shared between the living and the dead was sure to have brought sympathy and pity among the readers. In the tale of Tualvungi and Zawlpala, readers are introduced to two lovers who had powerful love for each other; so powerful that even death could not be ruined and shatter the love they had for each other. In the tale of Tumchhingi and Raldawna, the two were profoundly in love but was thwarted and hampered by Phungpuinu. Readers felt as much sympathy and pity for Tumchhingi as they hated and loathed Phungpuinu. In the tale of Unau Fanghma |o Zawng, the readers felt sympathy and pity for the elder brother when he had lost his toe while fleeing from the raiders.

In the tale of Rahtea, readers can witness that Rahtea had metamorphosed into a cicada as his metamorphosis was triggered by his immense fear and agony that he had of his stepmother. In the tale of Rairahtea, a father and a son had lost each other in the

woods. The tale of Pafa Hruai Bo is about two piteous and heart-touching siblings. As the younger brother was starving, the elder brother went in search for food. On finding some eggs of a *vapual*, he had miraculously metamorphosed into a *vapual*. From here, readers can be aware of what the trauma and distress the younger brother would have gone through. From the tales mentioned above, it can be fully understood that sympathetic feeling towards the less fortunate characters of the tales would be felt not only by the people and community within the tale itself. It is very much felt by the readers of the tales as well. Thus, it can be said that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives contain countless elements of sympathy and compassion in them.

In the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos, there are several elements of fear and terror within the narratives. Keeping the community lives of the Mizos into perspective, the presence of the elements of fear and terror within their narratives is no surprise at all. One of the main reasons for this could be the fact that the Mizos were religious as well as superstitious which they had considered as sacred and important part of their ritualistic practices and daily life as well. They believed that the evil spirits (*ramhuai*) to have more power and authority over the human beings. As they strongly believed that the evil spirits caused suffering and pain and calamities to the humans, they felt strong fear and detestation for the evil spirits. Due to this, they led a constant life of fear and uneasiness of the evil spirits. They believed that every large stones, rocks, rivers and waters, large trees and mountains had evil spirits dwelling in them. It was for this reason that they lived their lives in constant fear and fear of making the evil spirits angry for any matter.

It was for this reason that any sort of unnatural events or occurrences that had happened were believed to be related with the evil spirits. When they happened to find a skull of a dead monkey in the forest, they did not dare to cultivate it for their fields. They were fearful and intimidated by tree roots that had crossed over from one bank of a river to the other side. Likewise, they were fearful of the events and incidents that they considered to be out of the ordinary. They were very superstitious within and without of their homes, which guided their lives to being very cautious which made them lead a very careful and fearful lives. Even when twins were born, they considered it to be out of the ordinary. They never welcome them with kind words like “the children are so beautiful”, rather they would say thus “they are so *rpthlak (terrible)*”. They reason for this was that they believed them giving the twin babies warm welcoming words would anger the evil spirits who would take the lives of the new born twin babies. Thus, it is clearly evident that the Mizos had lots to be fearful and cautious about in any events or occurrence that was out of the ordinary.

Due to all of these factors, the Mizo ancestors had a firm believe that anything that was out of the ordinary had been associated with the evil spirits. This made them automatically detached and fearful of events and occurrences that are neither not considered to be normal and ordinary. Taking into consideration that the Mizos had strong superstitious beliefs that they had reached a point even when they were terrified of seeing the skull of a monkey in their fields, the Mizos cannot help but be scared and vigilant of the metamorphosis occurrences and tales as well. The metamorphosis of a species to that of entirely different species, the change of men to tiger and tiger to men, the sudden change of the people of the society during the *Thimzin*, the change of

Ngaitei's father into a giant snake which had caused a huge flood - taking all of these into consideration, it can be concluded that the Mizos would have lived a life of constant fear and restlessness taking into account their superstitious beliefs and their fear of *huai* and other significantly unnatural and extraordinary changes.

All of these changes and transformations were out of this world for them and they considered them to be extremely strange. Due to this, they could not help but imagined that it had been the works and doings of the evil spirits. Had they not been scared and terrified of these changes and transformations, it would have in turn been obnoxious and disagreeable considering the lives led by the Mizos during that period of time. The Mizo folk narratives that had the tales of metamorphosis embedded the feeling fear and terror among the people of the community during that time. Apart from the fear that had been implanted, the metamorphosis tales also had implemented the feeling of sympathy and pity among the people as well.

Impact on the psyche: The body and mind of each individual is strongly connected. This is why the things that are seen and experienced through the body continued to have an impact on the mind as well. This is why happiness and joy, sorrow and misery and even tears are all manifested through the prior experiences of the individual. The body and the mind are connected in such a way that physical harm or sorry directly affected the mind causing it to be in a depressive and anxious state. Likewise, when the mind undergo trauma or is in a depressive state, so does the body which corresponds to the mind and manifested in the suffering of the physical body.

When a person suffers from serious danger or went through traumatic experiences, when an unfortunate and disastrous event befall upon them, the person can have traumatic and even post-traumatic stress disorder at a later point of time in their lives. This can lead to the mind being deprived of what it had been, being fearful all the time which all can lead to the person being a little less than their normal selves. This had been experienced by many who had undergone traumatic and disastrous experiences. When taking the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos into consideration, it can be observed that the Mizos in general as well as personally would have undergone plenty of traumatic and harmful experiences. The disastrous event that had happened, the strange and mysterious activity that were out of this world that took place and all of the metamorphosis that had occurred in the Mizo tales would have greatly impacted the psyche of not only the ones who underwent transformation but even the ones who were not directly metamorphosized. It can be clearly considered that they would have gone through tremendous suffering and pain in their psyche causing them to have great psychological trauma and suffering.

It had been discussed earlier in detail how the presence of *keimi* had caused great fear and terror among the people of the community as seen in the *keimi* tales. In the tale of Lalruanga and Keichala, as well as the tale of Hlawndawhthanga, it had been shown that the presence of a tiger in the forest made the people fearful and frightened of going and attending to their fields. Incidents such as the *keimi* killing people and creating unrest among the people had often been seen in these tales. The social moral of the people during that time would have been greatly affected by such experiences which adversely affected and impacted the psyche of the people. They would have lived their

lives in constant fear and also being traumatized by the incidents which would have greatly impacted the mental health of each individual of the society.

