MIZO POSTCOLONIAL WORLDVIEW AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LITERARY DISCOURSE OF MIZO NOVELS

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

JOSEPHINE L. B. ZUALI

MZU REGN. NO. 4914 OF 2011

PH. D. REGN. NO. MZU/PHD/679 OF 09.05.2014

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

NOVEMBER, 2020

MIZO POSTCOLONIAL WORLDVIEW

AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LITERARY DISCOURSE OF MIZO NOVELS

BY

JOSEPHINE L. B. ZUALI

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NAME OF SUPERVISOR

PROF. MARGARET CH. ZAMA

Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis 'Mizo Postcolonial Worldview and its Impact on the Literary Discourse of Mizo Novels' written by Josephine L. B. Zuali has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the Ph.D Regulations of Mizoram University. The thesis is the result of her own investigations. Neither the thesis as a whole nor any part of it was submitted to any other University for any research degree.

(Prof. MARGARET CH. ZAMA)
Supervisor
Department of English
Mizoram University

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
November 2020

DECLARATION

I, Josephine L. B. Zuali, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the result of the work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis for the award of any degree to me, or to anybody else to the best of my knowledge, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University or Institute.

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

(JOSEPHINE L. B. ZUALI)
Candidate

(Prof. K. C. Lalthlamuani)
Head
Department of English
Mizoram University

(Prof. Margaret Ch.Zama)
Supervisor
Department of English
Mizoram University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I take this opportunity to thank the Almighty God for His blessings, comfort, guidance, and protection throughout this research process. I am grateful to Him for having provided me with the wisdom, peace of mind, and strength needed to complete this thesis. I praise Him for His rich and abundant blessings.

I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Margaret Ch. Zama for her able guidance, encouragement, patience, and unwavering support. From the beginning of my research she has constantly been a strong pillar of support, and the detailed revisions and skilled academic guidance she has provided have greatly helped in successfully shaping this thesis to its completion.

I also take this opportunity to thank the Head of Department, Prof. K. C. Lalthlamuani, faculty members, and the office staff of the Department of English, Mizoram University for their support and encouragement, and for going out of their way to help and assist me whenever help was required.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the love and constant support I have received from my family and friends. Their love, encouragement, and support have been invaluable to me, and I am grateful to them for providing me with a much-needed support system and for being patient with me throughout this research journey. I would like to thank Mr. Laltawnliana, Dr. Lalmuanzuali Fanai, and Dr. Angela Parmawii who deserve special mention for their encouragement and support.

Aizawl Josephine L. B. Zuali

November 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

HLP	Hawilopari (1936) by L. Biakliana
ZTT	Zawlpala Thlan Tlang (1977) by Khawlkungi
TNS	Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii (1981) by James Dokhuma
NKP	Nunna Kawngmhuam Puiah (1989) by Zikpuii Pa (K. C. Lalvunga)
DTT	Damlai Thlan Thim (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente
PNH	Pasalmhate Ni Hnuhnung (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Mizo postcolonial worldview contains the perception of the Mizo regarding their colonial past and their cultural mindset, psyche, outlook, practices, and beliefs that have resulted from it. This research attempts to study the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and how this has resulted in creating a set pattern of storytelling concerning Mizo novelists. A brief overview of the known history, culture, and indigenous faith practices of the Mizo will be presented in this chapter to set the grounding for the study that moves from the pre-colonial, colonial, to the postcolonial, to enable the situating of the thrust of this thesis - the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its impact on the literary discourse of Mizo novels.

Postcolonialism began to emerge as an institutionalised field of specialisation in academia in the 1980s. Colonisation of countries such as Africa, Asia and South America came about as part of the imperial expansionist policies of powerful countries like Britain and other European powers since the fifteenth century when Columbus set sail for the West Indies and discovered America in 1492. British colonialism was at its height during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thus making western countries such as England one of the wealthiest and most powerful nations in the world, and gradually coming to an end with the Second World War. Postcolonialism seeks to understand the complex operations of power by which colonial powers controlled the colonised. It gradually emerged as a theoretical formation and form of critical enquiry into the influence and effects of colonisation on the history, politics, culture, and literature of the colonisers and the colonised. It looks for signs and traces of the cultural, material, imaginative, ideological and epistemological legacies of colonial ideology and colonial discourse.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview can be described as mainly comprising of the emergence of Mizo cultural revival in connection to the postcolonial reclamation of pride in the Mizo cultural identity following its negation under colonial rule. Consequently, there came about the emerging recognition of the lasting influences of colonial discourse and colonial ideology as a legacy of colonial rule (also referred to as colonial hangover). The Mizo postcolonial worldview also includes the indigenisation of the practice of Mizo Christianity which has emerged as one of the defining traits of the Mizo identity during the twentieth century, and through which traces of the continuation of colonial ideology and discourse may also be located. At the same time, there is a shared affinity with western

culture especially among the younger generations in contrast to the pre-colonial traditional Mizo society wherein enculturation into Mizo society began at the *zawlbuk*[1] where boys were taught and trained into becoming young men who exhibited bravery and the Mizo moral code of *tlawmngaihna*[2]. This can be understood as the effect of the ideology of the colonising mission by which Christianity has been equated with progress towards civilisation which is linked to westernisation and modernisation.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview includes the attempt to negate the effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse and to try and understand and to come to terms with the hybrid cultural formations that have resulted from colonial rule. The rejection of all elements of traditional culture and literature by the Mizo Christians during the early days of Mizo Christianity had far-reaching implications for the way Mizos have come to view the culture of the past. Mizo Christianity has since developed a wary approach towards the valorisation or reclamation of aspects of traditional culture. Only those components of the traditional Mizo culture or Mizo cultural traits and practices which were considered as being aligned with Christian values and teachings, have been accepted into the modern Mizo identity and worldview.

This rejection of Mizo culture and traditions in its entirety continues to complicate and problematise the process of Mizo identity formation. The complex nature of the formation of the modern Mizo identity and culture is observed as resulting from the hybridity that has emerged at the meeting point between the traditional Mizo culture and the effects and after-effects of colonial rule. The hybridity in the modern Mizo identity is on account of the lasting effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, whose continued influence can be observed as being in a state of tension and negotiation with the postcolonial reclamation and valorisation of the traditional Mizo culture and practices. The tension inherent in this hybrid formation of the Mizo cultural or ethnic identity has resulted in its constant redefinition.

This hybridity is revealed in Mizo novels through the representation of Christian ideals, norms, morality and values, and by the depiction and representation of selected aspects and practices of the traditional Mizo culture and traditions. It is a point wherein the influences of Christianity, traditional Mizo culture, and western culture continue to negotiate the terms of their influence upon modern Mizo identity, and culture in an ongoing

process of reconstitution, renegotiation, and restructuring. In the wake of decolonisation, the effects of epistemic violence on the colonised led to a crisis in identity. Taisha Abraham has observed that the effects of colonial ideology and discourse resulted in an identity crisis. She observed thus, "The crisis in identity related to structural imbalance, cultural imperialism, geographic displacement, political hegemony, the privileging of official history, and the psychological impact of these systems of knowledge in constituting the colonial subject is vital to postcolonial theories" (5).

The term Mizoram means the land of the Mizos. Mizo is the name of the people while *ram* means land. It has an international boundary with two countries, namely, Burma in the east and Bangladesh in the West. It is bounded by the state of Tripura towards the north-west, and the states of Assam (Cachar District) and Manipur towards the north. Mizoram is a hilly region with hill ranges running in the north-south direction and having deep narrow gorges. The Mizo people were believed to have migrated to the present-day Mizoram region through a long migratory trail spanning across several centuries. They are from the Mongoloid racial stock, and their language is rooted in the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Since the origin of the Mizo tribe is open to interpretation, there are many myths, legends and stories surrounding it. The Mizo worldview of the pre-colonial past is only traceable through the extant forms of oral literature and oral accounts of Mizo history that have been transcribed into the Mizo script, which was created by the missionaries, and through accounts of Mizo history.

Given the lack of detailed information about their migratory trail, it is difficult to surmise as to the cultural influences that could have shaped the Mizo worldview in the past. The earliest written accounts about Mizo history have mostly been the work of British amateur ethnographers (colonial-era administrative officers), and Mizo historians who began writing about Mizo history in the first half of the twentieth century. Mizo historians have mostly based their accounts of Mizo history on colonial accounts and oral literature including myths, legends, and songs, etc. Joy L. K. Pachuau has observed that colonial knowledge-production and later developments in Mizo history-writing have been linked with the ways Mizo understand their identity. She says, "In this, an important aspect was the need felt by the Mizos to incorporate popular narratives of their past, what are usually termed myths, into new forms of 'historical writing'" (84).

The worldview of a person is more than merely an interpretive lens through which the person views the world. It directs, shapes, and moulds a person's values and opinions, enabling them to make decisions and carry out actions on that basis. The worldview of a person, a society, a people, or a nation as a collective whole, can be equated with the conceptual framework which has emerged as a result of several factors such as events, cultural outlook, religious outlook, and decisions, actions, and knowledge acquired daily. This conceptual framework or worldview is never value-free. In the context of the Mizo, there was a seismic shift in their worldview. Consequently, their identity changed with the onset of colonialism. However, over the twentieth century, there has been a gradual process of indigenisation and valorisation of traditional Mizo culture which touched upon their cultural identity and Christianity, the religion they came to embrace.

The Mizo worldview consists of notions about their history and who they are as a people, and their perception of their past, present, and future. In the case of our present study, it involves how they express their self-knowledge through their literature and specifically, through their novels. The Mizo postcolonial worldview contains the perception of the Mizo regarding their colonial past and their cultural mindset, psyche, outlook, practices, and beliefs that have resulted from it. The research will attempt to trace the idea of a postcolonial Mizo worldview and the process of its shaping, especially concerning its manifestation in the production of Mizo literature vis-à-vis Mizo novels.

When one considers the idea of a Mizo postcolonial worldview concerning its representation in Mizo literature, one has to take into account all the formative influences and significant societal shifts in mindset that have changed and shaped Mizo society and brought about the transition from the Mizo traditional worldview to the Mizo postcolonial worldview. In this connection, there have been major causative factors that have wrought seismic shifts in the perspective of the Mizo society regarding Mizo identity and culture, which has thus effected changes in it. Such factors include the onset of British administrative rule in the Lushai Hills (1890), the religious conversion of the Mizos to Christianity, the introduction of a Mizo script by the pioneer missionaries in 1894, the revoking of the system of chieftainship (1954), and the occurrence of *Rambuai* or the secessionist uprising undertaken by the Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1966 and which ended with the signing of the historic Peace Accord with the Central Government of India in 1986.

By the time of the First World War, the Mizo Church was beginning to be established, and the Christian population began to grow in numbers. Meanwhile, those Mizo chiefs who were intractable and refused to comply with the orders of the British rulers were sent to jails outside Mizoram, even to places as far as the Andaman Islands where they died in imprisonment. At the same time, Mizo chiefs who were willing to be ruled over by the British colonial government continued to remain as chiefs but were under the rule of the colonial administration and with their power and authority being vastly diminished. The requirement of indented labour and payment of taxes from the villages under the chiefs proved to be a significant burden.

Therefore, although the chiefs continued to rule, the authority of the British government was asserted and consolidated. Gradually, with the introduction of money economy, education, and conversion to Christianity, the Mizo chiefs who were the foremost figures of authority in the pre-colonial Mizo society were perceived of as being inferior to the British. This went a long way in establishing the influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse among the Mizos. Thus, in accordance with colonial ideology and discourse, accounts of Mizo history about Mizo chiefs bravely fighting against subjugation and colonisation by the British Empire became overshadowed by accounts of the portrayal of those chiefs who submitted to colonial rule. Generally, the latter came to be considered as being wise for being able to assess the military might and prowess of the British which enabled them to protect their subjects from suffering on account of a sure defeat.

The introduction of formal education and exposure to other world cultures accelerated the modernisation and westernisation of the Mizo, and with it, a sense of appreciation for their own culture. By 1924, 14 Mizo youth had completed their matriculation from the city of Shillong in Meghalaya (The state of Meghalaya was not yet formed, and Shillong was a part of Assam back then) while two Mizos received the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. During the First World War in the year 1917, more than 2000 Mizo young men were recruited to be a part of the Lushai Labour Corps and went to France. By the time these men returned, their outlook had changed, and they expressed the desire for better standards of living for the Mizos. Moreover, there was a measure of disillusionment with the ‘white man’ whom they now saw as capable of the most extreme acts of violence on account of the warfare they witnessed. Thus, there began the emergence of a postcolonial

outlook with which Mizos began questioning the effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse.

Furthermore, the emergence of the educated class was to have a significant influence in the formation of a political outlook and a postcolonial mindset among the Mizo over the twentieth century. It was the educated youth who were beginning to emerge as the influential and powerful class with the waning of the rule and authority of the Mizo chiefs. The formation of a modern Mizo society relegated the role of the Mizo chiefs to a nominal one since the socio-economic pattern of living no longer necessitated their rule. Therefore, they effectively became subordinates to the colonial administrators who had the ultimate authority in Mizoram.

With the rise of the educated class among the Mizos who began to perceive of the rule of the chiefs as a burden, there was the development of a political outlook and a desire for self-realisation and self-expression. This too can be understood as a form of undermining of colonial rule which thus marked the beginnings an anti-colonial sentiment and of the need for self-realisation. An anti-colonial uprising against the colonial administration like the Indian independence movement was absent owing to the geographical and cultural distancing of the Northeast region from the rest of mainland India. However, there was a political awakening among the emerging educated class which began to harbour the desire for a democratic form of government. Thus, colonial rule, and the rule of the chiefs as the form in which colonial rule was implemented in the Lushai Hills, can be seen as being challenged in some ways. Chaltuahkhama wrote in *Political History of Mizoram* (1981) that in 1945, the YMA (the Young Mizo Association which is the largest social organisation in which all Mizos are included) organised an informal meeting where the superintendent A. McDonald was present, and he was informed that the people wanted a democratic system of governance in Mizoram (qtd. in Sangkima 256).

In the Lushai Hills political activity was prohibited and suppressed by the British and the missionaries too did not encourage political activities. According to C. Lalbiaknema, when the Mizo Union was formed in 1946, they were against the rule of the chiefs and the superintendent L. L. Peters. They even organised a protest on 28th December 1948 in which they called for the superintendent to go home. The points of their protest were that they would no longer obey the dictates of the superintendent and the Mizo chiefs, that

they no longer wanted to provide indentured labour, and would no longer pay the tax of a portion of rice and a portion of meat from their kill to the chiefs. This was because the people were tired of the rule of the Mizo chiefs and of the British who supported the Mizo chiefs (247-248). It was from this educated class that the writing of Mizo novels began. As commonly observed in countries that were colonised such as India, the rise of an educated class resulted in a political awakening and the desire for self-determination or self-rule coupled with the attempt to throw off the yoke of a foreign power which they perceive as oppressive, wrongful, denigrating, and disparaging to them.

Conventional accounts of Mizo history by Mizo historians and scholars laid great emphasis on the origin of the Mizo and their migratory trail to the present-day Mizoram. Such accounts included descriptions of Mizo culture, customs, traditions and faith practices of the pre-colonial traditional Mizo society. They projected the Mizo moral code of *tlawmngaihna,* which is a key cultural trait, as the defining trait of Mizo culture and identity even in the post-colonial Mizo society. The Mizo philosophy of *tlawmngaihna*, a concept which continues to be a defining trait of Mizoness or the Mizo identity even in the modern Mizo society, is considered as being synonymous with the concept of the *pasalṭha*[3] (warriors). The emergence of the postcolonial worldview or outlook in the modern Mizo society has mainly come about with the emergence of an educated class with access to higher education and literature from other regions and cultures of the world. However, despite the acquisition of knowledge and access to various kinds of literature, Mizo novels written in the Mizo language and which began to emerge around the middle of the twentieth century, continued to follow a more or less fixed or set pattern of storytelling. These novels had many features in common and similarities can be observed in the storylines, themes, and characters across the majority of the Mizo novels. This research is an attempt at unearthing the processes by which the postcolonial Mizo worldview has been formed, and how it had an impact on the formation of a set pattern of storytelling in Mizo novels.

When one considers the postcolonial challenge to colonial authority and influence in the context of India as a nation, the kind of nationalistic fervour that inspired the Indian independence movement was not to be perceived among the Mizos. One has to understand that up till the time the Lushai Hills (present-day Mizoram) was annexed to India with the end of colonialism in 1947, the Excluded Areas Act of 1936 ensured the relative insulation

of the Mizo tribes from the cultural or political influence of mainland India so to say. This factor could have made it difficult for the Indian independence movement to have reached the area. In addition, the ingrained effect of colonial discourse in the form of imperialist scholarship or colonially determined educational apparatuses on the psyche of the Mizo as a result of Christianisation is another factor.