Besides all of the mentioned tales, in the tale of Ngaitei, it can be clearly observed that the community would have suffered from great fear and restless nights having had immense anxiety as they had never suffered any kind flood before in their lifetime. In the tale of Unau Fanghma |o Zawng, the elder of the sibling lose his big toe as they were fleeing from the oncoming enemy raids. The fear of the enemies as well as the loss of the big toe would have caused them to suffer great psychological trauma. They would have asked themselves these questions: “would the enemy reach and enter the village?” living their lives in constant fear of the enemies. This would adversely have a negative impact on the mental health and psyche of the brothers causing them restless nights and days living in constant fear and terror.

Taking the tales of the stars and constellations as well as the *Thimzin* tale into consideration, it is evident that the people would have had suffered a great deal of mental disorder during and after those metamorphosis events. As the *Thimzin* event was something that was out of this world, and many strange and unexpected metamorphosis event took place among all of the living creatures, it would have been near impossible for the people to shake it off and move on easily from their traumatic experience. As many people underwent sudden and vigorous transformation all of a sudden, people of the community who were their families, relatives, neighbors, brothers and sisters and their close friends having metamorphosed into different beings had greatly impacted all of the people. Their changes and transformation in front of their eyes had adverse effect on their psyche would have a deep impact on the persons that underwent change as well

as the persons that did not undergo change as the sudden change that had occurred was greatly traumatic that the people could have fainted to the shock that they had suffered.

When some people encountered evil spirits or some supernatural event they lose their minds over their trauma. Likewise, when people suffered loss or grief or death, they lose their minds over their trauma and suffering. However, in the *Thimzin* tales, the events that took place was more traumatic, problematic or worse than what had been mentioned earlier as it had probably caused immense mental disorder and trauma to the people who were affected. It was considerably worse than death itself, the most troublesome and problematic as well as fearful of all disastrous events that could have occurred. Due to this, the people that would have suffered from mental illness and suffering after the *Thimzin* event was immeasurable. Many would have suffered from immense mental disorder and many people would have probably suffered from incurable mental stress and abnormality causing them to have abnormal lives. Therefore, the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives had had caused a deep mental impact on the psyche of the community the Mizos.

In the tale of Tlingi and Ngama, Ngama lose his mind over the death of Tlingi and frequently visited the grave of his lover. This had a tremendous effect on his physical and mental health which eventually caused him to be in a state where he was in a near-death situation. He was such in a desperate state and condition that he was able to spiritually visit his lover who was in the after-life. What is evident from what has been mentioned is that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives largely deal and consist of the element suffering and great loss which eventually led the characters to a state of mental disorder.

The main points and arguments that have been founded and dealt with in this chapter are: the wide and various effects and impact of the metamorphosis tales on the people of the Mizo community, with fear and terror being the common motifs underlying in these metamorphosis tales. The supernatural occurrences and transformation that had happened in the metamorphosis tales within the Mizo narratives brought different restlessness and disruption within the community on a large scale. Besides this, plenty of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos had elements of death in them as well. Death plays a crucial role in many of the metamorphosis tales within the Mizo narratives. Moreover, in the *keimi* tales, all of the *keimi* characters met their death in one way or the other in each of the tales which clearly tells that the *keimi* species and the human species were not meant to live and share the same life.

Not only these, but one of the most important conclusion and findings from the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos is that the changes and transformation that took place had deep negative impact on the financial and occupational problems among the people. Moreover, fear and panic as well as pity and sympathy could be found among the people of the metamorphosis tales. Lastly, besides their economic and physical health problems that the people had to go through, the mental health of the community within the metamorphosis tales were too greatly affected by the transformations that took place among their friends, families, relatives, neighbors and their loved ones.

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Conclusion:

Different tribes and cultures all over the world have different types of narratives and stories that have been handed down to them from their ancestor. These narratives vary differently in terms of tone, mood and morals. They have numerous relation and interconnection to the real issues and problems of life while at the same time there are various improbable and fanciful tales and narratives as well. As these tales are handed down orally their origin remain untraceable and unknown. Different cultures have their own differences and uniqueness all around the world as they have different origin. It is through these tales that one's cultural background, tastes and values are clearly known as they talk about different issues within the same cultural tales. These differences in each culture's stories and narratives are reflective of the similarities that each culture has with other culture from different parts of the world. However, these tales that had been passed down from generation to generation vary differently as some narratives have high improbability while some have high probability which enriches and reinforces the richness of the literature of the world. Due to differences in geographical location all around the world the narratives vary accordingly which in turn clearly denote one's cultural history, beliefs, customs and traditions of their respective culture.

It has been mentioned earlier that there are more than twenty folk narratives that deal with metamorphosis. The origin of these metamorphosis tales differ with each tales along with their own unique differences in their themes and narration. The fact that the Mizos had these numerous improbable tales clearly denotes the imaginations and fantasies that they had. Besides this, it also clearly denotes that they wanted to escape

from the realities of life that they had to face and endure in their lives and used these tales as a means of escape.

As these forms of metamorphosis tales can be seen throughout different cultures and literature all over the world, it is not a new element in the ambit of literature itself. In turn, it is believed to be more abundantly found in the literature of the more sophisticated cultures of the world. Some cultures even consider these tales as history rather than mere tales and fantasies. Thus, such is the relevance that metamorphosis tales has in relation to the literature of the world.

From the research that has been done, there are number of findings on the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives. Firstly, like many other cultures from around the world, there are number of metamorphosis tales within the Mizo folk narratives that have different morals and meanings behind them. They denote the psyche of the Mizo ancestors, belief systems, their hardships and turmoil and deaths. They also include the different aspects of hardships faced by the people like having to deal with the cruelties of step-mothers, the effects of extreme poverty and other unfortunate events including having split personalities or identities by a single person, where a being could transform to either a human or an animal; the strong belief in the presence of spiritual beings and supernatural beings, and the belief in the transformation of the soul into another being in the afterlife are some of the significant elements that can be found within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

Besides the ones that have been mentioned before, there are tales like the *thimzin* tales that clearly denoted the Mizos' belief of the occurrence of a catastrophic event that

covered the whole of the globe. An unexpected and unexplainable event that causes a lot of problems on earth was believed to have occurred from the metamorphosis tales.