The introduction of formal education in 1894 can be considered as a contributing factor in preventing the emergence of anti-colonial feelings of dissent against colonial rule. They helped to instil a sense of respect for the British authorities and particularly the missionaries. In Mizoram, colonial rule was consolidated through the cooperation of the British colonial administration and the missionaries. The missionaries were in charge of education and the creation and maintenance of a fledgling Mizo Church, while the administrators of the British colonial government were in charge of governance. Although the missionaries and the administrators did not always, for the most part, they co-operated in their efforts to govern the Lushai Hills.

A study of postcolonialism cannot escape material considerations. The general readership of Mizo literature is confined to the Mizo Christian population owing to the lack of translations. Recent efforts in translation have been made in the field of Mizo songs, poems, and folktales into English. However, there are no translations of Mizo novels to date. Nowadays, a new sub-genre of Mizo writings in English is beginning to make an appearance and perceptions are changing, with a new crop of Mizo writers writing poetry and novels in English. The first notable English novels by Mizo writers are *Zorami*: *A Redemption Song* (2015) by Malsawmi Jacob, and *Diamantaire* (2015) by Thara Tlau, while one young adult fiction work entitled *Facebook Phantom* was published in 2013 by Suzanne Sangi.

It is noteworthy that there is no perceptible anti-colonial sentiment expressed in the storytelling process of Mizo novels, particularly in the initial stages. The lack of anti-colonial sentiment comes as no surprise considering that most of the Mizo population became Christians by the middle of the twentieth century. In fact, in some of the novels selected for study such as ZTT (1977), British colonialism has been perceived as having ushered in only positive changes in Mizo society especially on account of the British and Welsh missionaries who introduced the Christian religion, modern healthcare, and formal

education. However, it is with the novel *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (PNH) (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga that the postcolonial turn or the emergence of a postcolonial mindset appeared in Mizo novels. It would also be appropriate here to keep things in perspective wherein the renowned Mizo scholar and historian B. Lalthangliana divided the history of Mizo literature into four periods, The Oral Literature Period (1200-1893), the Missionary Period (1894-1919), the Middle Period (1920-1965) and the Modern Period (1966-2000) in his book *History of Mizo Literature (Mizo Thu leh Hla)* (1993). He has observed that Mizo novels never existed in the past, with its closest likeness being the Mizo folktales. He noted that Mizo novels were introduced by the educated Mizos who first began writing Mizo novels that soon occupied a prominent place among other genres of Mizo literature (305-306).

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon proposed that the works of native writers fall under three categories. In the first phase, the native intellectual has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings are inspired by European culture and literature, to the exclusion of the cultural traditions of the colonised nation. In the second phase, the native intellectual becomes dissatisfied and "decides to remember what he is," that is, he remembers the past and the cultural history of his people. In the third phase, the native turns himself into "an awakener of the people," and becomes directly involved in the struggle against colonialism, termed as the fighting phase (179). It is from this third phase that native intellectuals come into their own, begin to address their people and make an attempt to be involved in the formation of a national culture which is the total of all the internal and external tensions that have ripped through the society under colonial rule. The development of the novel in Mizo literature appears to follow a similar pattern as described by Fanon, especially with the emergence of novels such as *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (PNH) (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga (1970-) which can be considered as belonging to the third or fighting phase as described by Fanon.

In this thesis, the six selected Mizo novels that have been taken up for study are *Hawilopari* (HLP) (1936) by L. Biakliana (1918-1941), *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (ZTT) (1977) by Khawlkungi (1927-2015), *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii* (TNS) (1981) by James Dokhuma (1932-2008), *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (NKP) (1989) by K. C. Lalvunga whose nom de plume is Zikpuii Pa (1929-1994), *Damlai Thlan Thim* (DTT) (2003) by

Lalrammawia Ngente (1968-), and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (PNH) (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga (1970-). Mizo novels can be said to be the genre of Mizo literature in which the influence of colonial ideology and discourse has been strongly felt, and where the Mizo postcolonial worldview finds expression. Mizo writers are familiar with works of English literature and have borrowed the form of the English novel of the eighteenth century. Even in the globalised and inter-connected world of today, the Western-centric academic world continues to be acknowledged as the acme of literary studies and criticism.

Postcolonial studies include the attempt to define and express the condition of postcoloniality. However, as a branch of critical study, it is fraught with the burden of having to deal with varying experiences of colonialism and its ramifications. This is on account of the breadth of geographical and cultural diversity of countries that have been colonised. This study on the experience of postcoloniality in the Mizo context is an attempt to further nuance the understanding of postcolonial studies, and to call attention to the need for the representation of Mizo literature within Indian literature and even academia at large to foster a better understanding of Mizo culture.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview influences the production of Mizo literature vis-à-vis Mizo novels. In speaking about a literary discourse as denoted in the title of this thesis, the reference here is to the discourse in terms of the rigid or set pattern of representation followed by Mizo novelists. The influence of colonial ideology has resulted in a set pattern of representation or set structure of storytelling in Mizo novels from which Mizo writers rarely deviate. The idea of discourse is dealt with in terms of narrative as a discursive manifestation or product of the formation of Mizo identity vis-a-vis the dynamics of the changes it undergoes, as it grapples with the lasting influence of colonial ideology and discourse amidst the emergence of a postcolonial outlook that seeks to assert the Mizo identity.

Homi Bhabha has observed that, “An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (94). He goes on to describe colonial discourse as such, “It is a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchisation” (96). *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward W. Said refers to the totality of the West’s representation of the Orient. Such a view is premised

on the existence of a binary division or a dichotomy by which the Orient is differentiated from the West which is portrayed as being superior. Using Foucault's notion of discourse that revealed the link between power and knowledge, in the book, Said has established how an Orientalist discourse has emerged.

Colonial discourse is mainly manifested in Mizo culture and society through the consideration of the white man as being superior, and of the stereotyping of the Mizo ancestors as being savage head-hunters who are backward, unintelligent, foolish, weak, cowardly and helpless against the might of the British Empire. In accordance with the ideology of the colonising mission, colonial rule has been portrayed as effecting the transformation of the Mizos from being primitive and uncivilised to being civilised and modernised through the introduction of Christianity and education. Two main features of colonial discourse among the Mizo can be seen in one of the earliest school textbooks *Zirtirh Bu* (1929) which taught two lessons that could have had an impact on the Mizo worldview. Lalthangliana has observed that the *Zirtirh Bu* taught that, in the past, there was no separate clan of chiefs and all clans had the authority to rule. The Sailo chiefs who considered themselves as the race of chiefs took great offence at this and were indignant. Although they attempted to change the words they failed to do so. The other lesson that potentially influenced the Mizo mind was the mention of the superiority of the intellect of the white men over the other races in the world (100-101). Such lessons ingrained in the minds of impressionable Mizo school students would have worked towards cementing the notion of the cultural superiority of the British, which would have further degraded the position of the Lushai chiefs under colonial rule.

Colonial discourse is theoretically organised to assert the superiority of particular cultures, races, and nations. Pramod K. Nayar has spoken about Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) which focused on the way empires thought and wrote about their empires, "How the Europeans thought and wrote about their empires was the focus of Said's epoch-making work. Arguing from the premise that to represent the non-European culture was a form of colonial thinking, Said showed how literary, historical, anthropological, and other texts carried within them the same politics as those that inspired military and economic conquests. "Colonial discourse" is the study of these texts and representations… Colonial discourse masks the power relations between races, cultures, and nations. It makes the relations

seem natural, scientific, and objective" (3). Discourses portraying the natives as being savage, backward, and unintelligent helped to naturalise a myth and a stereotype which came to be accepted as authentic historical fact. In its working, colonial discourse did not allow for the presence of dissenting discourses. Therefore, colonial discourse has had a significant role to play in "the management of racialised imperial relations" (4). In the Mizo context, stereotyping of this kind was further compounded by the positioning of the 'Mission,' that is, the governing body of missionaries, as the spiritual and educational leaders among the Mizo.

In the context of India, there has been a particularised image of the Indian colony as projected by various writers. John Fryer, who wrote in the seventeenth century when the East India Company was still a trading company, portrayed India as undiscovered and mysterious. William Hodges who began writing after the English had started to become involved in trade and local politics portrayed India as a ruined civilisation, while James Prinsep wrote about India as consisting of a vast and varied culture thus emphasising on its difference from other places. George Campbell portrayed Indians as morally degenerate and effeminate, and Flora Annie Steel and Gardiner portrayed them as childlike, weak, vulnerable, and gullible (Nayar 1-2). Colonial domination over a colony begins with the process of documentation by which colonial ethnographers and travellers gather information and then project a stereotypical image of the native as inferior to Western man or Western culture. In the Mizo context, colonial records projected an image of the Mizo as troublesome, backward, uncivilised, and savage tribes who caused trouble in the border areas, that is, the North-eastern Frontier of the British Indian Empire, and terrified British subjects with their practices of raiding and head-hunting.

The documentation and representation of the Mizos in colonial records began towards the second half of the nineteenth century. In this connection, accounts by amateur ethnographers such as political and military administrative officers gave the general impression of the Mizo tribes as being wild savages who practiced head-hunting as a method of warfare. Such accounts portrayed Mizo depredations on the plains (considered by the British as their territory) as a testament to the nature of their savagery. These works include *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein; With Comparative Vocabulary of the Hill Dialects* (1869), *Wild Races of The Eastern Frontier of India* (1870),

Progressive Colloquial Exercises in Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language with Vocabularies and Popular Tales (Notated) (1874), and *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* (1912) by T. H. Lewin, *Foreign and Political Dept. Report, 1874 on Eastern Boundary of Hill Tippera* (published by the Tribal Research Institute of the Govt. of Mizoram in 1980), *The Lushais 1878-1889* (published by the Tribal Research Institute of the Govt. of Mizoram in 1978), *Foreign Department Report on Chin Lushai Hills September 1892* (published by the Tribal Research Institute of the Govt. of Mizoram in 1980), *Chin-Lushai Land: Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country* (1893) by A. S. Reid, and *Handbook of the Lushai Country: Compiled (Under the Order of the Quarter Master General in India) in The Intelligence Branch* (1899) by Capt. O. A. Chambers. According to A. G. McCall, in 1895, the Lushai Hills District was officially declared by a proclamation of the government on September 6th, 1895 ("The Lushai Hills" 11). Thus, colonial administrative records and ethnographic accounts of the Mizo people by colonial administrators (amateur ethnographers) have variously depicted the Mizo as backward, uncivilised, and as savages. They highlight their practice of head-hunting as the defining feature of their identity. This image and representation helped to ingrain the notion of the colonisers as being civilised, advanced, superior, and more intelligent than the Mizo, which helped justify the colonial enterprise as a civilising mission.

In one of his accounts of the Mizo, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein* (1869), the military officer T. H. Lewin (whom the Mizo fondly referred to as Thangliana) mentions, "Among the Lhoosai it is customary for a young warrior to eat a piece of the liver of the first man he kills; this, it is said, strengthens the heart and gives courage" ("The Hill Tracts" 150). Since this is one of the earliest colonial accounts of the Mizo people and Lewin was the first British officer to have spent considerable time living among the Mizos before colonial rule was established, such an account would have contributed towards projecting a rather savage image of the Mizos whom the British referred to as the Lushai. He also stated that "The whole art of war among them may be described in one word – surprise. They never advance openly to attack an enemy but send forward spies to make sure of taking their foe unawares. Should their object be discovered, they at once abandon the attack, and retreat as they came" (148). Thus, Lewin included Lushai

methods of warfare in his documentation, and this could have aided the British in their colonial takeover. He also observed, "It is only within the last 10 or 20 years that the Lhoosai have learnt the use of fire-arms; but muskets, mostly of English make and Tower-marked, are now common enough among them, and rendered what was formerly a horde of simple savages, a band of very dangerous marauders. They are constantly warring among themselves; or when a short interval of comparative peace comes, they make a raid upon the nearest British territory to procure slaves" (147-148). Some of the first missionaries to enter the Lushai Hills such as J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge read Lewin's accounts in learning about the Mizos and their language. Therefore, his documentation of the Mizos as savages would surely have been influential in cementing the impression of the Mizo ancestors as being so.

Before the beginning of colonialism in the Lushai Hills, there had been resistance to colonial rule on the part of the Mizo chiefs some of whom put up a formidable resistance. However, victory over the Mizo chiefs was inevitable owing to the strategic thinking and military might of the British Indian Army. There was an incident in which Lewin, the first British military officer to be a part of one of the several Lushai Expeditions, advanced towards the village of the Sailo chief Savunga (which was the largest village among the village of the Sailo tribes) to punish him in 1865. Chief Rothangpuia accompanied him, and when they were within nine hundred yards of a small outlying village, the General who accompanied them decided that it was an excellent opportunity for displaying the force of their guns. Meanwhile, when Lewin and his team approached the village, they were ambushed with "an artful avalanche of rocks" along with spears, arrows and other missiles which swept the upward path. He commented that the seven-pounder steel guns rendered this sudden attack by the Mizo useless ("A Fly on the Wheel" 273-274). Then during one of his first encounters with the Lushais, Lewin noted that they carried guns which were, "…all Tower-marked old flint-lock muskets of King George III's time" (196) which revealed that they were outdated, and thus, would not have matched up to the more advanced weaponry of the British at the time.

Therefore, colonial takeover of the Lushai Hills involved the display of the military might of the British which impressed upon the Mizos the notion of their superiority, especially in warfare. In comparison to Mizo weapons which were outdated, the British

had far superior weapons and outnumbered the Mizo warriors in numbers. The usual mode of punishment inflicted by the British forces on the Mizo chiefs was to burn entire villages, thus destroying their vital means of sustenance, that is, the rice harvest they stored. The British superiority in warfare against the Mizo chiefs was aided by their knowledge and understanding of the weak points of Mizo warfare which information they received from their intelligence officers and local sources, as well as the documentation of the location of water sources and number of guns in each village. However, despite the bravery and courage of the Mizo warriors, they were far outnumbered by British troops and their advanced weaponry which were no match for the outdated guns of the Mizo.

One has to understand that the British military might and intelligence would have been unsurpassed during the colonial era, and understandably, the British had acquired knowledge about the Mizos and took advantage of the infighting that occurred among the Sailo chiefs to their advantage. It is likely that it was this knowledge of the Mizo people that led the British to burn villages and especially rice granaries within the village as a means of ensuring the defeat of the Mizos for whom the stock of rice stored in the villages was a vital means of sustenance. Besides acquiring knowledge of the tactics of Lushai warfare and documenting information about them, all of which served to defeat them, the British made inroads into trading in the region and exerted influence through this, in accordance with the British policy of capturing markets and trade prior to the establishment of colonialism.

In the colonial record *The Lushais* (1878-1889), the colonial authorities have acknowledged thus, “The history of our dealings with the Lushai Chiefs is to a great extent interwoven with that of the markets which our traders keep up in Lushai land.” They also acknowledged that by the end of 1874-1875, the entire rubber supply of the Eastern Lushai region was exhausted in exchange for “purchasing articles which had then become almost a necessity to them in the shops of the traders at the bazar” (41-42). Trade was established through the setting up of the Tipaimukh bazaar, the Sonai bazaar and the Changsil bazaar, and although their date of establishment is unclear, the latter two were spoken of even before the Lushai expedition of 1871-1872. In these markets the Lushai exchanged rubber at a time “when the Lushai had not yet learnt the value of the article which they were so eager to barter in exchange for the traders’ goods” (43). The report

also mentioned that in 1875-1876 two Mizo chiefs sent elephant tusks to the Deputy Commissioner along with their request for new bazaars to be established near them, but it was denied (42). This reveals that the British were involved in the politics among the chiefs in the region well before the establishment of colonial rule in 1890 by granting favour to certain chiefs by placing the markets near their villages and even permitting them to collect revenues from such markets

The objective of the various Lushai expeditions of the British Indian Army was to instil fear and awe in the Lushai regarding the military might and power of the British, which were aimed at quelling the series of raids on the frontier region of British territory in the northeast region of India. The colonial government wanted to ensure the safe conduct of trade activities, especially that of tea plantations which were a lucrative source of income for the British Empire. Reid has noted that, ever since the colonial government discovered in 1855 that the tea plant was indigenous to Cachar, they took measures to ensure that the tea plantation and production process for "this important article of commerce" went smoothly. Meanwhile, the Lushai perceived such measures as possible encroachments upon their ancestral hunting grounds (8).

By the time the British came into contact with the Mizo and then established their rule in the Lushai Hills (present-day Mizoram) by setting up the Aijal Fort in 1890, it was the chiefs of the Sailo clan who had managed to gain supremacy across the region and who were the main adversaries whom they defeated, although there were a handful of chiefs from other clans as well. The earliest accounts of Mizo history and culture by Mizo historians do not usually focus on the British colonial takeover of the Lushai Hills in a negative light, that is, as the military takeover of one's land by enemies. Even though the Mizo chiefs continued to challenge and actively fight against the acceptance of Christianity through their discriminatory treatment and persecution of early Mizo Christians, the religious revivals that began to occur in Mizo Christianity helped to bring about its acceptance among the Mizos. The various revivals were effective in inspiring the Mizos to take up the task of evangelising and spreading the Gospel to all regions with the Lushai Hills because of which most of the Mizo population became Christians during colonial rule. Regarding the influence of colonial administration in India, the colonial administration conquered them politically by establishing their rule, while the missionaries conquered

them culturally and morally, as also observed by Sajal Nag (34). Owing to the influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, colonial rule was gradually embraced without public or collective expressions of anti-colonial sentiment as observed in the Indian independence movements.