Different people living in different parts of the world separated by different regions and geographical areas have one thing in common - that is the belief in the existence of an extraterrestrial life. Due to this, there are plenty of individuals and organizations dedicated to the findings and study of UFO's and aliens. With special reference to the tales that had existed, the Mizo ancestors themselves were aware of the existence of extraterrestrial life which they often termed as 'van mi' - meaning beings of the sky. They had tales about beings from the sky which included tales like 'Siruk', and 'Lasiri leh Lasari'. From this, it is evident that the Mizos believed in the existence of beings that were out of this world, who were extraterrestrials that often interact with the being of the world. They were believed to be overwhelmingly superior to men from the tales that they have been mentioned. However, unlike the modern aliens have been portrayed, the extraterrestrial beings in these tales seemed to have quite similar physical appearance to the human beings - having similarities in their voices and looks as well.

In most of these metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives, there are elements of death and suffering and can be said that it has a strong connection with the element of death and other calamities. Due to this, the Mizos held a firm belief that any kind of unnatural event or occurrences had a strong connection to bad luck and bad omen. This in turn led them to believe that all things that are found in nature and that which occurs naturally are as all things should be as can be witnessed from many of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos.

With reference to the narratives found in the metamorphosis tales, the Mizos seemed to have believed that the sufferings and hardships that was faced and endured by the people needed some kind of major external intervention. In some of the metamorphosis tales, it can be seen that there are instances where the process of metamorphosis seemed to be the only means of escape from their harsh realities and troubles that they had to deal with in their life. This can be seen in the tales like Rahtea as he was able to escape his step-mother's murder attempt on him only through his transformation into the insect cicada. When there are certain events that could not be solved and overcome through natural means, the Mizos believed that these could be solved only through unnatural means like the processes of metamorphosis.

Chapter two highlight many differences in metamorphosis tales that are found within the ambit of Mizo folk narratives. What this signifies is the differences in the origin of the tales along with the differences in their faith, beliefs and fantasies. Of the many different genres of metamorphosis, the first are the shape shifters - from man to animals and vice versa. These beings can be seen from the *keimi* tales. They posed a serious threat and imminent danger to the community and settlement of the humans. Though there were some instances of inter marriage between the species of the humans and the *keimi*, it never last long and is never a fruitful marriage as it always ultimately ends with the death of one of the species. The Mizos seemed to have quite a strong believe that the two species were not supposed to mingle and live in harmony with one another. Moreover, the form of therianthropy metamorphosis seemed to be hereditary in nature while there were some instances of shape shifting that occurred due to accidents as can be seen in the tales of Hlawndawhthanga.

In the selected tales, there are clear instances of the element of rebirth which can also be described as reincarnation. Some of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives deal with metamorphosis or the change to another form of being in the after-life which can be described as another form of reincarnation. This indicates that the Mizos too had believed in some kind of a form of reincarnation or rebirth which is strongly believed to have existed by various cultures all around the world. The Mizos had always been superstitious and believed in omens and could be said that their whole lives had been guided by their principles and beliefs in the superstitions as can be seen throughout history. Though such is the case that they were strongly guided by their religion and superstitions, the religion of the Mizos had no leanings to any kind of rebirth in their faith but rather a form of metamorphosis in the after-life. However, there can be seen some traces of the element of rebirth in their tales as well which makes it likely probable that the Mizos had some form of belief in a form of rebirth to some extent.

However, on the other hand, the form of rebirth or reincarnation that could be seen in the Mizo metamorphosis had nothing to do with their religious or superstitions beliefs as compared to other cultures around the world. They appear only in metamorphosis narratives as tales rather than having a strong religious belief in the actual existence of rebirth. Though it was not included into their religious beliefs, these types of metamorphosis existed within the gamut of their narratives. As tales are formed and came into existence from one's cultural imaginations and fantasies, it could be said that the Mizos had imagined about the existence of life after death.

The tales that deals with metamorphosis in the after-life portrayed these transformations to be a form of liberation when they had gone through their lifetime and began to live their lives in the after-life. This, in a sense, denoted the escapist mechanism that can be found in these type of metamorphosis tales. It has to be noted that most of the metamorphosis that had occurred within the Mizo narratives occurred as a means of escaping from the harsh realities that the people had to undergo. They act as the only means and ways to escape from certain sufferings, pains, anxieties, and so on which they were unable to escape from in the world of living. It is clear from these events in the tales that the Mizos were not completely satisfied with the realities that life had to offer. The hardships, turmoil and sufferings that one had to endure but cannot escape from in reality are made easier to deal. This is made possible by making up a dream or fantasy world where they could escape to make it a little more bearable and sufferable. Likewise, the metamorphosis tales that can be found within the Mizo narratives have a huge leaning to this form of escapism as they are used by the Mizos to project their fantasies to escape from their harsh realities into these metamorphosis tales.

The idea of wanting or desiring to escape from the realities and hardships of life can be found in quite a number of the metamorphosis of the Mizos. What this clearly denotes is that they had found reality extremely hard to deal with and had considered it a hardship, burden and hopeless at times. Thus, to escape from this, they had often idealized a mechanism of escape which manifested into the formation of these metamorphosis tales within their narratives. The tale of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana was two lovers who could not enjoy the love they had for each other due to the existing enmity between their respective villages. Thus, their only means to enjoy

their love was in the after-life or after being reincarnated into the stars where they could love freely in the skies away from all of their peers who wanted nothing but to hurt or kill each other. The same can be said for the couple Tualvungi and Zawlpala who loved and cared for each other very much but could not express the same. They had to leave the world of the living and escape by transforming into butterflies after their death which was only way that they could love affectionately. Likewise, there are several instances where the process of metamorphosis was employed as a means of freedom, escape or liberation from the harsh reality.

From these instances it is evident that the Mizos employed the technique of escapist mechanism into their metamorphosis tales. The Mizos had believed and fantasized that most of the problems and troubles and hardships that they had faced could not be solved and the only solution was to escape from them by idealizing a fantasy world. They believed that their hopes, dreams and desires could only be fulfilled by escaping into the world other than their own world and into their world of fantasy. This idealization and fantasy was deeply embedded and lodged into their psyche as it can be seen due to their abundant presence of the metamorphosis tales within their narratives.

These forms of escapist mechanisms were often portrayed in the form metamorphosis that occurred in the after-life. However, there were also other forms of metamorphosis that occurred in the after-life which were not necessarily an escapist mechanism. Some examples of this kind of narrative are the star myths where metamorphosis occurred in the after-life but were not in any form portrayed as a mechanism of escape. The occurrence of metamorphosis after death seemed to have

formed a large part of the imaginations and fascinations of the Mizos of the past as can be seen from the abundances of the after-life metamorphosis in their tales. According to the religious beliefs of the Mizos, only the spirits *thangchhuah* were supposedly able to enter into *pialral* after they had passed away. All the other spirits, besides the *thangchhuah*, will continue their existence in the abode of the dead (*mitthi khua*) which was strongly believed to be worse than the world of the living. Due to this particular belief of the harsh living condition of the *mitthi khua* they supposedly concocted and created a fantasy where they would transform into another being rather than having to continue their existence in the abode of the dead. Although this was not a part of their religious leanings and teachings, fantasizing and idealizing about a better existence in the after-life was a huge part of their desire which manifested and was displayed through their metamorphosis tales within the Mizo folk narratives.