There are some colonial-era records and accounts of the Mizo tribe and sub-tribes which do not suggest that they are a savage people. These have been written by some of the British colonial administrators and military officers well after colonialism was established. Such accounts portray a people who have a structured and well-planned system of regulating their society with various laws and customs as seen in works of political administrators such as *Mizo Dan* (1927), *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* (1928), and *The Lakhers*: *With an Introduction and Supplementary Notes by J.H. Hutton* (1932) by N. E. Parry; *Lushai Chrysalis; with a Foreword by Sir Keith Cantlie* (1949), and *The Lushai Hills District Cover* (*1931-43*) (printed by the Tribal Research Institute of the Govt. of Mizoram in 1980) by A. G. McCall, and *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (1912) by J. Shakespear. However, despite such acknowledgements, the notion of colonialism as having secured the transition of the Mizo tribes from being a savage, primitive people to a civilised one remains prominent owing to this narrative being ingrained through Christianity and education.

In the case of the Mizo, two factors that had a significant influence in enabling the effective functioning of colonial discourse was the introduction of Christianity, and formal education by the missionaries. It led to the placing of the Western 'white man' and Western culture as something to be emulated and Western culture and literature as being far more superior to that of the 'savage' and 'backward' Mizo culture and traditions of the pre-colonial era. Over time, the effectiveness of colonial ideology and discourse led to the appreciation of and admiration for Western culture, especially literature, music, and popular culture among the younger generation of the Mizo and especially among those born within the twentieth century. Colonialism was perceived as ushering in modernity to the Mizos and has been considered as a blessing.

The concept of the Mizo ancestors as a backward and foolish tribe is often represented in short plays and skits that offer dramatic renditions of the Mizo society of the past, and which is often seen at various religious and secular events. Such plays display

the transition from a heathen past to the Christian present as having been enabled by the missionaries who are portrayed as respected saviour figures for having introduced Christianity. In general, the English have been portrayed as being wise and powerful, while Mizo ancestors have generally been portrayed as being foolish, awkward, and cowardly in such dramas or skits. Following the impact of colonial discourse among the Mizo, in accounts of Mizo history, breakdown of negotiations between the British colonisers and the Mizos have mostly been imputed to the Mizo Chiefs. Their assertion of their territorial sovereignty have often been negated through the consideration of the British claim to colonisation as a right achieved through military conquest and which was thus seen as being justified by what is perceived as its positive aspects, that is, the introduction of Christianity, education, and modernisation.

Recent accounts of Mizo history such as F. Lalremsiama's *Milu Lak Leh Vai Run Chanchin* (1997) have begun to provide a postcolonial perspective pointing to the subterfuge and unfair means especially regarding negotiations and agreements by which some British colonial officers and administrators defeated some of the Mizo chiefs, and because of which accounts of Mizo history have often ended up portraying the Mizo chiefs as unwise and irrational. The writer C. Lalnunchanga has remarked on this aspect of colonial discourse among the Mizos in his novel *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006). In the preface to the novel, he has written about the need for making the future generations of Mizos realise the inaccuracy of the negative portrayal of the Mizo ancestors in colonial history.

He observed how this misconception is commonly found in Mizo popular culture in depictions of the Mizo ancestors on television or other platforms, as unintelligent and dull people who are physically stooped in posture and are barely able to enunciate words while speaking. He hopes to make the future Mizo generations realise that the Mizo ancestors were not backward and cowardly, but brave and intelligent even though their way of life was simple and not advanced in the modern sense. As examples of their intelligence, he points to their knowledge of the longest day of the year, their division of a year into twelve months, their knowledge of farming techniques and the implications of seasonal changes and patterns of rainfall for crop cultivation, as well as their ability to make gunpowder. As for their practice of raiding their neighbours, he says that it is not

because of their savagery but that history has shown that mighty races have always subjugated weaker ones over territorial expansion, which is the way of the world (7-9).

During colonial rule the chiefs were considered as representatives or agents of colonial rule and the enforcement of impressed labour and the imposition of taxes for every household was a source of burden to the general public, thus partly leading to the waning of the authority of the chiefs in their estimation. In *The Lushai Hills District Cover* (printed by the Tribal Research Institute of the Govt. of Mizoram in 1980), the Mizo chiefs, whose rule was retained by the colonial authorities albeit in a reduced form wherein many of the rights and privileges they had enjoyed in the pre-colonial era were curtailed, were expected to comply with the standing orders of the district. There was a village code which the chiefs had to read out once every month and which they had to explain to the village leaders if necessary, which was, "Those of us who are Christians agree to recognise that we should bow to the authority of those who introduced us to Christianity and that we shall be disloyal to them if we do not submit to the discipline which it is their prerogative to demand" (McCall, "The Lushai Hills" 32). The authority and superiority of the colonial authorities would have been further reinforced by such public declarations and acknowledgements of their authority.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview is essentially a hybrid formation of the interaction between Mizo culture and Western culture (Christianity) in the formation of the modern Mizo identity. It is a hybrid that includes the valorisation and reclamation of the history and culture of the Mizo past along with the influence of Mizo Christianity, literacy, and modernisation as the defining factors of the modern identity of the modern Mizo culture and identity. This study attempts to show how this worldview continues to inform and affect the modern Mizo identity formation and how it has impacted the existing literary discourse of Mizo novels as reflected in the thorough study of the six selected novels that span the years from 1936-2006. This research has sought to study the selected novels as emblematic of broader trends or patterns in Mizo novel writing, and the selected authors are some of the most popular and lauded among the Mizo readership. The findings show that Mizo novels, in general, follow a rigid pattern of representation that limits the scope of characterisation while projecting romance and aspects or practices of Mizo history and culture as key themes, and in which Christian didacticism continues to play a prominent

role. The key finding, however, is the formulation of the idea of Mizo postcolonial worldview, defining it as an amalgam of selective features of the pre-colonial and post-colonial Mizo world.

Colonialism, for the Mizo, resulted in entirely uprooting a way of life in which identity was linked to one's clan, or one's village and the chief, to that of identification with a singular Mizo identity with a shared cultural heritage, common language, and common religion with the near-complete Christianisation of the people within the twentieth century. Colonialism signalled the end of the rule of the Mizo chiefs by the mandate of the Mizo people in 1954. It ushered in a new class of the educated elite, as well as the merchant class with the introduction of formal education and the transition from a barter economy to a monetary economy. Colonialism caused a significant shift in the worldview from a life under the Mizo chiefs and the institution of the *zawlbuk* as a unifying force, to its rejection. It has resulted in the formation of a postcolonial worldview strongly informed by Mizo Christianity as a unifying force, but which has continued to embrace indigenisation in turn.

L. Biakliana who is the first Mizo novelist has, in the first Mizo novel *Hawilopari* (1936) made mention of a British army officer whom he portrays as a benevolent benefactor of the protagonist Hminga and his friends who have run away from their village, for he gave them a job and thus, a source of livelihood. They obey all the orders they receive as soldiers of the army and for that reason, often participate in checking the raids by the Mizo on the plains. One day, they get the opportunity to go back home to their village as part of the Lushai Expedition of 1872 against the Lushai Chiefs. In the novel, Hminga and his friends show no hesitation in participating. Perhaps this can be justified by the fact that the colonial administrators saw their action of punishment and subjugation of the Mizo chiefs as rightful and justified. According to colonial records, Mizo raids on the plains bordering their lands were considered as incursions on their territory. Thus, the two main expeditions (1871-72 and 1889-90), as well as other punitive expeditions, were considered as remedial measures necessitated for protecting their subjects and their trade interests in the region.

The lack of any sentiment of anger and indignation shown by Hminga and his friends in being a part of the British Indian Army in the Lushai Expedition, portrayed their sense of identification with the colonisers or the 'white man' who is perceived as the

benefactor. Comparisons can be drawn to the general Mizo perception of the 'white man' in a positive light, that is, as someone who introduced the good news of the Gospel, education, and modernity to the Mizo. In this respect, the writer appears to fit the description of the first phase of native writers as described by Fanon. On the other hand, the novelist C. Lalnunchanga can be considered as falling under the category of the third phase. His novel *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006), deals with the brave struggle of the Mizo chiefs against the incursion and the attempt to subjugate them by the British colonisers. Lalnunchanga's seminal work of postcolonial fiction can be regarded as signalling the postcolonial turn in the writing of Mizo novels.

Postcolonial studies attempts to define and express the condition of postcoloniality. Regarding postcolonial studies about the narrative of novels, initially, some of the main concerns had been the subversion of the colonial language, English, to 'write back' to the Empire which involved the attempt to inscribe and introduce writings in English from the postcolonial nations, on an equal footing with works from the English literary canons at the outset. However, given the geographical and cultural diversity of the countries that have been colonised, experiences of colonialism and cultural responses to colonial situations differ. Thereby, the Mizo cultural response to colonialism has not always been in terms of a deliberate and conscious engagement with western academia and with postcolonial studies, as seen among postcolonial writers of fiction. Owing to the lack of translation of Mizo novels into other languages and in catering solely to a Mizo readership, Mizo novels in general, have not deliberately engaged with postcolonial theory nor have they been written to be inscribed within an anti-colonial discourse or a decolonising project, with the exception of *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga. This is a novel that seeks to negate the effects of colonial ideology and discourse among the Mizos.

This thesis seeks to portray the impact of colonialism on Mizo society and its implications for the formation of the modern Mizo identity which has influenced the writing of Mizo novels. In this connection, an attempt has been made to depict the postcolonial assertion of the Mizo identity or cultural valorisation among the Mizos primarily through the depiction of the traditional Mizo society, and through stories that have been influenced by Mizo folktales and legends. In terms of identification with the land of Mizoram, the beauty of its natural landscape fosters a sense of nostalgia and belonging to a Mizo identity

or sense of self, as reflected in Mizo literature. This attachment has often been expressed in works of literature like songs, essays, poems, and novels. Such concepts will be explored in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the process of formation of a singular or common Mizo identity among the various Mizo sub-tribes will be explored. This chapter will also explore the process of 'othering' that has been compounded by colonisation and its aftermath, especially the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986). The implications of the resulting xenophobia of sorts directed against the Vai or the mainland Indians, which has translated into their being generally depicted as villains or enemies in Mizo novels, will be explored.

In Chapter 3, the influence of Christianity, colonial ideology, and colonial discourse on Mizo identity and literature (Mizo novels) will be studied. Mizo novels almost always have an explanatory preface in which the authors usually seek to explain their reasons for writing the novels. This practice appears to stem from their reluctance at offending the sentiments of their readers. Such acts of self-censorship are often found among Mizo writers owing to the influence of their identity as Mizo Christians. The idea of Mizo novels as vehicles for promoting Christian values and for reflecting the modern Mizo society and the moral degradation therein, will be studied as being influenced by Mizo Christianity. This aspect of the influence of Mizo Christian identity will be explored in this chapter.

To further nuance the study of the forms of representation in Mizo novels, the depiction of women in Mizo novels will be studied. The cultural politics behind the depiction of Mizo women in the novels will be studied to understand the position held by women in the Mizo Postcolonial worldview as seen in Chapter 4. This is to see whether the representation of women in Mizo literature prescribes their role in society, thereby resulting in their stereotyping and in limiting their voice and potential. The study includes the impact of changes in the worldview of women on their sense of self or selfhood owing to colonialism.

According to B. Lalthangliana's classification of periods in Mizo literature, L. Biakliana and Zikpuii Pa have been classified as authors belonging to the Middle period (1920-1965). The other writers James Dokhuma, C. Lalnunchanga, Khawlkungi, and Lalrammawia Ngente can be categorised as falling under the Modern period (1966-2000). To take a closer look at the novels selected for study in this research, the novel *Hawilopari*

(1936), hereafter referred to as HLP (1936), by L. Biakliana is a historical novel. It is the first Mizo novel to have been written, although it was published posthumously. Biakliana also wrote *Lali* (1937) the first Mizo short story, and composed songs as well. He was a promising young man who attended high school at Silchar, Assam and then went to college in Guwahati but unfortunately, he contracted tuberculosis and met with an early death.

In HLP (1936), the story takes place in an unnamed village east of Aizawl consisting of 1000 houses which shows that it is a rather big village. Lalthangliana has pointed out that the novel is didactic for the novelist has something to teach the youth, that is, true friendship even unto sacrificing one's life, which is the central theme of the novel. He has observed that true friendship which is of the kind that is held in high regard in the traditional Mizo culture, that is, *ṭhian chhan thih ngam* (which translates as, having the courage to die in order to save a friend) is shown in the character of Zema. This quality of selfless love and sacrifice for others, which value was held in utmost regard in the old Mizo society, and which reveals the Mizo moral code of *tlawmngaihna* is displayed in this novel in the character of Zema (308-309). In this manner, certain defining cultural traits of the traditional Mizo society have been shown.

K. C. Lalvunga, who writes under the nom-de-plume Zikpuii Pa, was a prolific writer who wrote many stories and essays during his lifetime. Unfortunately, several of his works could not be preserved due to its disappearance during the period of the *Rambuai* (1966-86). He was posthumously awarded 'Writer of the Century' (1900-1999) by the Government of Mizoram in 2000 and by the Mizo Academy of Letters in 2004. His novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*, (hereafter referred to as NKP (1989), portrays the protagonist Chhuanvawra as an educated Mizo young man who received higher education outside Mizoram and excelled at it. He even managed to clear the Indian Civil Service examinations and could have opted to join the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) stream but instead, opted to join the Indian Police Service (IPS) to locate the whereabouts of Ngurthansangi who had supposedly married an officer of the Indian Army during the *Rambuai* period.

The novel *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang*, hereafter referred to as ZTT (1977), written by Khawlkungi was the first Mizo novel by a Mizo woman. Khawlkungi was a Padma Shree awardee (1987) who made significant contributions to Mizo literature, especially in the fields of translation and children's literature. ZTT (1977) won the story writing competition

organised by the Christian Youth Fellowship in 1977 in Mizoram. It is a Christian love story, as mentioned in the preface to the novel. It is a didactic story that teaches the value of Christian morals, of good character, and conduct for which a person is richly rewarded. The protagonist Vanlalremi (Remi), who underwent many hardships, is richly rewarded in the end for staying true to her Christian beliefs and values.

James Dokhuma received the Mizo Academy Award in 1983, the Padma Shri Award in 1985, and the Bhasa Saman Award in 1997. Till the year 2000, he had written 42 books and 460 essays. He is well-known for his contribution towards enriching the Mizo language with his skills in writing, and his efforts towards collecting and preserving the Mizo language is notable. His novel *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii*, hereafter referred to as TNS (1981), is set in the Mizo pre-colonial society. It depicts how the protagonist Fehtea is falsely maligned and subjected to slander and portrayed as being promiscuous, lazy, and malicious for which he is reviled and subjected to scorn in his village. Fehtea endures his suffering in silence and with forbearance as befitting a *Pasalṭha* (who are known to be the embodiment of *tlawmngaihna* in the traditional Mizo society) who does not boast of his prowess in hunting or warfare. Fehtea kills the awe-inspiring *tumpangchal* (legendary wild gayal or mithun) and thus wins the hand of Saithangpuii, the daughter of the chief, in the process.

Lalrammawia Ngente is a writer whose works such as the one selected for study, *Damlai Thlan Thim,* hereafter referred to as DTT (2003), depicts the social evils that have befallen the Mizo society in the modern age, such as substance abuse (particularly alcohol abuse) and the broken lives and dysfunctional family settings which it engenders. His novel *Rintei Zunleng* (2009) was awarded the 'Book of the Year' award by the Mizo Academy of Letters in 2009. His novel DTT (2003) is a story told in the first-person perspective of Chhuana whose life goes into a downward spiral of alcoholism, criminality, and debauchery after the breakdown of the marriage of his parents due to his father's alcoholism and his mother's adulterous affair with a young man. Despite having a supportive foster family belonging to a good Christian background who were ready to accept him even after he served time in prison for murder, he remained unrepentant till the end. He finally met with a tragic fate wherein he lost his limbs in an accident and had no one to turn to in the end.

C. Lalnunchanga is a writer whose novel *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung*, hereafter referred to as PNH (2006), signalled the emergence of the first Mizo postcolonial novel. It attempts to rectify and overturn the effects of colonial discourse by which the Mizo have come to look on the Mizo ancestors and Mizo culture with a measure of disdain, that is, as belonging to a primitive past defined by savagery and foolishness. This novel was awarded the Book of the Year award in (2006) by the Mizo Academy of Letters. PNH (2006) is a historical novel in which the writer depicts the life and downfall of the fictitious Sailo chief Puilura who emerged to become one of the most formidable chiefs by the end of the nineteenth century. The novel is set against the backdrop of the Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 in which the Mizo chiefs were subjugated by the British colonial forces, thus paving the way for the setting up of British colonial rule in the region. Lalnunchanga particularly highlights the positive qualities of the Mizo chiefs such as their bravery, and valour as well as their skills in warfare which served to debunk the existing colonial discourse that projected the Mizo ancestors as foolish and cowardly.

The next chapter will trace the formation of the Mizo postcolonial identity and its impact on the writing of Mizo novels vis-à-vis the emergence of the Mizo cultural identity and its assertion. It will be seen that this postcolonial worldview comprises of the interplay between western culture that was imbibed, along with the reclamation and valorisation of traditional Mizo culture.

END NOTES

[1] *Zawlbuk* is a dormitory that houses young men of the village. The *zawlbuk* functions as an institution for training young men into becoming responsible adults and warriors ever ready to defend the village against wild animals and the threat of enemy raids. The men in the *zawlbuk* served as the standing army of the chief. It is an institution where Mizo cultural values, moral codes, and societal norms and practices such as *tlawmngaihna* have been handed down to the younger generations.

[2] *Tlawmngaihna* - It is the moral code of conduct that calls for selfless service to one's community or to others under all circumstances with no expectation of praise or rewards and is highly cherished as one of the defining traits of Mizo culture in the past and present. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo* (2010) describes *tlawmngaihna* as, "n. a term for the Mizo code of ethics meaning selfless service for the others. A compelling moral force which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the service of others; helpfulness, self-denial, altruism, unselfishness, sociability, bountifulness" (Vanlalngheta 441). *Tlawmngai* is the verb form and *tlawmngaih* is a variant form. *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) describes the word *tlawmngai* (verb form of *tlawmngaihna*) as, "1. to be self-sacrificing, unselfish, self-denying, persevering, stoical, stouthearted, plucky, brave, firm, independent (refusing help); to be loath to lose one's good reputation, prestige, etc. to be too proud or self-respecting to give in, etc. 2. to persevere, to endure patiently, to make light of personal injuries, to dislike making a fuss about anything. 3. to put one's own inclinations on one side and do a thing which one would rather not do, with the object either of keeping up one's prestige, etc, or of helping or pleasing another, or of not disappointing another, etc. 4. to do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to oneself or to one's own inclinations. 5. to refuse to give in, give way, or be conquered. 6. to not like to refuse a request; to do a thing because one does not like to refuse, or because one wishes to please others. 7. To act pluckily or show a brave front. (Also used as adj. and adv.)" (Lorrain 513). *Tlawmngaihna* is the Mizo moral code that defines the communitarian existence of the Mizo wherein qualities such as benevolence, self-sacrifice, courage, and forbearance for the sake of others in the village community are lauded and promoted.

[3] *Pasalṭha* - *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) describes the word *Pasalṭha* as, "n. a person who is brave and manly; a brave, a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter" (Lorrain 352). In the traditional Mizo society, the *Pasalṭha* were the group of warriors consisting of the bravest and noblest men who showed prowess in warfare and at the hunt. They protected the village and were a source of great comfort to all the villagers and were the embodiment of *tlawmngaihna*.

WORKS CITED

Abraham, Taisha. *Introducing Postcolonial Theories: Issues and Debates*. Macmillan, 2007.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Reprint, Routledge, 2012.

Chambers, O. A. *Handbook of the Lushai Country: Compiled* (*Under the Order of the Quarter Master General in India*) *in The Intelligence Branch*. 1899. Reprint, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2005.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington, trans. Penguin, 1967.

Foreign and Political Dept. Report, 1874, on Eastern Boundary of Hill Tippera. Firma KLM on Behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1980.

Foreign Department Report on Chin Lushai Hills, September 1892. Firma KLM on Behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1980.

Lalbiaknema, C. *Kan Chenna Mizoram*. Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1995.

Lalremsiama, F. *Milu Lak Leh Vai Run Chanchin*. MCL Publications, 1997.

Lalthangliana, B. *History of Mizo Literature: Mizo Thu leh Hla*. 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

Lewin, T. H. A *Fly on the Wheel, or How I Helped to Govern India*. 1912. Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, 2005.

—. *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language with Vocabularies and Popular Tales* (*Notated*). 1874. Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1984.

—. *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein: With Comparative Vocabulary of the Hill Dialects*. 1869. Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Department of Art & Culture, Government of Mizoram, 2004.

—. *Wild Races of the Eastern Frontier of India*. 1870. Reprint, Mittal Publications, 2004.

Lorrain, J. H. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. 4th Reprint, The Asiatic Society, 2008.

McCall, A. G. *Lushai Chrysalis; with a Foreword by Sir Keith Cantlie*. 1949. 2nd Reprint, Government of Mizoram, Tribal Research Institute, 2003.

McCall, A. G. *The Lushai Hills District Cover* (*1931-43*). Tribal Research Institute, 1980.

Nag, Sajal. *The Uprising: Colonial State, Christian Missionaries, and Anti-Slavery Movement in North-East India* (*1908-1954*). Oxford UP, 2016.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Pachuau, Joy L. K. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford UP, 2014.

Parry, N. E. *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*. 1928. Reprint, Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1928.

—. *Mizo Dan*. N. E. Parry, 1927.

—. *The Lakhers: With an Introduction and Supplementary Notes by J.H. Hutton.* Firma KLM Private Ltd. On behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1932.

Reid, A. S. *Chin-Lushai Land: Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country*. 1893. Reprint, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. For Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2008.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1978. Reprint, Penguin Books, 2003.

Sangkima. *Essays on the History of the Mizos*. Spectrum Publications, 2004.

Shakespear, John. *The Lushei Kuki Clans*. 1912. 3rd Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, 1975.

The Lushais 1878-1889. Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. 1978.

Vanlalngheta, J. T. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo*. 2010. 3rd ed., Lalchungnungi, 2015.

CHAPTER 2

MIZO POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY FORMATION AND THE WRITING OF MIZO NOVELS

In depicting the transition from the pre-colonial Mizo traditional worldview to a postcolonial worldview, this chapter will study the formation of the Mizo postcolonial identity and its impact on Mizo novels in terms of the assertion, preservation, and reclamation of Mizo cultural identity. The effects of colonialism on the formation of a unified and common Mizo identity and culture with which the various Mizo sub-tribes or clans have identified, and which has given rise to an ethnonationalism of sorts, will also be studied. Moreover, the development of an anticolonial discourse or postcolonial criticism of colonial discourse formation will be explored through the novel PNH (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga where he attempts to reclaim the integrity of Mizo culture and Mizo pride in their history and culture. The attempt at asserting, articulating, reclaiming, reconstituting, redefining, and valorising of one's cultural or ethnic identity by the colonised is a process commonly observed across historically post-colonial nations. Such a process has often been expressed through literature that emerged during colonial rule as a form of protest, and in the assertion of one's cultural identity through literature in the postcolonial world.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview comprises of the interplay between western culture and traditional Mizo culture, and between the exclusion of elements of Mizo traditional culture as heathenish and the postcolonial valorisation of it. This hybridised worldview and identity has resulted from the interaction between the continuing effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, and the emergence of the postcolonial attempt at negating such effects in the formation and assertion of the modern Mizo cultural identity. The modern Mizo identity which is hybrid in nature continues to undergo a process of redefinition, reconstitution, and restructuring on account of this negotiation, between the ideological influence of colonialism and the postcolonial attempt to reclaim the culture of the past.

Colonial ideology and colonial discourses seek to instil notions of the superiority of the coloniser's culture, nation, and race over the colonised, thus leading to the negation of the legitimacy, authority, and autonomy of the culture and cultural achievements of colonised nations. The imposed authority and rule over nations or territories, by which colonialism functioned, was brought about primarily through military conquest and political and economic control. In the wake of decolonisation, the effects of this epistemic violence on the colonised resulted in a crisis in identity among them. Abraham has observed this

crisis in identity is at the heart of postcolonial studies. She defines it as such, "The crisis in identity related to structural imbalance, cultural imperialism, geographic displacement, political hegemony, the privileging of official history, and the psychological impact of these systems of knowledge on constituting the colonial subject is vital to postcolonial theories" (5). Such an impact has also been felt among the Mizos in the formation of a common and homogeneous Mizo identity as a result of colonial rule.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview and identity which is hybrid in nature has emerged through the dialectical relationship, interplay, and at times, tension between westernisation and indigenisation, and this process continues to inform the modern Mizo worldview and identity. Within this dialectic, westernisation has been perceived as a positive development towards modernity and progress, and Christianity has significantly moulded and shaped the cultural frame of reference. This is manifested in the easy acceptance of, and affinity towards westernisation, especially among the younger generations, coupled with the indigenisation of Mizo culture. Therefore, the Mizo postcolonial worldview is essentially a hybridised formation where one can locate the lasting influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, as well as the emergence of a postcolonial mindset seeking to assert the Mizo identity and to valorise the culture of the precolonial past.

Hybridity is indeed one of the central concepts in postcolonialism or postcolonial studies and may be observed in culture, identity, or language. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define hybridity as, "One of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. As used in horticulture, the term refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species. Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc." ("Post-Colonial Studies" 108). The complex nature of the formation of the modern Mizo identity and culture is observed as resulting from the hybridity that has emerged at the meeting point between the traditional Mizo culture and the effects and after-effects of colonial rule, thus giving rise to the modern Mizo identity. It is a point wherein the influences of Christianity, traditional Mizo culture, and western culture continue to negotiate the terms of their influence upon modern Mizo identity and culture in an ongoing process of reconstitution, renegotiation, and restructuring.

The word hybridity originated from a term in biology wherein a hybrid is a cross between two different species of the plant or the animal kingdom. Robert J. C. Young points out that the word "hybrid" has etymological roots in the Latin word hybrida, which is described as, "The offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar" (5). During the nineteenth century, when British colonial expansion was at its height, and at a time when the Eurocentric theory of racial difference was based on the faulty belief in its justification through biology, much vitriolic attack was reserved for hybridity during a time when the idea of racial purity was brought into focus as part of a colonialist discourse of racism. According to Young, during the nineteenth century the word 'hybrid' was a word used to refer to physiological phenomenon while in the twentieth century, it has led to, "…questions about how contemporary thinking has broken absolutely with the racialised formulations of the past" (5). It was with Homi Bhabha's conceptualisation of the term 'hybridity' in *The Location of Culture* (1994) that it became legitimised as a concept for defining postcolonial cultural states and interactions in which the cultural interaction mutually transfigures the participating cultures (the coloniser and the colonised) in complex ways.

In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha has elaborated on a "contact zone" between the coloniser and the colonised which he determines as an interstitial space which he described as indeterminate, liminal, contingent, ambiguous, and within the ambivalent borderline of hybridity. This is a zone that works against the essentialising and homogenisation of cultural identities. However, there are those who argue against this, such as R. Radhakrishnan who has noted the dominance of the West in hybridity, while observing the need for the postcolonial hybrid "to compile a laborious "inventory of one's self"' and, on the basis of that complex genealogical process, produce her own version of hybridity and find political legitimacy for that version" (753). He thus states his view, "My general contention is that, although avant-garde theories of hybridity would have us believe that hybridity is "subject-less," i.e., that it represents the decapitation of the subject and the permanent retirement of identitarian forms of thinking and belonging, in reality, hidden within the figurality of hybridity is the subject of the dominant West" (753).

Radhakrishnan has noted how postcolonial hybridity, which is characterised by expressions of extreme pain and agonising dislocations, is in a frustrating search for constituency and a legitimate political identity. He has thus observed "a) that heterogeneity

or even hybridity is written into the postcolonial experience, and b) that there is a relationship of historical continuity, however problematic, between colonialism and nationalism, and nationalism and its significant Other, the diaspora" (753). Therefore, the emergence of the hybridised Mizo identity as a product of colonialism and its cultural influences, has sought legitimacy through the formation of singular or shared Mizo identity with common points of identification. The crystallisation of the common Mizo identity is based on a shared historical experience beginning with the rule of the Sailo chiefs and their subjugation by the British colonisers. This also includes a shared Christian religion and hybridised cultural identity that emerged as a result, and a common language (Mizo) and political identity formed by the demarcation of a distinct geographical location, that is, the state of Mizoram. The formation of the modern Mizo identity can be seen as the attempt towards the homogenisation and essentialisation of this culture and identity. This has given rise to an ethnonationalism or a cultural nationalism of sorts pertaining to the Mizo as a people with a distinct culture and identity.

Colonial discourse infantilises the native or the colonised by controlling them. But this control is undermined by the ambivalence that arises out of the inscrutability of the colonised, who uses mimicry as a weapon or form of resistance. Thus, the colonised can escape the mould in which he or she has been cast by the coloniser, through the repetition and displacement of stereotypes in the colonial discourse (Abraham 114). Helen Tiffin has noted the function of stereotypes in creating binaries, "In colonialist discourse the potency of the stereotype depends not just on its fixity and its endless repetition but on the binaristic codifications that serve as inescapable foundations. Such rigidly maintained binaries as colonizer/colonized; master/slave; white/black; 'European'/'native' are, of course, also hierarchized" (154).

In the Mizo context, colonial discourse, which includes missionary discourse, has generally stereotyped and portrayed the Mizo ancestors as foolish and savage head-hunters who follow a heathenish faith involving the worship of demons. The use of mimicry as a weapon to displace such stereotypes can be seen in the indigenisation of Mizo Christianity that was actuated with the various religious revivals. Mizo Christians began incorporating aspects or elements of traditional culture into Christianity which came as a shock to the

missionaries. The resulting hybridised Christian practices and hybridised Christian literature paved the way for the development of modern Mizo literature and cultural practices.

Bhabha introduced the term ambivalence into colonial discourse theory in which it represents the complex relationship of attraction and repulsion between the coloniser and the colonised. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have noted that Bhabha's ambivalence undermines the authority of colonial domination by complicating the simple relationship between the coloniser and the colonised since it disrupts the aim of colonial discourse to produce compliant subjects who will 'mimic' the coloniser and reproduce his assumptions, habits, and values. Instead, it produces ambivalent subjects alternating between mimicry and mockery which is "fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance" and is therefore not necessarily disempowering for it can be "ambi-valent or 'two-powered'." Therefore, ambivalence (the simultaneous attraction and repulsion) disturbs and undermines the authority of colonial discourse ("Post-Colonial Studies" 10).

Bhabha writes that "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (122). He also states that, "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object" (126).

Ambivalence in the context of the Mizo colonial situation can be observed in the process of indigenisation of Mizo Christianity brought about by the religious revivals (*Harhna*) which came as a shock to the missionaries. The incorporation of traditional cultural elements, which they had considered as heathenish, into the practice of Mizo Christianity went against their westernised sensibilities and their ideas of Christian forms of worship. These revivals ultimately led to the acceptance of aspects of traditional Mizo culture within Mizo Christianity. Although Christianisation and the introduction of formal education was intended to create a civilised colonial subject, instead, the emergence of Mizo cultural elements in Mizo Christianity has thus unsettled colonial dominance by bringing about the element of mimicry and its disruption of authority through the

indigenisation of Mizo Christianity. The process of indigenisation that began with the revivals initiated the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview through which the culture and literature of the precolonial Mizo past began to be reclaimed and valorised.

The continuation of the effects of colonial ideology in the modern Mizo society is mainly through Mizo Christianity as an institution. Only those components of the traditional Mizo culture or Mizo cultural traits and practices which were considered as being aligned with Christian values and teachings, have been accepted into the modern Mizo identity and worldview. Mizo Christianity has become an indispensable part of the modern Mizo culture and identity. This aspect will be dealt with in Chapter 3. At the same time, with the emerging postcolonial awareness, Mizos have begun to recognise the effects of this ingrained nature of colonial ideology and have sought to challenge it. Although Mizo traditional culture of the pre-colonial past has been reclaimed and asserted in the light of the postcolonial worldview, it has historically been considered with a certain measure of disdain and wariness within Mizo Christianity. This is owing to it being considered as part of a heathen past.

With the introduction of education among the Mizo, there emerged a growing sense of awareness about the postcolonial quest for authenticity and the importance of finding and asserting one's cultural and ethnic identity in the world stage. Thus, began the emergence of the Mizo national consciousness in terms of conceptualising the Mizo identity as a singular or common identity where before, there was no unified singular Mizo identity since identity in the pre-colonial traditional Mizo society was attached to one's village or clan (sub-tribe). It was this growing sense of awareness about the need to respect, preserve, uphold, reinvigorate, and valorise one's cultural heritage that the educated Mizo, who received higher education even up to the professional level in the cities beyond its borders such as Shillong, Calcutta, and Guwahati, began writing novels. The formation of this identity has been initiated, to a certain extent, by colonialism and points to the building up of a common identity across the slight differences in culture, language, manner of dressing, and indigenous faith practices of the various Mizo sub-tribes.