The Mizos believed that there had been some unexplainable and unexpected events that had occurred multiple times that had caused major changes in the whole world. The metamorphosis tales that can be seen supports this as there are multiple changes that had occurred unexpected within the narratives. A clear instance that supports this claim can be seen in the tale of Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers as they suddenly shape shifted into tigers after they had drunk water from a tree trunk. Besides this, in the *thimzin* tales, many human beings transformed to another species. Not only were humans effected but also the other species were affected by the events of the *Thimzin*. From this, it is clear that the Mizos had believed that some of catastrophic calamities had occurred on a large scale that had completely changed the entire world. The event of the *thimzin* remains unexplainable and can even be considered to be some

sort of magical element. The Mizos had a firm belief that there was a strong external unnatural, yet unexplainable power that had an influence on the world which constantly causes different catastrophic changes on the humans on a global scale.

Besides this, the Mizos seemed to have a belief that humans were capable of undergoing some kind of transformation, both mentally and physically, when they were faced with very strong emotional pressure. When one is faced with certain difficult situations, hopelessness and restlessness one is capable of undergoing unexpected change in their psyche that enables them to be a completely different person having different mentality and personality as well. This is represented in the form of metamorphosis tales within the Mizo narratives in the tales like Rahtea who shapeshifted into a *thereng*, Lasari who transformed into an *uleuh* after both of them were extremely traumatised. The metamorphosis tales of the Mizos clearly indicate such circumstances where a person is capable of undergoing physical as well as mental change under such extremely difficult situations.

There are certain animal and human characters in the metamorphosis tales who have undergone transformation who continued to have the psyche and mentality of the species that they had shape shifted to. However, they retained their human psychology once they returned back to their former self. In the romance tales of the Mizo narratives, the existing romance between the lovers were always extremely immense which could not be altered even by death and continued to exist even in the after-life?

The beings or species that underwent metamorphosis in the Mizo narratives continued to have developed all the characteristic traits of the beings or species that they

had transformed to. Those that underwent transformation into plants, flowers or fruits continued to remain as plants, bearing fruits and flowers exactly as any plant or fruit, or tree would. Likewise those that underwent metamorphosis into natural weather continued their existence as the weather that they had transformed to performing their duties or functions as a natural weather would; the stars behaved like any other stars; the animals that underwent metamorphosis too acted and behaved as animals, and insects that they had transformed to. However, there are some instances where a few animal transformations continued to have the mental traits of their former selves as their former human psychological functions remained intact. These instances can be seen in the tales like Mauruangi where her mother who had shape shifted into a fish continued to love and care for her daughter even after her metamorphosis. Tumchhingi who had transformed into a mango tree was described to continue cooking for her ex husband Raldawna by transforming back into a human. Besides, Zawlpala and Tualvungi continued to love and share each other's affection for the love they had for each other in their life time even after their death. The constellations Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana are said to be still in love with each other and continue to woe each other even after their transformation into the stars. Thus, it can be concluded that there were various forms of metamorphosis where the transformed continued to carry on the physical and mental traits of the beings that they had transformed to as well as losing their mental traits completely.

Besides this, from the metamorphosis tales it can be seen that the changes that took place had an immense effect on the society. Firstly, it is the immeasurable distress and anxieties that was brought about by the metamorphosis that took place within the

society. When certain incidents such as shape shifting occurred suddenly in the society, chaos and disorder immediately followed it which had immense negative impact on the society. When the *thimzin* occurred, the society was in complete disarray as disruption and a huge commotion followed such incident. The reason for this was that even the chiefs and the leaders of the village too were all affected by the sudden change which left the village in a state of anarchy. Since even the young men of the village had turned into animals themselves, there was complete fear, restlessness and anxiety which enveloped the society at a large scale.

Likewise, fear and terror spread throughout the whole community in the tales of the *keimi*. Though it has been mentioned earlier that metamorphosis occurred due to immense terror, the opposite of it too took place as the metamorphosis that had occurred brought about immense terror, fear and fright among the community.

It has to be noted that the unexpected event of the metamorphosis had a great impact on the economic and food supply system of the Mizos. Ngaitei's father who had shapeshifted into a giant snake had caused a huge flood which almost submerged the whole village. Large amount of property, houses and livestock, and food stocks and many more valuable items and properties were destroyed on account of the flood. Moreover, besides the presence of the *keimi* causing panic and restlessness among the villagers, their livestock were used to be killed by the *keimi* as well which had greatly impacted the economy and food supply of the Mizo community.

One of the most difficult phases of life that one has to endure in his/her lifetime is probably death which is closely related to the metamorphosis tales as it can be seen in

almost all of them. As the Mizo society was a rather small community that took the occurrence of death rather seriously with full sincerity. It affected the whole community so much so that no work was ever done when some members of the community had passed away. It brought fear, pity, pain, suffering and tears among the members of the community as they all lived together as one big family. There could be seen plenty of death within the metamorphosis tales. This has stated that the metamorphosis that had occurred had deeply impacted and had an adverse effect on the Mizo society both within and without the physical and mental level.

Other than death, the metamorphosis that had occurred put great fear, restlessness, panic and distress among the people of the community. They lived their lives miserable and were in constant fear and terror which adversely impacted their psychological well being. There was restlessness and panic all around them both in their external as well as their internal psychological functions. From the tales of the *Thimzin* it can be imagined how the society would have reacted to such circumstances. They would have been panic and fear stricken and the level of distress that they had faced was unimaginable. Even though there were some people who did not shape shift, they were neither saved from distress and the mental effect such even had on them as they would have suffered severe post traumatic disorder. Such event was too much to handle and cope with for any person. Thus, the transformations that took place in these metamorphosis tales greatly impacted the society on a large scale as the members of the community were affected physically, mentally as well as psychologically.