During colonialism, new literary forms such as essays and novels were introduced by Mizo writers, inspired by Western literary forms. Although the novel is western in form, the early Mizo novelists have not imitated western ideas or models and have drawn from Mizo folktales and legends. They sought to tell stories that were distinctly Mizo in

character. Mizo novels are essentially hybrid in form, for they draw upon the oral literature of the past and the form of English novels of western literature. Over the twentieth century and beyond, the novel has become one of the most prolific forms of literary expression among the Mizo. It was this newfound appreciation for the Mizo cultural heritage coupled with the need and awareness for preserving it thus, that Mizo novelists began delving into the literary heritage of the pre-modern traditional past such as folksongs (or song-poems), proverbs, myths, legends, sayings and folktales as inspiration for their stories.

According to missionary J. Meirion Lloyd, for the Mizo in the colonial period, "the identity of the race and the continuity of racial consciousness remained strong and was possibly heightened." It appears that such a consciousness ensured the survival of ancient folktales, proverbs, poetry composed in the *upa tawng* (older form of the Mizo language or language used in the past), words, idioms, and turns of phrases. The Mizo retained the proverbs used in the pre-colonial society. They were much cherished and published after the onset of the print culture (116). The influence of Mizo legends and folktales can be traced in the depiction of Hminga whose cruel stepmother who mistreated him in HLP (1936). Mizo folktales and legends often contain stories about orphans. In particular, the influence of Mizo folktales and legends can be felt in the emphasis on the *pasalṭha* as the hero, and through the virtue rewarded, vice punished mode that continues to be the overarching theme in Mizo novels albeit in a hybridised and Christianised version.

Attempts at cultural reclamation and assertion of the Mizo identity by Mizo writers and especially novelists have taken place among Mizo writers and especially novelists, who have taken on the role of restoring, reviving, and reclaiming pride in their culture and cultural heritage. This is observed in the cultural self-expression seen in the novels about the Mizo society of the past. Such Mizo novels assert and express the Mizo identity through displays of Mizo cultural traits such as *lunglenna*[1], *tlawmngaihna* (moral code of conduct geared towards selfless service to one's community or others), and the bravery and courage of the *pasalṭha* (warrior/warriors). In the process of reclamation of the past, Mizo writers have been influenced by the need to project a common Mizo identity and to portray the *pasalṭha* as the embodiment of Mizoness of Mizo identity to fit the present needs of the Christianised modern Mizo society.

The attempt at asserting the Mizo identity can be seen in the attempt by Mizo writers at presenting an idealised Mizo past that was portrayed as dignified and orderly to the Mizo readership. This includes the depiction of the moral code of conduct called *tlawmngaihna* as the chief ideal and the driving spirit which touched upon all aspects of their life. Such a view of the past is in line with the Christian teaching of selflessness, self-sacrifice, and could thus fit into a Mizo ethnicity and cultural identity where Mizo Christianity is the legitimising authority. T. Vanlaltlani has observed that Mizo identity or Mizoness is revealed in acts of kindness shown towards those who face disasters or misfortune, sickness and death. They willingly give their time, money, and service to those that require it (168).

Mizo novels depicting the precolonial past idealise the *pasalṭha* as cultural icons of the past and present. In the novels, commoners who were considered as *pasalṭha* have been portrayed as being married to the daughters of chiefs. In the selected novels, we find examples of these in TNS (1981) and PNH (2006). Although the portrayal of the *pasalṭha* being elevated to the status of marrying the daughter of a chief is portrayed in Mizo novels, it appears that this a more historically recent development. Even in TNS (1981) Saithangpuii is described as the only daughter of the chief whom the ordinary or poor would not dare to attempt to marry (26). In the past, James Dokhuma has said that daughters of chiefs had a high bride price and would typically look out for sons of chiefs for a husband. Thus, it was difficult for young men from impoverished backgrounds to even consider marrying them. He also said that, at an earlier time, ordinary men could be killed for falling in love and sleeping with the daughter of a chief (175-176).

In speaking about the transformation in the politics of representation of black culture, Stuart Hall has noted in the article "New Ethnicities" that "how things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation— subjectivity, identity, politics—a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life" (Ashcroft et al, "The Post-Colonial" 224). The depiction of the Mizo historical past as the age of the *pasalṭha* in Mizo novels is a reflection of their postcolonial worldview by which they have asserted the Mizo identity by depicting Mizo culture as something differentiated from western

culture. This has helped to cement their status as heroic figures in the Mizo literary and cultural imagination.

Colonialism impacted the formation of a singular Mizo identity, a common language, and a common religion, that is, Christianity. Consequently, there has been an attempt in Mizo historiography to subsume the identity and distinctiveness of the various sub-tribes under a common Mizo identity. The attempt at essentialising or homogenising Mizo culture or identity can be attributed as having begun with the onset of the process of indigenisation that emerged in Mizo Christianity. The concept of the golden age of the *pasalṭha* as portrayed in Mizo storytelling has become an indispensable and formative component of the reclamation of pride in Mizo history and identity. The occurrence of religious revivals in Mizo Christianity resulted in an attempt to arrive at a point of commonality between the value system of the traditional Mizo society and the value system upheld by Christianity. In this regard, it appears that *tlawmngaihna* as a value system, a moral code of conduct, a code of conduct, or a code of ethics, has been singled out as the defining trait since it embodies the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice and selfless service to others.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview can thus be considered as giving rise to a process of restriction of scope for literary expression in the Mizo novels. There is a prevailing discourse in Mizo novel writing which has given rise to an observable pattern or structure of representation. As a result, the Mizo identity and Mizo society have commonly been portrayed in a particular manner, that is, through stock characters and situations, or storylines using the form of realist or historical novels. The Mizo postcolonial worldview as reflected in the Mizo novels plays a constitutive role in reinforcing notions of the Mizo novelist as a representative of Mizo culture, beliefs, and traditions. Therefore, Mizo novelists assume the authoritative position of responsibility in presenting the novel as a mirror and a lens through which Mizo society of the past and the present have been reflected because of which Mizo novels and the characters have been expected to have verisimilitude value.

Thus, the emergence of the modern Mizo identity led to the formation of a discourse in Mizo novels by which the precolonial past has been portrayed in a particular manner, that is, as the golden age of the *pasalṭha* under the rule of the Sailo chiefs. This refers to a portrayal in which only certain features of the past society are prominently featured such

as the bravery and prowess of the *pasalṭha* at hunting and warfare, and the trials and triumphs they face in their relationships or their love life. In this manner, one can locate an overarching functioning literary discourse under which Mizo writers practice novel writing. The term "literary discourse" is used in this instance to denote a rigid pattern or trend of storytelling which the Mizo reading public has come to expect and enjoy. It is a discourse that has stemmed from the attempt at depicting Mizo identity and culture through valorisation and idealisation of the past.

Following the purpose of this research, the process of tracing the shift in the worldview of Mizo society from a tribal society to a modernised and Christianised one necessitates a comparative analysis of this shift, and its impact on literary production. It is to be understood that the Mizo identity has constantly undergone a process of change, redefinition, and reconfiguration throughout Mizo history. Their semi-migratory mode of existence can be attributed as having contributed to this change to a great extent. It was this practice of migration which impeded the formation of the Mizo sub-tribes into one united whole. As denoted earlier, the lack of information about their migratory trail beyond their settlement in the Kabaw valley of Burma (believed to be around 800-1200 AD) makes it difficult to trace the formation of the Mizo worldview in the past. This is because extant forms of the traditional oral literature were documented after literacy was introduced by the Christian missionaries who developed the Mizo alphabet based on the Hunterian system of the Roman script.

Extant forms of their cultural knowledge transmitted across generations and as seen in their oral literature reveal their worldview. This included the recognition and appreciation of the beauty of their natural surroundings, their belief in the afterlife, their struggle for survival, and the fears they had to contend with in their daily lives in the face of constant threats to their existence such as epidemics, natural disasters, wild animals, enemies, and evil spirits who were believed to cause illnesses. It appears that the worldview in the traditional Mizo society was driven to a great extent by fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar, which mainly concerns the world of the spirits. Their world was divided into the realm of humans and spirits, both beneficent and malevolent. Human actions could inadvertently lead to angering or displeasing these evil spirits, which could result in sickness or death. In such circumstances, the spirits were appeased through ritual sacrifices of

animals conducted by the *bawlpu*, the priest specially assigned for such a task. Since their survival depended upon paddy cultivation as a means of sustenance, they had to face the fear of not being able to cultivate adequate amounts to last them through the year.

An important aspect of postcolonial studies is the recovery or reclamation and revaluing of indigenous histories. Accounts of Mizo history by colonial era ethnographers (political administrators and missionaries) and Mizo writers have mainly focused on the rule of the Sailo clan since colonial takeover historically coincided with the time of the rule of the Sailo chiefs. Such accounts begin with the emergence of the system of the rule of Mizo chiefs after the Mizos had migrated to the Chin Hills region (1200) adjacent to present-day Mizoram (which they entered around 1700 AD) from the Kabaw valley region in Burma (present-day Myanmar). Before the rule of the Sailo chiefs, the Mizo tribe did not have the system of hereditary chiefs. Each clan would choose the man who was bravest in defending the village as the ruler (Dokhuma 147). However, the depiction of the precolonial past in Mizo novels as the age of the *pasalṭha* under the rule of the chiefs reveals the consideration of Mizo history as beginning with colonisation.

As a critic who is dissatisfied with the construction of history on the terms of others, that is, the colonisers, Aijaz Ahmad has stated in 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality' (1995) that, "It is worth remarking, though, that is periodising out history in the triadic terms of pre-colonial, colonial post-colonial, the conceptual apparatus of 'postcolonial criticism' privileges as primary the role of colonialism as the principle of structuration in that history, so that all that came before colonialism becomes its own prehistory and whatever comes after can only be lived as infinite aftermath" (qtd. in Childs and Williams). It can be said that colonialism helped foster the creation of a common Mizo identity that subsumed differences between the various Mizo subtribes. This shared identity involved the selection of the Lusei (transliterated as Lushai) language of the Sailo chiefs as the official language, the subjugation of all the Mizo chiefs under one administrative rule, the setting up of the boundary lines marking out the geographical terrain of the Mizo, and the introduction of a common religion, Christianity.

Mangkhosat Kipgen traced the emergence of the Sailo clan and noted that during the stay of the Zos (the Mizo) in the plains of Burma, they "maintained something of a national character". However, upon entering the Chin Hills with steep mountains and

deep gorges, they began to split into smaller groups often with families of the same clan settling in the same area since there was no flat land large enough to hold large settlements. Owing to the increasing lack of communication between clans that were now scattered, differences in language, manner of dressing, customs and practices began to occur, and over time, clan feuds began to emerge because of the fight over land for cultivation. Ultimately, they "completely lost their sense of national identity" (42). The absence of an authoritative figure proved to be a disadvantage since the Falams, the Hakas, and the Suktes (collectively called Pawi or Pawih) were formidable enemies and a constant source of threat. Under such circumstances, a man called Zahmuaka was persuaded, albeit reluctantly, to become the chief of the Zos. The six sons of Zahmuaka, namely, Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Ṭhangura, Rivunga, and Rokhuma became chiefs over villages. Among them, the descendants of Ṭhangura came to be known as the Sailo chiefs who were the wisest and most powerful among the chiefs (43).

In the traditional Mizo society, the chief played a crucial role, for he was the administrator, judge, and guardian who looked after the safety of the village and maintained law and order. The Mizo chiefs arbitrated over matters of dispute within the village and had the authority to settle inter-village disputes. They were responsible for ensuring that the village had enough food reserves (rice) for sustenance and so, they distributed land for cultivation among the villagers based on a system of allotment. Families who were industrious and capable of reaping abundant harvests could choose the best areas of land for cultivation. It was a system of rule that ensured that even the poor and destitute were taken care of. The poorest of the village and the destitute could avail of the option to become a *bawi* (a position akin to slaves but not precisely the same, for they were better off than slaves and could work to earn their freedom). The chief always had the *bawi* as part of his household to serve him. The *bawi* cultivated the lands which the chief chose for himself, which were among the most fertile in the region. The villagers had to pay a tax consisting of a portion of rice from their produce. With this tax, the chief could provide for the destitute who had no choice but to opt to become a *bawi*.

In the pre-colonial society, Mizo identity was based on their attachment to the village and the chief, and this ensured protection and provided a sense of belonging. Being a society where inter-village wars and raids happened, the strength of a chief lay in his

warriors, and the institution of the *zawlbuk* was the training ground where young boys were, upon reaching puberty, encouraged, taught, and trained to become brave warriors or *pasalṭha*. N. Chatterji has defined the *zawlbuk* as, "the crucible wherein the Mizo youth, the marginal man was shaped into the responsible adult member of their society" (61). Thus, much honour and respect was conferred on those men who became *pasalṭha* (men skilled at hunting and warfare) who, with bravery and resilience, were ready to lay down their lives for their village community. The *pasalṭha* were regarded as the ultimate embodiment of the Mizo moral code or behavioural ideal of *tlawmngaihna*, which can be regarded as the defining and distinctive Mizo cultural trait which advocates for self-discipline, self-sacrifice, selflessness, and service to one's community. Accounts of Mizo history often depict Mizo legends which include accounts of famous *pasalṭha* such as Mizo legends contain accounts of many famous *pasalṭha* such as Chawngbawla, Taitesena, Khuangchera, Zampuimanga, Neuva, Vanapa, and Saizahawla. They were admired and respected and have become symbols of the glory days of the Mizo past in the modern Mizo cultural imaginary through their common depiction as heroes in Mizo novels.

Colonial era accounts have tended to focus on the Sailo clan and its culture and traditions as representative of the history of the Mizo tribe as seen in *Mizo Chanchin* (*An account of the Mizo*) (1938) by Liangkhaia, which is the earliest record of Mizo history by a Mizo. Under such a narrative, accounts of the cultural practices of other Mizo clans, which slightly vary from that of the Sailo clan, tend to be side-lined. Other Mizo historians have also followed this model of delineating the history of the Mizo, wherein the culture, customary practices, and traditions of the Sailo clan have been considered and accepted as the common cultural heritage of the 'Mizo tribe'. L. Keivom has also pointed to this depiction of Mizo history as focusing solely on the Sailo clan to the exclusion of other clans. He laments the quick acceptance, consolidation, and labelling of the Lusei language (formerly known as the Duhlian dialect spoken by the Sailo chiefs) of the Sailo clan as the 'Mizo language.' He observes that this Lusei language was the seat upon which words from other languages like English, Hindi, Burmese, Meitei and other languages from the surrounding areas were absorbed to form a richer and more inclusive language. He has observed that this has resulted in alienating and excluding many of other Zo clans and sub-

tribes living outside the borders of Mizoram who do not speak the Lushai (Lusei) language ("Zoram Khawvel" 32-33).

The essentialisation of the Mizo identity into a single, shared, and common 'Mizo' identity has involved the co-optation of the various Mizo sub-tribes who came to inhabit the land of Mizoram by the nineteenth century and most of whose ancestry can be traced to a common descent. John Mcleod has stated, "Nations are often underwritten by the positing of a common historical archive that enshrines the common past of a collective 'people'… In reality, there are as many different versions of history as there are narrators; but a national history makes *one* particular version of the past the only version worthy of study" (70). Radhakrishnan conceptualises identity as being formed from the multiplication of spaces into time, thus suggesting , "a) that the concept of identity is in fact a normative measure that totalizes heterogeneous "selves" and "subjectivities" and b) that the normative citizenship of any identity within its own legitimate time or history is an ideological effect that secures the regime of a full and undivided Identity. And in our own times, whether we like it or not, the dominant paradigm of identity has been "the imagined community" of nationalism" (752). He explains how this idea of multiplying spaces and time is particularly appropriate for those peoples who lived in their own spaces and had their own different sense of history before colonialism was forced on them. However, he is careful to note that this does not point to a "pure undifferentiated indigeny before colonialism" or that there were no other conquests (752).

Although the concept of a of common and pure essence of Mizo identity is a postcolonial formation, historical events have also paved the way towards the creation of this common and shared Mizo identity. The establishment of the rule of the Sailo chiefs throughout Mizoram by the nineteenth century helped place the Lusei dialect in a position of prominence. The Lusei dialect began to be accepted as the lingua franca for the Mizo by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, when the colonial takeover of the Lushai Hills began in 1890, the colonial government accepted the Lusei language (which they called Lushai in official records) as the official language of the Mizo.

The Lushai language was used as a medium of instruction in formal education by the missionaries who introduced a written script for it, based on the Roman alphabet. This language was also used in the translation of the bible and in the translation as well as

composition of Christian songs. This led to the enrichment of Mizo literature, both secular and religious. It also led to the transcription of the oral traditions of the Mizo into the written form which has helped to preserve their rich cultural heritage. Moreover, it helped in consolidating the emergent singular Mizo identity. The Mizos began using the term 'Mizo' as a signifier of their common identify although there is no consensus nor definite knowledge as to its origin. The term 'Mizo' was officially used for the first time in *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih* (1898) (it was a handwritten cyclostyled Mizo journal or newspaper which was the first of its kind) in which the term referred to the ruling Sailo clan.