In the metamorphosis tales, there are instances of trickery, cruelty of step-mothers, the poor condition of orphans, hatred, enmity, romance, immense trouble and

distress, war and death and murder, magical elements, poverty, jealousy, talking animals as well as death. An overview of the metamorphosis tales clearly indicate that there are more of negative effects of the transformations that took place as compared to the positive effects.

In the metamorphosis tales, the imaginations, fantasies and desires of the Mizos were clearly indicated within the narratives. They had believed in the existence of supernatural and unnatural occurrences, events that could not be controlled by man, the possibility of transforming oneself into another being under extreme circumstances and pressures, the existence of shape shifters, the existence of the abode of the dead as well as the occurrence reincarnation or rebirth, they believe in the existence of extraterrestrial beings, the incompatibility of the *keimi* and human species when it comes to living together as spouses, the occurrence of *thimzin* which brought about many transformations, the metamorphosis of humans into stars and constellations, the existence of immense love between lovers that continued to exist even after their death, the presence of evil and benevolent spirits and magical beings and magical elements all of which existed within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

What can be witnessed from the metamorphosis tales is that the Mizos highly valued living in harmony and happily with one another. There were lots of instances of terror, fright, troubles, deaths, poverty which clearly denoted the other side of this. The presence and occurrence of orphans, step-mother, and poverty aims to teach and highlight the dangers of broken family and acts as a warning and precautionary measures against the dangers of such. Thus, when events that are extraordinary or unnatural occur, they often lead to some kind of disaster or unwanted negativity among

the community which suffer from many troubles and problems. Thus, this in turn denotes the importance of living life normally and accordingly to the laws of nature and to abide by it naturally.

The Mizo folk narratives which largely deal with many metamorphosis tales clearly denote the fantasies, desires and wit of the Mizo ancestors highlight the traditional beliefs which add value to the narrative of the Mizos. This opens and paves the way for more in-depth research and analysis on these tales. The narratives of one's own culture give the importance and relevance of one's own culture. Likewise, the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos clearly enrich the Mizo literature to a very large extent. The literature of the world does not focus its interest only on the tales that occur naturally. It also gives special importance to the narratives that deals with unnatural occurrences which are valuable as well as extraordinarily beautiful. Thus, such kind of stories which emerge and got its existence from such the unnatural occurrences like the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives enrich the literature of the Mizos.

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in Mizo Folk Narratives

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF METAMORPHOSIS IN MIZO FOLK NARRATIVES

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A STUDY OF METAMORPHOSIS IN MIZO FOLK NARRATIVES

(Abstract)

This dissertation is about the study of metamorphosis seen in the tales of Mizo folk narratives. Alan Dundes stated that “The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of

people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is it could be a common occupation, language, or religion.” (n.p)

There is a number of metamorphosis in Mizo folk narratives. This dissertation is about the how the tales of metamorphosis has an impact on Mizo society, and is also about the study of different characters of metamorphosis and how they are related to the Mizo society.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The term metamorphosis is derived from the Greek word “*Metamorphoun*” which means ‘transform’ or ‘change shape.’ According to Joseph B. Solodow, Metamorphosis is,

A process by which characteristics of a person, essential or incidental, are given physical embodiments and so are rendered visible and manifest. Metamorphosis makes plain a person’s qualities, yet without passing judgment on them. It is and this constitutes a central paradox of the poem a change which preserves, an alteration which maintains identity, a change of form by which content becomes represented in form (174).

“Metamorphosis can mean a rapid transformation from one object to another or a distinct or even degenerative change in appearance, personality, condition, or function. The concept of metamorphosis is commonly used in pieces of literature to describe an extreme change in character or form.” (n.p)

From these definitions, we can say that metamorphosis is a changing form or a shifting shape of something for reasons or situations to create a new structure. It may be

the internal or external change, visible or invisible as well. It can be concluded that any change in the living organism or non-living organism which have changed it into something else by its nature or the situation.

According to the rich Mizo folk narratives, we have found various kinds of Metamorphosis such as *Thimzin thawnthu*, *Kungawrhi*, *Lalruanga leh Keichala*, *Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna*, *Hlawndawhthanga*, *Lawnglaili leh Zuntei nu*, *Ngaitei*, *Mauruangi*, *Rahtea*, *Rairahtea*, *Unau fanghma \o zawng*, *Tlingi leh Ngama*, *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi*, *Tumchhingi leh Raldawna*, *Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana*, *Lasiri leh Lasari*, *Thangsira leh Thangzaia*, *Siruk or Laizawn paruk thawnthu*, *Khiangte zawng zim*, *Chhohreivung*, *Dingdi puan tah*, *Zangkhuah*, *Hrangkhupa selu*, *Si kawi kap*, and *Pafa Hruai Bo*.

Chapter 2: Classification of Metamorphosis

In this chapter, we study about metamorphosis in Mizo folk narratives in which certain transformations took place i.e. Therianthropy, were tiger: their nature and their characters in a numbers of stories could be seen. There are a number of stories and tales which depicted the transformations of certain creatures. The stories could be seen that they are somewhat similar but not same. In this chapter, we also see that many transformations took place because of several reasons, one such transformations is due to *thimzin*. Also transformations could be due to after death change, which is the occurrence of metamorphosis of the soul. This after death change is also somehow related to reincarnation. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn in their book stated that “Reincarnation asserts that human persons after death are then embodied or re-incarnates in another body. This way of putting the matter implies that

there is some entity that is re-incarnate, something that carries over from life to life (640)".

This chapter also reflected on escapism which is an escape from the harsh reality of life.

This can also be seen from the statement by Warren L. Young as

Escapism is, as other coined words are, a value led term– this means that there has been attached to the word and ethical connotation, which, it seems has created a social stigma association. The social stigma appears when the word is used as a noun, or transformed into an adjective as escapist, or when used as the verb in the context of escapes from a situation by creating one which appears to the creator, before he has experienced it, to be better than that in which he finds himself. (377)

This chapter dwells and focuses on the divisions of the many categories of the metamorphosis that exist within the Mizo folk narratives. What is obvious from this chapter is that the metamorphosis within the Mizo metamorphosis tales is all complete transformations. There are various categories mentioned in this chapter – *Thimzin* transformations, Therianthropy, after death transformations, hereditary and genetic transformations, and incidental transformations, magical transformations, distress transformations as well as reincarnations metamorphosis and also elements of metamorphosis which has the element of escapist mechanisms in it. What is clearly evident from the different categories that this chapter has highlighted is that the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos contain different characteristics having their own

uniqueness as there is evidence that different kinds of transformations which vary from one another from tales to tales existed.