The Indian government officially recognised the word Mizo for the first time in 1954 when the name 'Lushai Hills' was changed to 'Mizo Hills.' The first Mizo political party, the Mizo Union used the term as a name for their party in 1946. According to Lalthangliana, although scholars and historians have not provided the time of origin nor source of the emergence of the word 'Mizo', it is significant that after the Mizo chief Bengkhuaia captured Mary Winchester on January 1971 at Alexandrapur, she was named Zoluti. The term 'Mizo' has been used by the Mizo people as a collective term of identification since a long time. This is borne out in works like T. H. Lewin's book *Progressive Colloquial Exercise in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language* (1874), in *Mizo leh Vai Thawnthu* (Stories about the Mizo and the Vai) which came out in 1898, and the *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu* (Accounts of the Mizo and the Vai) which appeared in 1902. In 1903, the missionary Zosapthara (Edwin Rowlands) composed a song which was included in the Middle School Textbook, *Bu Lai II* (1909) in which the lyrics speak about pride in the Mizo identity, the Mizo clan, the land and the natural landscape of Mizoram ("Mizo Identity" 18).

Although the pre-colonial Mizo society placed the chief and the village as a point of identification fostering a sense of belonging among the Mizo tribes, their denigration under colonial rule can be regarded as an effect of colonial ideology. Mizo novels have helped to counter colonial discourse by portraying the Mizo *pasalṭha* of the pre-colonial society as brave and noble and not head-hunting savages as they had been perceived and depicted in colonial discourse. However, this reclamation of the Mizo past and the assertion of the Mizo cultural identity through the characterisation of the

pasalṭha as the essential Mizo subject serves to limit the scope of Mizo storytelling by confining Mizo subjectivity only to a particular type.

The onset of colonial rule in 1890 significantly diminished the authority of the Mizo chiefs. By the end of colonial rule, the rise of political awareness and the emergence of politics (the emergence of Mizo Union Party in 1946) brought the rule of the Mizo chiefs to an end in 1954. The chiefs were not without their faults, and there have been instances of misuse of power and privileges both in the past and during colonial rule. During colonial rule, although the rule of the chiefs was retained by the colonial administrators for the sake of convenience, they were placed in charge of trials for petty offences and collection of tax (tribute) from each household, as well as the provision of indentured labour from their own villages.

The number of chiefs in Mizoram increased from 60 to 350 with the process of decentralisation of the power of the chiefs initiated by the colonial administrator J. Shakespear. According to Subhas Chatterjee in Mizo Chiefs and the Chiefdom (1995), this was based on the idea that this would help to undermine the political power of the powerful Mizo chiefs (qtd. in Lawmsanga 71). The British administration took away many of their rights such as the right to order capital punishment, the right to seize the property and food stores of those villagers who wanted to transfer their allegiance, the right to tax traders within their jurisdiction, proprietary rights over their land, and the right to freedom of action in appointing their sons as chiefs under their jurisdiction (McCall 202). The curtailment of their rights vastly diminished their power.

The introduction of 'land settlement' was done for the convenience of administrative purposes and to assert influence over the society (Lalfakzuala 158-159). The permanent 'land system' put in place by the colonial authorities at the beginning of colonial rule in the form of the '*ramri lehkha'* (boundary papers) demarcated the territories of the Mizo chiefs and ended the raids and warfare among them. This vastly diminished their rule. Besides this, the role of the chiefs became a nominal one after the introduction of money economy and formal education that led to salaried jobs and the formation of the educated elite who became figures of authority in politics, religion, and administration. The chiefs became mere figureheads and rulers by proxy for the colonial administration. And although it was in the policy of the colonial administrators to try and preserve the culture and

customs of the people, the Mizo people decided to do away with the *zawlbuk* and eventually, the chiefs in 1954. The removal of the institution of the *zawlbuk* virtually signalled the end of rule of chiefs.

The colonial administrator McCall noted how colonialism affected the Mizo chiefs who without any training, were forced to adapt from "a one-village life, secured by force of arms, to life within a whole land of Lushai villages, secured by the Pax Britannica." They had to deal with the peculiar conditions brought about by European missionaries "spreading their ideas on religion among an emotional people". Then he also noted the rise of "an oligarchy, or intelligentsia" and concluded that with the emergence of such conditions unfamiliar to them, there was "no strong counter-machinery" capable of encouraging the Lushai chiefs to withstand such shocks (243).

Thus, in tracing the formation of the Mizo postcolonial identity and worldview, one must understand how colonial ideology and colonial discourse came to ingrain notions of the racial and cultural superiority of the colonisers and the inferiority of the Mizo chiefs and the traditional Mizo culture. The introduction of formal education by the missionaries helped to impress the notion of the superiority of the white man and his culture. In Mizoram, the missionaries had complete authority over colonial education and the development of the curriculum in the schools. In addition, the successful conversion to Christianity ensured that the missionaries who introduced Christianity were greatly respected and admired by the Mizo, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

In tribal societies like the Mizo, cultural practices and indigenous faith practices tend to be interlinked as seen in the faith practice concerning the *thangchhuah*[2] status, the achievement of which accorded an honoured and respected status in the traditional society. After Christianisation and modernisation, with the Mizo society was suddenly catapulted from a traditional tribal society into a semi-modernised society, there emerged a disconnection between Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity. There was no place for the practice of traditional Mizo culture within the ambit of Christianity since all aspects of their culture was linked to their indigenous faith practice.

The idea of the sacred and the profane or that of good versus evil as embodied in the Christian binary worldview had a profound effect on the Mizo psyche. In particular, the Mizo cultural revival called the *Puma Zai*[3] which is a kind of folk song that emerged in

1908-1909 influenced the early Mizo Church leaders and the missionaries to take up a strong stand against the inclusion of elements of the traditional Mizo culture into Mizo Christianity. The *Puma Zai*, also referred to as the heathen revival, effectively influenced the early Mizo converts to Christianity to revert to their traditional faith practice owing to the appeal it held, especially in terms of its emotive appeal in connection to the Mizo cultural concept of *lunglenna* which is strongly linked to songs or the act of singing.

The emergence of the *Puma Zai* or the *Tlanglam zai* soon after the first religious revival in the Mizo Church in 1906 had occurred, was instrumental in influencing the early Mizo Christians to enforce a complete break between Christianity and Mizo culture. Christianity in Mizoram began to take the form of a direct attack on traditional culture after the first revival wave (1906). The popular songs that were composed using the tune of the *Puma Zai* were commemorated with celebratory feasts amidst a traditional cultural feast-like atmosphere by many of the Mizo chiefs, most of whom had not yet embraced Christianity.

It was at this point that the concept of the sacred and profane, as applicable to the context of Christianity as a belief system, began to be deeply ingrained within Mizo society. This helped in deeply ingraining Manichean conceptual structures among Mizo Christians because of which the duality of Christianity and the heathen past, good and evil, sacred and profane has impacted the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview. Ever since, the negotiation or the interplay and relationship between Mizo Christianity and Mizo culture within the modern postcolonial worldview or modern identity has always been in terms of exclusion or inclusion of elements, aspects, or practices of the traditional Mizo culture within the modern Mizo Christianity.

In the history of Mizoram, the process of indigenisation of Mizo Christianity occurred through various religious revivals, and the major ones among which took place in 1906, 1913, 1919, 1930-1935, 1945, 1984, 1987, and 2014-2015 although there is no clearly defined timeline for when these revivals have ended for once they began, they would spread to other villages. The religious revivals followed upon the Welsh revival of 1904-1905 led by Evan Roberts in Wales, and the Khasi revival among the Khasi people. The revivals had far-reaching implications for how Mizo Christianity and Mizo identity formation would develop since it led to the indigenisation of Mizo Christianity especially

in terms of worship in the churches. At the same time, it created a deep-rooted mistrust and lack of connection to the traditional Mizo culture and traditions which came to be regarded as being part of a heathen and demonic past.

The early Mizo Church and the Mission (the apex body of the missionaries) had strictly rejected all aspects of the traditional Mizo society including traditional songs and instruments such as the Mizo *khuang* (traditional Mizo drum). If not for the religious revivals, the process of indigenisation would have taken a different tangent. Consequently, there has always been a certain level of friction or a need to negotiate the conflicting interaction and hybridisation between Christianity and the traditional Mizo culture, westernisation and indigenisation, and between the sacred and profane in the formation and ongoing redefinition of the modern Mizo identity.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, "Whilst assertions of national culture and of pre-colonial traditions have played an important role in creating anti-colonial discourse and in arguing for an active decolonizing project, theories of the hybrid nature of post-colonial culture assert a different model for resistance, locating this in the subversive counter-discursive practices implicit in the colonial ambivalence itself and so undermining the very basis on which imperialist and colonialist discourse raises its claims of superiority" ("Post-Colonial Studies" 111). The assertion of Mizo identity is seen through the depiction of the lives of the *pasalṭha* in Mizo novels and it is through such novels that an anti-colonial discourse can be traced in Mizo fiction writing. Hybridity of postcolonial culture as a different model of resistance can be observed in the form of anti-colonial resistance towards Christianity as seen in the indigenisation of Christianity that was brought about by the religious revivals (*harhna*) among the Mizos, and also in the emergence of the *Puma zai* which is also known the heathen revival of 1908-09.

The early Mizo Church was simply a westernised Christianity that had been translated to its simplest form for the Mizo to understand. In speaking about the *Puma zai*, Chhangte Lal Hminga has observed, "The so-called 'revival of heathenism' was also something new in the Mizo culture, because it was not associated with festivals or special occasions... Judging from available records and verbal information, I believe that the early Christian group singing had considerable element of Mizo culture of festive singing and dancing though in a different form. Likewise, resurgence of the pre-Christian song in a

new form had borrowed something from the Christian revival group singing" (74). Thus, it appears that even though the *Puma Zai* was believed to be a revival of traditional Mizo culture, it was already a hybrid formation and was an instrument of defiance against the authority of the missionaries (the British).

Kipgen believed that measures undertaken towards the protection of Mizo Christianity from the influences of the cultural revolution called *Puma Zai* harmed the interests of the new Christian community in two ways. Harmless elements of Mizo culture such as Mizo traditional tunes and the use of the *khuang* (Mizo drum) were rejected because of their connection to the old culture and religion. Secondly, it led to the suppression of the spirit of free expression which was an important contribution of Christianity and the revivals (258). Modern Mizo literature gradually began to grow under the shadow of the Mizo Church which initially rejected traditional Mizo poetry for belonging to the heathen past. Songs are a very important cultural component among the Mizo, especially in the form of community singing which has great emotive value is fostering a sense of belonging to a community. Therefore, it may be observed that the indigenisation of Christian songs during the revivals and its acceptance by the early Mizo church paved the way for the acceptance of Mizo literature of the past.

R. L. Thanmawia has observed that the religious revivals awakened three cultural traits of the Mizo, which were in connection to singing. These involved the introduction of the *khuang* Mizo traditional drum), dancing during worship, and the softened tunes of songs that led to the emergence of the *lengkhawm hla* (*lengkhawm* songs) ("Harhnain" 579). According to him, the Mizo *lengkhawm zai*[4] helped to foster a sense of unity and created a bond among Mizo Christians from various Christian denominations and various destinations and is the common reservoir into which the *lunglenna* felt by the Mizos flows and gathers (591). In particular, the third revival (1919) is significant for ushering in this process of indigenisation which paved the way for the gradual acceptance of the traditional Mizo culture within the folds of Mizo Christianity.

Kipgen believes that it is the cultural aspect of the Zos (a term he uses to refer to the various Mizo clans inhabiting the regions bordering India, Burma, and Bangladesh) called *lunglen* which finds expression in the revivals. He noted that emotional expressions manifested through "ecstatic behavior" are characteristics usually found in types of

revivalism found elsewhere, but revivalism in Mizoram had its unique features. According to him, this had to do with "the "emotional" element in their nature" which is *lunglen* (250). He goes on to say that in general, "The Zos as a people were believed to possess it. It is this aspect of their culture that came to be reflected in the revivals" (251).

The new songs which emerged during the 1919 revival were born in the "shade" of Western songs and were tweaked to appeal to the Mizo taste by softening the tunes. Such songs continue to be influential until today and are among the most popular songs. They are sung at funerals, during Christmas, and at any occasion involving community singing, and were mainly composed between the 1920s to the 1940s (Lalthangliana, "Mizo Literature" 171). This reveals how the emerging modern Mizo literature is hybrid in form, as seen with the *lengkhawm* songs which are a hybrid form. Certain elements have been drawn from translated Christian hymns and traditional Mizo folk songs to create a new form. The emergence of the *lengkhawm* songs was one of the first markers of the indigenisation of Christianity among the Mizo. Since the early Mizo Christians rejected all aspects of the traditional Mizo culture, including their songs, Mizo Christians could not feel a real sense of connection to the Christian songs for their tune and form were alien and unfamiliar.

Christian songs had been translated from Welsh and English hymns and had been composed or translated by the early missionaries who used the common prosaic language of everyday usage, unaware that the Mizo already had poetic language and poetic diction used in songs from their oratures. Liangkhaia also noted this and said that the early Mizo Christians (himself included) realised they were mistaken in believing that the usage of colloquial language for translating and composing songs was the norm in Christianity because of which they had regarded the poetic language of the traditional songs as being worldly (qtd. in Lalthangliana, "Mizo Literature" 139-140). Modern songs began to make their appearance during the mid-twentieth century. Modern Mizo songs included love songs, secular songs, patriotic songs, songs admiring the natural beauty of the land of the Mizo, and songs catering to any event or occasion. The translation of Western hymns influenced their poetic imagery and their verse form to a great extent, thus revealing the hybrid nature of modern Mizo songs. The emergence of the *lengkhawm* songs has thus paved the way for the incorporation of traditional oral literature into the modern Mizo literature.

Thanmawia has also observed this. According to him, the influence of both traditionalism and western ideas can be seen in Mizo poetry in what he has termed the Patea Age of Poetry (1920-1937). Most of the allusions made by the Mizo songwriters (poets) are Biblical. Western literature has influenced Mizo poetry or song writing in terms of imagery. These include the use of metaphorical allusions such as a desert to denote desolation, sea voyages or the sea in general to denote life situations, and pastoral landscapes in nature to denote the idyllic life of rest in God. The translated Christian hymns greatly influenced their poetic imagery and verse forms, while traditional verse forms such as couplets and triplets were wholly done away with ("Mizo Poetry" 215). References made to deserts, to sea voyages, and pastoral landscapes can be clearly understood as borrowed imagery since these are foreign to the natural landscape of Mizoram. This shows that even though the introduction of the *lengkhawm* songs revealed the reclamation of the oral literature of the past, it also showed that this is a hybrid form that has incorporated elements from both traditional and western literature.

It is a fact that the British colonial government had no real interest in advancing the level of education of the Mizo people beyond the primary and middle school levels. On account of this, those who wished to pursue higher education joined high schools and colleges in Shillong (that later came to be a part of the newly formed state of Meghalaya) and Calcutta (now Kolkata). A high school was opened for the first time in Mizoram only in 1954. College education was made possible with the establishment of Pachhunga Memorial College in 1958. The educated class among the Mizo is similar in characteristics to what has usually been labelled as the middle class or the working class in social studies.

It was within this educated class that political awareness began to emerge, resulting in the formation of the first Mizo political party called the Mizo Common People's Union (later termed the Mizo Union) in 1946. The first general election was held in April 1952 with the Mizo Union making a clean sweep of the seats. It may be said that the establishment of the Mizo Union and its attempt to do away with the rule of the Mizo chiefs was a result of the emergence of the postcolonial worldview of the Mizo people. They fought against the Chiefs and even the colonial administrator (the Superintendent) of the Lushai Hills whom they observed as privileging the chiefs. The chiefs became unpopular in public

opinion since they were perceived as practising favouritism and misusing their power for their profit. Finally, the institution of the chieftainship came to an end in 1954.

The World Wars had a significant impact in ushering in the age of modernity and westernisation among the Mizos owing to the advancements they witnessed in Europe. There were about 2100 young men who joined the war effort as part of the Lushai Labour Corps during the First World War. The money they brought home had a significant impact in helping the Mizo society to transition from a subsistence economy to a money economy. A small number of Mizo men and women took part in the two World Wars as army recruits as well. Lloyd calls 1944, a watershed in the church's history although he said it is difficult to choose one particular moment as such. He says that although they escaped invasion (by the Japanese forces), "the Mizo tribe was dragged suddenly, as it were, into the 20th Century" (309). Thus, the Mizo people began to realise that white men were capable of unbridled destruction.

The two World Wars served to disillusion the Mizos regarding the superiority and moral purity of the 'white man' for it dawned on them that not all 'white men' were morally pure despite being Christians. They had observed white men who failed to live by the teachings of the Gospel of Christianity and even expressed their shock to the missionaries. The missionary Lewis Mendus has mentioned that Pastor Chhuahkhama (the first Mizo Pastor) told him soon after the Second World War had begun, "You Sahibs in Europe are as bad as we used to be in the old days!" (qtd. in Lloyd 309). The Mizo people also differentiated between the missionaries whom they fondly called 'Zosap' and the colonial administrators they called 'Sap'. Thus, the influence of colonial ideology was mitigated among the Mizo. The missionary Lloyd also observed, "For years the Mizos had believed that all white men knew the Gospel of Christian love and lived by it, but World War II served to disillusion them. Many found it hard to come to terms with their lost innocence. They had also become very aware of the machinery and tools of war at the command of the sophisticated powers" (310).