Chapter-3: Characteristics of Metamorphosis in Mizo Folk Narratives

This chapter is about the characteristics of metamorphosis and their significance in Mizo Folk Narratives. The characters within a narrative have their own terms based on their characteristic traits, personalities, importance, significance and the role that they played within. They are main character, protagonist, antagonist, evil character, round character, flat character Dynamic character, major character, and minor character. This chapter also highlighted about the conditions of orphans in Mizo society, and how they are treated in the worst possible manner, and also the impact of having a step-mother.

This chapter also highlighted about the nature of character of metamorphosis mentioned in certain tales. Metamorphosis usually has different unique characters depending on the role they played in different tales. Different roles played by different character of metamorphosis can be seen like round character, flat character, evil character, romantic character. They metamorphosis mentioned in the story are usually antagonist, protagonist, major character. The appearance of sky people can also be seen in a number of tales. Different roles played by different characters also tell us about how the story would progress. This characters of different metamorphosis mentioned in the story also tells us about how the ancestors of Mizos believed and lived in the society.

Chapter 4: The Impact of Metamorphosis in Mizo Society

The instances of the metamorphosis that can be seen in the tales of the Mizos have many impacts in the society. With reference to the time these narratives originated,

the metamorphosis tales can be said to have one of the greatest impacts on the Mizo society in general. Moreover, the transformation of a human being into another species is already out of the ordinary in a sense. Since that is the case, the metamorphosis of a man into that of another species absolutely had had its impact on the society without a doubt. One of the many reasons for this is that, during the time setting of the tales, it can be known with certainty that there would not have been many dwellers in a village. Some villages are so small that all of the villagers were well accustomed to one another apart from the young children. Due to the villagers knowing each other well, what had happened to one of their members was quite well known and easily spread throughout the village. Besides, looking back into the lifestyles and daily habits of the villagers during that time, there was complete transparency with one another, with their neighbors and the whole villagers as well. This was why the villagers were quite aware of each other even to small details like getting sick to details of one's death and other news. This was why any extra ordinary event or things that had happened spread quickly throughout the village easily.

In the Mizo ancestral practices and customs, evil spirits known as *huai* were extremely feared. The *huai* were believed to have had some kinds of evil power causing tragedies and disasters upon men; they were believed to be being sole bringer of bad omens and curses over men. Due to this strong belief system of the supernatural evil spirits, the Mizos lived in constant fear of them. They had lived their lives in such a way to avoid angering them, as to anger them was believed to be cursed with their wrath. Any incident that was out of the ordinary was believed to be supposedly caused by the evil spirits, as they strongly believed that the *huai* lived in places and locations that are

out of the ordinary. Due to this, the Mizos had often offered sacrifices and ceremonies to appease the *huai* which was considered sacred and was performed with utmost seriousness. When any kind of metamorphosis had occurred in their village, it can be known that the villagers would have been living in constant restlessness and fear stricken atmosphere would have had grabbed the whole, but small community.

In this chapter, the impact of metamorphosis in Mizo society can be clearly seen, some of the important events are- grief and anguish, impact of food supplies, death follows, sympathy and terror and the impact on psyche. In the context of metamorphosis, fear has a high impact on the story. This can be seen in the story of Kungawrhi by R.L Thanmawia likewise: "... she was completely horrified, and she hurried home as fast as she could, she was filled with terror and fell into Kungawrhi's father, then she fainted" (85). Also, in the book *Mizo Thawnthu* by Nuchhungi & Pi Zirtiri, it is thus written: "Moreover, in those times *keimi* frequently used to roam around in the fields, this was why the people did not dare to go and work in their fields" (117).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

From the research that has been done, there are plenty of findings that have been made on the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives. Firstly, like many other cultures from around the world, there are plenty of metamorphosis tales within the Mizo folk narratives that have different morals and meanings behind them. They denote the psyche of the Mizo ancestors, belief systems, their hardships and turmoil and deaths. They also include the different aspects of hardships faced by the people like having to

deal with the cruelties of step-mothers, the effects of extreme poverty and other unfortunate events including having split personalities or identities by a single person, where a being could transform to either a human or an animal; the strong belief in the presence of spiritual beings and supernatural beings, and the belief in the transformation of the soul into another being in the afterlife are some of the significant elements that can be found within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

Besides the ones that have been mentioned before, there are tales like the *thimzin* tales that clearly denoted the Mizos' belief of the occurrence of a catastrophic event that covered the whole of the globe. An unexpected and unexplainable event that causes a lot of problems on earth was believed to have occurred from the metamorphosis tales.

Different people living in different parts of the world separated by different regions and geographical areas have one thing in common – that is the belief in the existence of an extraterrestrial life. Due to this, there are plenty of individuals and organizations dedicated to the findings and study of UFO's and aliens. With special reference to the tales that had existed, the Mizo ancestors themselves were aware of the existence of extraterrestrial life which they often termed as 'van mi' – meaning beings of the sky. They had tales about beings from the sky which included tales like 'Siruk', and 'Lasiri leh Lasari'. From this, it is evident that the Mizos believed in the existence of beings that were out of this world, who were extraterrestrials that often interact with the being of the world. They were believed to be overwhelmingly superior to men from the tales that they have been mentioned. However, unlike the modern aliens have been portrayed, the extraterrestrial beings in these tales seemed to have quite similar physical appearance to the human beings – having similarities in their voices and looks as well.

In most of these metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives, there are elements of death and suffering and can be said that it has a strong connection with the element of death and other calamities. Due to this, the Mizos held a firm belief that any kind of unnatural event or occurrences had a strong connection to bad luck and bad omen. This in turn led them to believe that all things that are found in nature and that which occurs naturally are as all things should be as can be witnessed from many of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos.

With reference to the narratives found in the metamorphosis tales, the Mizos seemed to have believed that the sufferings and hardships that was faced and endured by the people needed some kind of major external intervention. In some of the metamorphosis tales, it can be seen that there are instances where the process of metamorphosis seemed to be the only means of escape from their harsh realities and troubles that they had to deal with in their life. This can be seen in the tales like Rahtea as he was able to escape his step-mother's murder attempt on him only through his transformation into the insect cicada. When there are certain events that could not be solved and overcome through natural means, the Mizos believed that these could be solved only through unnatural means like the processes of metamorphosis.