The need to reclaim one's cultural past has often involved the return to an originary past, premodern, or primordial past. In the past, the idea of a single or unified Mizo identity encompassing all the Mizo subtribes as a collective whole was absent. Identification was with one's village and one's chief. In addition to the continued sense of attachment to

one's village or locality, the notion of a common or singular Mizo identity attached to the land of Mizoram and to a common history and culture came to define the modern Mizo identity. The assertion of the Mizo cultural identity through cultural reclamation is brought out in Mizo novels through the use of cultural markers, which are the aspects of Mizo culture that create a sense of belonging and identity such as the *pasalṭha*, *tlawmngaihna*, and *lunglenna*.

Such a reclamation is connected to pride in one's culture and the attempt to retain the cultural values of the past. Stories about the *pasalṭha* hold pride of place in Mizo culture as being emblematic of true representation of the Mizo history and culture. This is evident in their popularity in the market as well as in the modern Mizo cultural imaginary. Till today, most depictions of the *pasalṭha* continue to follow the common or usual pattern of representing their success in warfare or in hunting, their love story, or their having to face being falsely slandered but which will result in their being absolved of wrongdoing after the matter is presided over by the chief and his council of elders.

The portrayal of the Mizo past or the idea of a distinct Mizo identity as seen in the novels is through the *pasalṭha* as an authentic cultural icon, *tlawmngaihna* as a value to be cherished, and *lunglenna* as an emotional trait or form of cultural expression of the Mizos. In particular, the *pasalṭha* has acquired great symbolic as well as affective value in the Mizo cultural imagination and has generated a connection between Mizo oral literature, Mizo history, Mizo novels, and the modern Mizo identity. Cultural markers which create a feeling of belonging and identity such as *tlawmngaihna*, the *pasalṭha*, and *lunglenna* have been drawn from the culture of the past but continue to retain value in the practice of Mizoness or Mizo ethnicity under Mizo Christianity. They enable the establishment of links between the past and the present and aid in the creation of a sense of connection to the common Mizo identity as a distinctly Christianised identity which is itself a colonial formation and is hybrid in nature.

In the past, to be a *pasalṭha* was to be brave and skilled at hunting and warfare, to be willing to lay down one's life for the village, and to possess the qualities of *tlawmngaihna*. In the modern context, with the *pasalṭha* being considered as a cultural icon for the common Mizo identity, people who accomplished acts of bravery and acts of sacrifice for the sake of society have been referred to as *pasalṭha*. It is a title that refers to the spirit of bravery,

self-sacrifice, and concern for the Mizo community in the past and the present. On this basis, the soldiers of the Mizo National Front (MNF) army who took part in the secessionist movement resulting in the *Rambuai* (1966-86) years have also been referred to as "*hnam pasalṭha*" (meaning *pasalṭha* of the Mizo tribe or nation).

The *pasalṭha* as a cultural icon has served the need of the Mizo writers in new contexts, that is, with the emergence of the new Christianised Mizo identity such as with NKP (1989) where Chhuana is portrayed as a modern day *pasalṭha*. Towards the end of the novel, after Chhuana and Sangtei get married, she praises him and tells him, "You are more than just my husband, you are a *pasalṭha* for everyone, so your love is enough for me" (213). Faithful Christians have been referred to as the *pasalṭha* of God in sermons and Christian songs. A popular song by the group Luminaires has referred to faithful Christians as "Lalpa tana pasalṭha. Mahni inphat a, A hnungzuitu" (*pasalṭha* for God, who deny themselves to follow Him). Such comparisons have commonly been made in sermons by preachers as well. Postcolonial readings by Mizo theologians and scholars have involved the application of contextual theology by which Jesus Christ has been portrayed as an exemplary *pasalṭha* such as with Chhakchhuak (158). Thus, the mutability of the cultural icon and its continued applicability within the modern Mizo identity reveals its continued significance.

The reclamation of the Mizo past has also included dramatized displays or re-enactments of the traditional Mizo culture, traditional games, and the performance of traditional dances on occasions such as the *Chapchar Kut*[6] (Chapchar festival) or at official government functions to display the Mizo cultural heritage, and traditional dresses or costumes. They foster a sense of connection to a common Mizo identity since there has been a crystallisation of the differences and variations in the culture and traditions of the various sub-tribes to form one common point of identity called 'Mizo culture'. As a testament to the rise of the Mizo postcolonial worldview, the *Chapchar Kut* was reintroduced as a Mizo cultural practice around 1973 from when it has been conducted on an annual basis. However, the celebrations and displays of Mizo culture and traditions of the past in the *Chapchar Kut* reveal the process of such cultural elements being repurposed for affirming that the Mizo ancestral cultural heritage lives on.

The process of writing Mizo novels for a Mizo readership brings into focus its role as a medium for instruction, a platform for displaying Mizo history and culture, and as a platform for the assertion and representation of a unified modern Mizo cultural identity. Mizo novelists have written novels keeping in mind the tastes and preferences of the Mizo readership. Most of the Mizo novels are realist or historical novels. Jerome de Groot has defined the historical novel as "challenging subjectivities, offering multiple identities and historical story lines. Far from being a rigid, ordering structure History seems to provide a set of potentialities and possibilities" (139). He also mentions how historical novels have been used, "to reinsert communities into the past, rescuing them from the marginal positions to which they have consciously been consigned" (148). Likewise, Mizo novels that depict the past can be seen as the act of asserting the Mizo identity from their marginal position as seen in PNH (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga.

Mizo novels began to make an appearance during a time when the postcolonial cultural revival or Mizo ethnonationalism, so to say, was beginning to be strongly felt among the educated class. This was during the first half of the twentieth century when the erstwhile Lushai Hills was still under colonial rule (from 1890-1947). Two of the authors whose works have been selected for study, L. Biakliana and Zikpuii Pa were among the first generation of Mizo writers to receive higher education at the graduate level outside Mizoram since college education at the time was not yet established. The first generation of Mizos who received higher education did so in the neighbouring cities of Shillong, Gauhati (presently Guwahati), and Calcutta (presently Kolkata). It was only after independence in 1954 that the first Mizo high school was opened, which reveals that for the Lushai Hills, despite the projection of the colonising mission as the attempt to bring civilisation to the unenlightened natives, it was clear that the colonial government no real interest in furthering the status of education beyond the mere provision of literacy.

In the article 'New Ethnicities' Stuart Hall has observed that "The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. Representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time" (Ashcroft et al, "*The Post-Colonial*" 226). When a colonised

people emerge into self-realisation, they tend to reconcile with the denigrated past by conceptualising a golden age of the past. It is among the cultural elite or the educated class that this cultural identity formation begins. A similar pattern may be said to be found in Mizo novels beginning with L. Biakliana's novel HLP (1936).

In Mizo novels that depicted the premodern past, the bravery, courage, valour, and the defining trait of *tlawmngaihna* of the *pasalṭha* were highlighted. This portrayal became the basis upon which the quest for the postcolonial cultural authenticity could be detected among Mizo writers in their attempt to locate the distinctiveness of Mizo identity and culture. Such a Mizo self-fashioning demonstrated a Mizoness that was linked to the *pasalṭha* who embodied the Mizo cultural ethos and moral code of *tlawmngaihna*. This was because *tlawmngaihna* could be perfectly aligned with Christian ideal of charity and selfless service to others. Therefore, *tlawmngaihna* has been highlighted as an ideal in Mizo novels depicting life in the premodern society. In this manner, a particular construct, idea, and picture of the traditional Mizo society came to be established in the Mizo literary imagination, albeit in the form of an idealised image of the traditional Mizo society, thus creating the start of a postcolonial discourse in Mizo literature.

In the oral literature of the Mizo, there was a prevailing form of discourse according to which, their stories and wise sayings served the purpose of teaching societal values to the community, of fostering a connection with the village community, and providing lessons about the dangers that surrounded them, and of societal roles and responsibilities. Since the *pasalṭha* have been known to be protectors and supporters of widows and the poor in the traditional Mizo society, the role of being the guardian figure or the protector of the poor and the helpless is seen in Mizo novels. In accordance with the prevailing discourse through which the Mizo past has been portrayed in Mizo novels, the focus on the lives of the *pasalṭha* is apparent. Such novels trace their failures or successes in relationships, or at hunting and warfare. Some of the novels under study as part of this research, namely, HLP (1936), TNS (1981), and PNH (2006) represent this idealised image of the Mizo society as the age of the *pasalṭha* under the able rule of the chiefs.

In HLP (1936), the protagonists keep referring to each other as *pasalṭha* in their normal conversations, almost like a term of endearment. This reveals their admiration for the *pasalṭha* and their identification with the idea of becoming one. In this novel, Zema is

portrayed as the consummate *pasalṭha* for her helped Hminga and his brother Liana escape from the village because of the cruelty of their stepmother who kept mistreating them. He guided them and stayed with them as they all joined the army. Then when Hminga was not included in the list of soldiers who were to join the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872, he persuaded his employer in the army to allow Hminga to join them (240). Once they all returned, he helped to rescue Hminga's lover Pari who had been taken captive by the Pawih enemy and died in the process. The concept of *ṭhian chhan thih ngam* (which means, willingness to save a friend or the act of dying for the sake of a friend), is a cherished Mizo cultural value which is in keeping with the spirit of self-sacrifice inherent in *tlawmngaihna*.

In the same novel HLP (1936), when Chhana and Hminga manage to kill a bear not far from the place where they had set up a camp near a river. They has gone out in search of food and when a bear suddenly attacked Chhana. Hminga jumped on the bear to save him and then rolled down the slope with the bear. Then Chhana managed to find his gun and shot it dead (207-208). Therefore, factors such as the portrayal of the protagonist Hminga and his friends as brave *pasalṭha*, the focus on the romance between Hminga and Pari, Liana and Mawii, and Chhana and Ngaihi, and the scene of hunting and warfare (the Lushai Expedition) that have been depicted places this novel firmly in line with the prevalent discourse by which the lives of the *pasalṭha* have been depicted in the novels.

The novel TNS (1981) has also followed the pattern of depiction of the lives of the *pasalṭha* in accordance with the prevailing discourse since Fehtea is a *pasalṭha* who achieved success in hunting, and who displays *tlawmngaihna* through his actions, and there is focus on his love life or relationship with Saithangpuii, the daughter of the chief whom he marries in the end. Fehtea managed to kill a tiger who terrorised the village and who had been injured by a trap set by the villagers (30) and ultimately killed a *tumpangchal* (mithun or gayal of mythic proportions) and possessed *tlawmngaihna* as a character trait. The narrator has even described the historical time of the novel as such, "This was a time when the *tlawmngai* and the *pasalṭha* were admired throughout the land" (34).

In the preface to the novel TNS (1981), Dokhuma elaborates his reason for writing this story which is, to bring about an awakening or revival of the cultural codes and practices of the Mizo ancestors which deserve admiration and emulation such as patience, grit, determination, a competitive spirit, and a sense of justice and integrity. He wished that the

admirable qualities and the greatness of the *pasalṭha* who embodied *tlawmngaihna* and who exhibited undaunted courage in the face of danger posed by enemies and fearsome wild animals, could be displayed for the world to see. At the same time, he expressed fear over the possible disappearance of *tlawmngaihna* in Mizo culture, which he hoped future generations would retain (7).

The feat of killing the *tumpangchal* was enough to convince the village community of Fehtea's good character and admirable conduct despite his utter loss of his reputation and respectability owing to Sangtuala's lies about him. Thus, the level of admiration and respect accorded to men who showed prowess in hunting and warfare can be seen in this instance. When Fehtea killed the *tumpangchal*, the chief conferred on him the honour of becoming an elder in his council. This honour is well-deserved, for Fehtea embodies those Mizo values held in high regard such as *tlawmngaihna*, bravery, prowess at hunting, and concern for those in need. An instance of his display of *tlawmngaihna* is seen when he stayed up for an entire night along with Saithangpuii to attend to Rivungi, the wife of a *bawi* (slave) of the chief when she became sick. When she dies the next morning, Fehtea immediately accompanied a youth of the village to convey the news to the relatives of the deceased in Muallianpui village without taking rest (25), thus displaying *tlawmngaihna*. Another instance when Fehtea's *tlawmngaihna* is seen is when he is prepared to run an errand for the chief by going to the next village in the middle of a thunderstorm at night. Among the young men in the *zawlbuk*, only he had volunteered to go when the village crier had called for volunteers. But then, the chief tells him that it was simply a test to see who was the bravest and the most willing to make sacrifices for him and his village (20).

In the same novel TNS (1981) when Fehtea's maternal uncle paid him a visit to scold him over his bad reputation, he told Fehtea that it was shameful to be the laughingstock of a village, hated and looked down upon by all. He mentioned how he had always been a great huntsman and a pillar of the village society wherever he went. He advised Fehtea that having a good reputation was far more valuable than being rich (61). This reveals the importance placed on having a good reputation which was equated with being noted as possessing *tlawmngaihna* which meant the fulfilment of the role of protection of society as was expected of men. This reveals the traditional Mizo society as being well-organised and contrary to the negative image of savagery and backwardness in accordance with

colonial ideology and discourse. This novel is didactic in nature since it portrays the benefits and rewards that attend upon being *tlawmngai* and living a life of service to others.

The concept of *tlawmngaihna* of the Mizo is the regulating force in the Mizo society of the past and present, and has helped instil values such as respect for elders, bravery, and the willingness to undertake acts of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others in the community. It also points to the concept of *sem sem dam dam ei bil thi thi* (which means, misers ought to die, the generous will prosper) that is premised on the principle of sharing and generosity as one of the central tenets of Mizo culture. In this way, *tlawmngaihna* has helped shape Mizo society and moulded its values and is synonymous with bravery, and a *pasalṭha* is required to possess *tlawmngaihna* (Nunthara 45-47). In HLP (1936) when the narrator speaks about Hminga and his friends as having joined the British Indian army after running away from their village, the narrator mentioned that the British army officer was impressed with their industriousness and *tlawmngaihna* (219). Therefore, there is an emphasis on *tlawmngaihna* as a positive attribute of the characters.

Peter Barry has said, "If the first step towards a postcolonial perspective is to reclaim one's own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past has been devalued" (193). The need to reclaim one's cultural past has often involved the return to an originary past, premodern, or primordial past. In the past, the idea of a single or unified Mizo identity encompassing all the Mizo subtribes as a collective whole was absent. Identification was with one's village and one's chief. In the modern Mizo society, the concept of identification to one's village chief has been replaced by and large with identification to the singular identity, that is, the 'Mizo tribe.' In addition to the continued sense of attachment to one's village or locality, the notion of a common or singular Mizo identity attached to the land of Mizoram and to a common history and culture came to define the modern Mizo identity.

Mizo novels usually portray the Sailo chiefs as Mizo chiefs. This grounds Mizo novels in the identification with a singular or common Mizo identity and heritage. Although the novel NKP (1989) is a novel about the *Rambuai* period (1966-86) and set in the 1960s, the author has firmly grounded his protagonist Chhuana in Mizo history by portraying him as the descendant of Rolura, one of the great Sailo chiefs. Chhuana was also related to Khawvelthanga who was the chief of Zopui village (11). C. Lalnunchanga has followed

the typical mode of representation of the traditional Mizo society in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2015) which is the precursor to PNH (2006). In keeping with the prevailing discourse by which the life of the *pasalṭha* is portrayed in Mizo novels, the primary focus of this novel is on Nghalṭhianga who is a *pasalṭha* in Puilura's village. The novel follows his bravery and prowess at hunting and warfare, and his love life as well. In this 2005 novel, he has inscribed the fictitious character Puilura within Mizo history by making him the descendant of one of the great Sailo chiefs in Mizo history, Rohnaa. In the novel, Puilura mentioned that he is the descendant of Vankalluia, the illegitimate son of Rohnaa (39-40).

Mizo novelists have often sought to display and assert the Mizo culture and identity through Mizo novels and this in line with the postcolonial attempt at cultural valorisation and reclamation. However, direct criticism of colonial ideology and discourse is conspicuously absent in terms of writing back to the West or the attempt at undermining and unravelling colonial discourse and ideology. PNH (2006) marks the rise of what is possibly the first Mizo postcolonial novel in this sense. The author seeks to dispel ingrained notions of inferiority among the Mizos, especially in connection to the denigration and subjugation of the Mizo chiefs. He seeks to portray the society of the past as one where the Mizo chiefs and their *pasalṭha* bravely fought to defend their honour and their sovereignty against the British colonial government.