In the selected tales, there are clear instances of the element of rebirth which can also be described as reincarnation. Some of the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo narratives deal with metamorphosis or the change to another form of being in the after-life which can be described as another form of reincarnation. This indicated that the Mizos too had believed in some kind of a form of reincarnation or rebirth which is strongly believed to have existed by various cultures all around the world. The Mizos

had always been superstitious and believed in omens and could be said that their whole lives had been guided by their principles and beliefs in the superstitions as can be seen throughout history. Though such is the case that they were strongly guided by their religion and superstitions, the religion of the Mizos had no leanings to any kind of rebirth in their faith but rather a form of metamorphosis in the after-life. However, there can be seen some traces of the element of rebirth in their tales as well which makes it likely probable that the Mizos had some form of belief in a form of rebirth to some extent.

However, on the other hand, the form of rebirth or reincarnation that could be seen in the Mizo metamorphosis had nothing to do with their religious or superstitions beliefs as compared to other cultures around the world. They seem to appear only in the metamorphosis narratives as tales as opposed to having a strong belief in the actual existence of rebirth from a religious point of view. Though it was not included into their religious beliefs, these types of metamorphosis existed within the gamut of their narratives. As tales are formed and came into existence from one's cultural imaginations and fantasies, it could be said that the Mizos had imagined about the existence of life after death.

The tales that deals with metamorphosis in the after-life portrayed these transformations to be a form of liberation when they had gone through their lifetime and began to live their lives in the after-life. This, in a sense, clearly denoted the escapist mechanism that can be found in these types of metamorphosis tales. It has to be noted that most of the metamorphosis that had occurred within the Mizo narratives occurred as a means of escaping from the harsh realities that the people had to undergo. They act as

the only means and ways to escape from certain sufferings, pains, anxieties, and so on which they were unable to escape from in the world of the living. It is clear from these events in the tales that the Mizos were not completely satisfied with the realities that life had to offer. The hardships, turmoil and sufferings that one had to endure but cannot escape from in reality are made easier to deal. This is made possible by making up a dream or fantasy world where they could escape to make it a little more bearable and sufferable. Likewise, the metamorphosis tales that can be found within the Mizo narratives have a huge leaning to this form of escapism as they are used by the Mizos to project their fantasies to escape from their harsh realities into these metamorphosis tales.

The idea of wanting or desiring to escape from the realities and hardships of life can be found in quite a number of the metamorphosis of the Mizos. What this clearly denotes is that they had found reality extremely hard to deal with and had considered it a hardship, burden and hopeless at times. Thus, to escape from this, they had often idealized a mechanism of escape which manifested into the formation of these metamorphosis tales within their narratives. The tale of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana was about two lovers who could not enjoy the love they had for each other due to the existing enmity between their respective villages. Thus, their only means to enjoy their love was in the after-life or after being reincarnated into the stars where they could love freely in the skies away from all of their peers who wanted nothing but to hurt or kill each other. The same can be said for the couple Tualvungi and Zawlpala who loved and cared for each other very much but could not express the same. They had to leave the world of the living and escape by transforming into butterflies after their death which was only way that they could love affectionately. Likewise, there

are several instances where the process of metamorphosis was employed as a means of freedom, escape or liberation from the harsh reality.

From these instances it is clearly evident that the Mizos employed the technique of escapist mechanism into their metamorphosis tales. The Mizos had believed and fantasized that most of the problems and troubles and hardships that they had faced could not be solved and the only solution was to escape from them by idealizing a fantasy world. They believed that their hopes, dreams and desires could only be fulfilled by escaping into the world other than their own world and into their world of fantasy. This idealization and fantasy was deeply embedded and lodged into their psyche as it can be seen due to their abundant presence of the metamorphosis tales within their narratives.

These forms of escapist mechanisms were often portrayed in the form metamorphosis that occurred in the after-life. However, there were also other forms of metamorphosis that occurred in the after-life which were not necessarily an escapist mechanism. Some examples of this kind of narrative are the star myths where metamorphosis occurred in the after-life but were not in any form portrayed as a mechanism of escape. The occurrence of metamorphosis after death seemed to have formed a large part of the imaginations and fascinations of the Mizos of the past as can be seen from the abundances of the after-life metamorphosis in their tales. According to the religious beliefs of the Mizos, only the spirits *thangchhuah* were supposedly able to enter into *pialral* after they had passed away. All the other spirits, besides the *thangchhuah*, will continue their existence in the abode of the dead (*mitthi khua*) which was strongly believed to be worse than the world of the living. Due to this particular

belief of the harsh living condition of the *mitthi khua* they supposedly concocted and created a fantasy where they would transform into another being rather than having to continue their existence in the abode of the dead. Although this was not a part of their religious leanings and teachings, fantasizing and idealizing about a better existence in the after-life was a huge part of their desire which manifested and was displayed through their metamorphosis tales within the Mizo folk narratives.

The Mizos had believed that there had been some unexplainable and unexpected events that had occurred multiple times that had caused major changes in the whole world. The metamorphosis tales that can be seen supports this as there are multiple changes that had occurred unexpected within the narratives. A clear instance that supports this claim can be seen in the tale of Hlawndawhthanga and his brothers as they suddenly shape shifted into tigers after they had drunk water from a tree trunk. Besides this, in the *thimzin* tales, many human beings transformed to another species. Not only were humans effected but also the other species were affected by the events of the *Thimzin*. From this, it is clear that the Mizos had believed that some of catastrophic calamities had occurred on a large scale that had completely changed the entire world. The event of the *thimzin* remains unexplainable and can even be considered to be some sort of magical element. The Mizos had a firm belief that there was a strong external unnatural, yet unexplainable power that had an influence on the world which constantly causes different catastrophic changes on the humans on a global scale.

Besides this, the Mizos seemed to have a belief that humans were capable of undergoing some kind of transformation, both mentally and physically, when they were faced with very strong emotional pressure. When one is faced with certain difficult

situations, hopelessness and restlessness one is capable of undergoing unexpected change in their psyche that enables them to be a completely different person having different mentality and personality as well. This is represented in the form of metamorphosis tales within the Mizo narratives in the tales like Rahtea who shapeshifted into a *thereng*, Lasari who transformed into an *uleuh* after both of them were extremely traumatized. The metamorphosis tales of the Mizos clearly indicate such circumstances where a person is capable of undergoing physical as well as mental change under such extremely difficult situations.

There are certain animal and human characters in the metamorphosis tales who have undergone transformation who continued to have the psyche and mentality of the species that they had shape shifted to. However, they retained their human psychology once they returned back to their former self. In the romance tales of the Mizo narratives, the existing romance between the lovers were always extremely immense which could not be altered even by death and continued to exist even in the after-life?

The beings or species that underwent metamorphosis in the Mizo narratives continued to have developed all the characteristic traits of the beings or species that they had transformed to. Those that underwent transformation into plants, flowers or fruits continued to remain as plants, bearing fruits and flowers exactly as any plant or fruit, or tree would. Likewise those that underwent metamorphosis into natural weather continued their existence as the weather that they had transformed to performing their duties or functions as a natural weather would; the stars behaved like any other stars; the animals that underwent metamorphosis too acted and behaved as animals, and insects that they had transformed to. However, there are some instances where a few animal

transformations continued to have the mental traits of their former selves as their former human psychological functions remained intact. These instances can be seen in the tales like Mauruangi where her mother who had shape shifted into a fish continued to love and care for her daughter even after her metamorphosis. Tumchhingi who had transformed into a mango tree was described to continue cooking for her ex husband Raldawna by transforming back into a human. Besides, Zawlpala and Tualvungi continued to love and share each other's affection for the love they had for each other in their life time even after their death. The constellations Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana are said to be still in love with each other and continue to woe each other even after their transformation into the stars. Thus, it can be concluded that there were various forms of metamorphosis where the transformed continued to carry on the physical and mental traits of the beings that they had transformed to as well as losing their mental traits completely.

Besides this, from the metamorphosis tales it can be seen that the changes that took place had an immense effect on the society. Firstly, it is the immeasurable distress and anxieties that was brought about by the metamorphosis that took place within the society. When certain incidents such as shape shifting occurred suddenly in the society, chaos and disorder immediately followed it which had immense negative impact on the society. When the *thimzin* occurred, the society was in complete disarray as disruption and a huge commotion followed such incident. The reason for this was that even the chiefs and the leaders of the village too were all affected by the sudden change which left the village in a state of anarchy. Since even the young men of the village had turned

into animals themselves, there was complete fear, restlessness and anxiety which enveloped the society at a large scale.

Likewise, fear and terror spread throughout the whole community in the tales of the *keimi*. Though it has been mentioned earlier that metamorphosis occurred due to immense terror, the opposite of it too took place as the metamorphosis that had occurred brought about immense terror, fear and fright among the community.

It has to be noted that the unexpected event of the metamorphosis had a great impact on the economic and food supply system of the Mizos. Ngaitei's father who had shape shifted into a giant snake had caused a huge flood which almost submerged the whole village. Large amount of property, houses and livestock, and food stocks and many more valuable items and properties were destroyed on account of the flood. Moreover, besides the presence of the *keimi* causing panic and restlessness among the villagers, their livestock were used to be killed by the *keimi* as well which had greatly impacted the economy and food supply of the Mizo community.

One of the most difficult phases of life that one has to endure in his/her lifetime is probably death which is closely related to the metamorphosis tales as it can be seen in almost all of them. As the Mizo society was a rather small community that took the occurrence of death rather seriously with full sincerity. It affected the whole community so much so that no work was ever done when some members of the community had passed away. It brought fear, pity, pain, suffering and tears among the members of the community as they all lived together as one big family. There could be seen plenty of death within the metamorphosis tales. This clearly stated that the metamorphosis that

had occurred had deeply impacted and had an adverse effect on the Mizo society both within and without the physical and mental level.

Other than death, the metamorphosis that had occurred put great fear, restlessness, panic and distress among the people of the community. They lived their lives miserable and were in constant fear and terror which adversely impacted their psychological well being. There was restlessness and panic all around them both in their external as well as their internal psychological functions. From the tales of the *Thimzin* it can be imagined how the society would have reacted to such circumstances. They would have been panic and fear stricken and the level of distress that they had faced was unimaginable. Even though there were some people who did not shape shift, they were neither saved from distress and the mental effect such even had on them as they would have suffered severe post traumatic disorder. Such event was too much to handle and cope with for any person. Thus, the transformations that took place in these metamorphosis tales greatly impacted the society on a large scale as the members of the community were affected physically, mentally as well as psychologically.

In the metamorphosis tales there are instances of trickery, cruelty of step-mothers, the poor condition of orphans, hatred, enmity, romance, immense trouble and distress, war and death and murder, magical elements, poverty, jealousy, talking animals as well as death. An overview of the metamorphosis tales clearly indicate that there are more of negative effects of the transformations that took place as compared to the positive effects.

In the metamorphosis tales, the imaginations, fantasies and desires of the Mizos were clearly indicated within the narratives. They had believed in the existence of supernatural and unnatural occurrences, events that could not be controlled by man, the possibility of transforming oneself into another being under extreme circumstances and pressures, the existence of shape shifters, the existence of the abode of the dead as well as the occurrence reincarnation or rebirth, they believe in the existence of extraterrestrial beings, the incompatibility of the *keimi* and human species when it comes to living together as spouses, the occurrence of *thimzin* which brought about many transformations, the metamorphosis of humans into stars and constellations, the existence of immense love between lovers that continued to exist even after their death, the presence of evil and benevolent spirits and magical beings and magical elements all of which existed within the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives.

What can be clearly witnessed from the metamorphosis tales is that the Mizos highly valued living in harmony and happily with one another. There were lots of instances of terror, fright, troubles, deaths, poverty which clearly denoted the other side of this. The presence and occurrence of orphans, step-mother, and poverty aims to teach and highlight the dangers of broken family and acts as a warning and precautionary measures against the dangers of such. Thus, when events that are extraordinary or unnatural occur, they often lead to some kind of disaster or unwanted negativity among the community which suffer from many troubles and problems. Thus, this in turn clearly denotes the importance of living life normally and accordingly to the laws of nature and to abide by it naturally.

The Mizo folk narratives which largely deal with many metamorphosis tales clearly denote the fantasies, desires and wit of the Mizo ancestors clearly highlight the traditional beliefs which add value to the narrative of the Mizos. This opens and paves the way for more in-depth research and analysis on these tales. The narratives of one's own culture give the importance and relevance of one's own culture. Likewise, the metamorphosis tales of the Mizos clearly enrich the Mizo literature to a very large extent. The literature of the world does not focus its interest only on the tales that occur naturally. It also gives special importance to the narratives that deals with unnatural occurrences which are valuable as well as extraordinarily beautiful. Thus, such kind of stories which emerge and got its existence from such the unnatural occurrences like the metamorphosis tales of the Mizo folk narratives clearly enrich the literature of the Mizos.

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