Therefore, Lalnunchanga seeks to dispel the notion by which the Mizo ancestors have been considered as wild savages who were stupid and cowardly. Concerning the impact of colonial discourse which has resulted in the portrayal of the Mizo ancestors in a negative light, an article in the Mizo monthly magazine "*Sabereka Khuangkaih*" (2006) by one Siama Ralte criticises the knowledge which has been passed down among the Mizo, about the superiority and bravery of the white colonisers who were no match for the Mizo ancestors, while failing to consider how they died while bravely defending their land against British occupation (qtd. in Vanchiau 46). Both *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2005) and PNH (2006) describe life in Puilura's village but the latter is a seminal work of Mizo postcolonial fiction, in which he has made a notable departure from the usual pattern of depicting the life of the *pasalṭha* and has instead, portrayed the Mizo chief as the primary character in the novel. Although the bravery and prowess of the *pasalṭha* continues to be displayed, they are portrayed as bravely defending their chief Puilura and their village.

In PNH (2016), Puilura is a well-respected and able chief who has great pride and respect for his roots, that is, for the Sailo chiefs who had managed to gain supremacy among the Mizos. During imprisonment, Puilura tells his son Saingura that since they are the descendants of Vankalluaia, the Sailo chief, and that the Mizo people have placed their hope and trust in them to be able to drive the enemies (British colonisers) out. He advises him to never bow down to the "Mingoho" (the white men). Since Puilura believed he was going to die in prison, he told his son that he will meet him in *pialral* (the Mizo version of heaven) (218). This reference to *pialral* shows that he had achieved the *thangchhuah* status, the pinnacle of the Mizo traditional faith practice. In 1891, before Puilura had been imprisoned, he had performed the *Khuangchawi* ceremony (200) which was a ceremony performed as part of the requirements for achieving the coveted *thangchhuah* status.

The waning of the authority of the Mizo chiefs is also reflected in the novel TNS (1981), where we come across the portrayal of disrespect being shown to the chief of Darzo village. When he sends for a young man from the *zawlbuk* to run an errand for him, all except the protagonist Fehtea refuses to go to the neighbouring village. It was the antagonist Sangtuala (the Val Upa) who convinced the others to not go and disrespected the chief by saying that the matter was not important, and that the chief was probably just exercising his authority arbitrarily (17-19). This appears to be the reflection of the attitude of the educated class against the chiefs especially during colonial rule when a political outlook was beginning to emerge among the common people. It is to be noted that the Lushai expeditions carried out by the British colonial government were instrumental in subjugating the Mizo chiefs. It was the last Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 by which the Mizo chiefs were finally subdued, and colonial rule was established.

The novel PNH (2006) portrays this moment of colonial takeover and final defeat of the Mizo chiefs. In the preface to the novel, the author expresses concern over the prevalent perception of the backwardness and uncivilised nature of the Mizo ancestors as commonly depicted in plays and skits wherein they are shown as weak, cowardly, and intellectually dull. He mentions how the traditional Mizo ancestors have often been portrayed negatively as hunchbacked and barely able to enunciate their words in popular culture through the television and other forms of media in Mizoram. He understands that such a negative and false portrayal of the Mizos in the past could leave a false and negative

impression of the Mizo ancestors on future generations of Mizos and people from other communities. Therefore, having carried out extensive research on accounts of Mizo history, Lalnunchanga wrote the novel with the aim of portraying the bravery of the Mizo ancestors whose courage and resilience was, according to him, most notable (7). He further states that the Mizo traditional faith practice was comprehensive and included all aspects of their lives, and the existence of a comprehensive system of social administration in which each member of society participates, reveal them as being a wise people (8-9).

In an unpublished essay titled, "Why I wrote *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* and the Mizo culture shown therein," he says that he wrote this novel so that colonial mentality, which is a legacy of colonialism, will no longer influence the younger generations of Mizos. In the same essay, he refers to a play enacted during the Gospel Centenary celebrations marking the arrival of the Gospel (Christianity) in Mizoram (1894-1994). In it, the Mizo ancestors were portrayed as primitive, savage, and cruel, while the white colonisers were portrayed as advanced and superior in comparison (1). Such dramatizations have been considered as the norm in depictions of the Mizo ancestors and Mizo society of the past in the modern Mizo society.

In Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) the authors have offered a critique of African society and the Indian village society respectively, just as they have criticised colonialism and its after-effects. Achebe has offered a critique of an African society that was fraught with inter-village or clan wars and in which the idea of masculinity or male prowess was promoted and glorified. Likewise, Rao's novel is a critique of a society in which caste distinctions and caste hierarchy result in prejudice and disdain shown towards the lower caste members just as much as it is a critique of colonialism. Similarly, with PNH (2016) Lalnunchanga offers a critique of colonialism just as much as he offers a critique of an uncomplicated and simplistic view of the colonial situation. He has portrayed a Mizo society that is fraught with in-fighting and inter-clan wars that escalated significantly during the nineteenth century and which threatened to cause the implosion of the rule of the Sailo chiefs. Therefore, the novel is a critique of the simplistic reversion to a golden age or a glorious past. In short, Lalnunchanga has attempted to decolonise the Mizo mind with this seminal work of postcolonial fiction.

During the nineteenth century, the civil wars among the Sailo clans throughout the Lushai Hills escalated to such a point that there was danger of implosion of the rule of the Sailo Chiefs. There was the *Chhim leh Hmar Indo* (the war between the South and the North which took place in 1860-61) and the *Chhak leh Thlang Indo* (the war between the East and the West which took place around 1863-1865), the duration of which is in accordance with Zatluanga's account in *Mizo Chanchin* (1996). Accounts of the duration of these wars differ among Mizo writers, with Chhawnmanga and Keivom noting the *Chhim leh Hmar Indo* (the war between the South and the North) as having taken place between 1849-1856 (Chhawnmanga 111; Keivom, "Zoram Khawvel 2" 88). However, their rule ended when British colonialism was established in 1890.

In PNH (2006) the author's account of Puilura's rule in the first part of the book negates the negative colonial portrayal of the Mizo ancestors as being backward, inept, degenerate, dull, or a savage head-hunting tribe. In chapter 2, just as rival chiefs Puilura and Sangburha both made claims over the Zawlsâng range, right before the situation turned into a full-blown war, three of Puilura's elders Chuaukunga, Kâwlvêla, and Tlangchuana advised against going to war with Sangburha. They opined that since they had just moved westwards and had just begun to settle down, choosing to be at war with Sangburha's village immediately would prove to be a significant burden on the women and children since they had been continuously at war with enemies beyond the Rûn river in the East (Lalnunchanga 46).

Puilura and his villagers had to contend with the constant threat of war from the Pawih enemies in the East. At the same time, there was the imminent threat of being caught up in the ongoing wars among the Sailo clans. The fact that chief and his council of advisers deliberated over the matter and displayed restraint and prudence in doing so, reveals the careful consideration that goes into raiding or warring with other tribes or villages among the Mizo, and this indicates how they were not simply mindless and bloodthirsty savages out to raid and indulge in head-hunting. Thus, this is an instance wherein the author negates the negative portrayal of the Mizo ancestors as backward, inept, degenerate, and dull.

In the preface to the his novel Lalnunchanga has stated that the world admires and respects brave people irrespective of their place of origin. He is of the opinion that,

historically, the scale of the military might of the British government used against the Mizo Chiefs proved that they considered the Mizo to be formidable enemies (7). Although the lives of Puilura and his *pasalṭha* have been depicted in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2005) in accordance with the prevailing discourse by which the lives of the *pasalṭha* is usually depicted, the novel PNH (2006) deviates slightly from this norm by portraying the method and rules of warfare practiced by the Mizo ancestors when they lived in the *Lentlang* region (believed to be around 1450-1700 AD) before they migrated to the present-day Mizoram region. The novelist portrays their tactical skills and prowess in warfare in detail, as they go into war with Puilura's village.

Towards the end of the first half of the novel, a battle of epic proportions takes places in which ten of Puilura's best *pasalṭha* fight ten of Sangburha's *pasalṭha* on a fallen tree trunk placed over a ravine. Sangburha, whose men had just fought with Puilura's men at Parsum village suggested that they should finally end the constant fights with a contest where the loser will admit defeat and no longer challenge the other. He suggested that their best *pasalṭha* should fight to the death in the manner practised by their ancestors while they lived in *Lentlang* (PNH 70-72). The portrayal of this method of warfare shows the author's attempt to situate Mizo history from the period prior to the rule of the Sailo chiefs. Liangkhaia has dated this Lentlang period around 1500-1700 AD and mentioned that in this practice of warfare, the clan of the champion was considered as having won over the other clan, and that this was at a time when the Mizo tribes were divided into clans and lived separately (51).

The second half of the novel portrays how the British military takeover of the Lushai Hills was more than a conquest based on sheer military might, for the victory of the British came about with the use of subterfuge and strategic intelligence gathering, documentation and understanding of their enemy to disrupt the rule of the chiefs. The novel can be understood as a commentary on the study and documentation of the subject races as part of the formation of colonial discourse for the justification of the aggressive economic and military expansionist policies of the British Empire. Documentation of the Mizo people was in line with the kind of process of colonial occupation applied by the British Empire during the nineteenth century, to justify their conquest as a civilising mission. Lalnunchanga's portrayal of chief Puilura and their fight against the British colonisers

subverts the image or impression of the Mizo chiefs as being weak, backward, and savage. He does so by portraying the British attempt to subdue chief Puilura which included conversations among the colonial officers, and the use of subterfuge in negotiations and in warfare.

Although chief Puilura's story is fictitious, the author has depicted real historical events and personalities thus giving the bn an air of authenticity. Being a historical novel, the events as well as the British officers portrayed in the story are real historical characters and their comments on the merits and positive qualities of Puilura and the Mizo chiefs is based on colonial era records, thus giving it an air of authenticity. Officers of the colonial administration such as G. H. Loch, Lt. Cole, McCabe, Capt. Williamson, Capt. McGill, and Lt. Tytler have been inscribed into the story. The missionary Lloyd has described McCabe as a political officer "notorious among the Mizos as Lalmantua (the man who catches chiefs) for the many chiefs he had arrested (20). and bravely fighting to defend his honour and to maintain his sovereignty over the land which he said his ancestors won over with their blood.

In the story, there were many instances that showed Puilura as being undaunted and undeterred by the might of the British, and that portrayed the uncompromising spirit and bravery of Puilura and his *pasalṭha*. When confronted with the prospect of being conquered by the British and bowing down to their rule, Puilura preferred to fight to protect the land his people had fought for and acquired through shedding their blood. He stated that if they submitted like cowards, the spirits of their brave ancestors will abandon them (202). He considered it better to die while fighting for freedom than to become like slaves and having to pay a tax (tribute) (203). After Puilura's death, one of the bravest of Puilura's *pasalṭha* called Nghalṭhianga told Puilura's advisers that he will keep fighting till the last drop of blood falls from his body to preserve their sovereignty and to uphold the foundation of their tribe, which was the last thing he could do for their chief Puilura (237).

Puilura's *pasalṭha* have also been portrayed as being brave, honest, truthful, and having integrity in contrast to the British officers. In the novel, the British officer Lt. Cole spoke about the *pasalṭha* Nghalṭhianga as being like the famed Mizo *pasalṭha* Khuangchera (223). Khuangchera had famously fought to the death in the siege of the fort at Changsil in

1890 where Capt. Browne had been killed and which Lt. Cole had been a part of. Meanwhile, Capt. Loch described the *pasalṭha* of Puilura's village as being unafraid of death and being like tigers (240). When Puilura was imprisoned at the fort in Aizawl because his men had participated in the shooting of Fort Aijal (Aizawl), he refused any offer of pardon or bribe from the British officer McCabe in exchange for submitting to the rule of the British. He told McCabe that his people had acquired their freedom with their blood and will not pay tax (tributes) to any authority nor will they provide indentured labour (211). Even when McCabe met him alone in his prison cell and tried to persuade him to relent, he refused, then said that his grandfather, the Sailo chief Lallula had once decimated the people of Thlanrawn village after they kept collecting taxes from them. He then suggested that the British would meet the same fate should they come to his village. McCabe responded in anger and told him that he would take him away to be imprisoned in the plains (215).

Puilura refused to be swayed from his position even when McCabe offered to make Puilura the most powerful chief from the east to the west of the land, to allow him to choose any area as his village, and to ease the burden of having to pay taxes (tributes) by letting his people pay an amount a person can carry on his back instead of the sum of one rupee they had to pay (216). While in prison, McCabe also offered to provide Puilura's people with job opportunities and to provide him with gifts such as cloth, a large sum of money, and whisky which he called the best kind of alcohol of the white man. He even offered to make him the richest chief among all the Mizo chiefs. But Puilura refused the offer and told his advisers that he chose impoverishment instead of living a life of glory and riches under the rule of the British (229).

When Puilura's son Saingura visited him in prison, he told him that as a *pasalṭha*, he should not be subjugated, and that he should fight to defend his honour and prestige even unto death (217). Puilura stubbornly refused to submit to the will of the British and even refused to eat and died in captivity. This reflects those Mizo chiefs who refused to submit to the rule of the British and were taken as prisoners in jails outside the Lushai Hills where some of them died in captivity. C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau has mentioned how the colonisers kept some Mizo Chiefs in captivity till death. These were, the Chieftainess Ropuiliani who ruled over Ralvawng, the chief Manga's descendent Lalkhama chief of

Sentlang, Lianphunga chief of Lungtian, chief Nikuala Zahau, Dokulha the Chinzah Chief, and Zakapa Fanai chief of Khawhri (47).

There were other instances that portray Puilura in a positive light or as a formidable enemy of the British. In a meeting with other officers, McCabe mentioned that Puilura's mindset was as steadfast and dignified as British men, and if they could get him on their side and place him as their second in command, they would be able to subdue the other chiefs (227). The opinions of the other officers also revealed how they admired certain characteristics of the Mizos. Capt. Loch observed that when he came to know the Lushai (Lusei) better, he realised they had unique traits. He said that although it appeared that they were uncivilised and backward, he had never seen the kind of efficient system of administration by which the Lushais were governed among other uncivilised tribes around the world. He noted how they never mistreated their slaves and refrained from raping women slaves or captives. He also admired them for their ingenuity in being able to make their own gunpowder (225).

Lalhruaitluanga Ralte has stated that the Mizo ancestors never raped women captives and slaves (50). McCabe also spoke about how the people were very loyal to their chiefs and their village communities, and except for the fact that they practised headhunting, they do not commit crimes (227). The missionary E. L. Mendus was told about an incident in which the Governor of the province was due to pay a visit to the Aizawl prison. The warder there had begged for permission to import prisoners form one of the jails on the plains since the prisoners were so few in number (Lloyd 52).

In the novel, the author has portrayed ways by which colonial ideology and discourse have been established by the colonial authorities through using subterfuge and underhand means to assert their cultural superiority. He does this by drawing from real events as well as adding fictitious embellishments to historical events. McCabe had mentioned an incident that happened in the southern region. The colonial officer Murray had demanded to be provided with women for his pleasure at the village of chief Zakapa of the Fanai clan and had even demanded that Zakapa's wife be brought to him. One cook and five soldiers died in the ensuing clash. Then McCabe mentioned how he did not want this shameful incident to be remembered in history, because of which he silenced anyone who spoke out about the incident by punishing them. Then he went on to say that they should instil admiration

and fear of the British in the hearts of the Lusei (Lushai) for the sake of posterity. To do this, he suggested that those Mizo chiefs who obeyed the British should be portrayed in history as being wise, while the names of the chiefs who fought against them should be erased from memory. Then Capt. Loch chimed in by saying that they should surely corrupt the minds of the Lusei (Lushai) people (226).

There was an incident in this novel PNH (2006) which portrayed the British officer Lt. Platt as being a coward. He had set out with an army to attack Puilura's village. They were led by two young men from the chief Hrangchiauva's village since Hrangchiauva had submitted to the British. After they were defeated by Puilura's men, the two young helped him get back to safety. But as they were about to reach their village, Lt. Platt shot them and as they were dying, he told them that primitive tribals like them should never be witness to the defeat of white men (277). Although this incident is a fictitious account, the author explores the possibility that such a thing happened. There is the lack of mentioning of the incident regarding the officer Murray and his womanising ways in colonial accounts, although it is common knowledge among the older generations of Mizos.

In the novel, when the British officers deliberated over whether they should allow three missionaries from the Arthington Aborigines Mission to enter the region. Cole stated they should not be allowed to enter since it would be uncomfortable to make them witness the ruthless manner by which they planned to defeat the chiefs in the eastern region (242-243). This incident has been found in historical accounts as well. The missionaries J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge were denied permission to enter the Mizo Hills at the beginning of 1892 by the political officer A. W. Davies and were later given permission towards the end of 1893 and they arrived in January 1894 (25-26). Seeing how the author blends fiction and non-fiction in his account of historical events, such instances help to explore the possibility of the account being true, which provides scope for the critical assessment of the colonial takeover of the Lushai Hills.

Other incidents in PNH (2006) also showed how the colonial authorities used subterfuge to achieve their ends. In the novel, the political officer A. W. Davies thought about the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 in which Lt. Col. T. H. Lewin fooled the Lushai (Mizo) chiefs into believing that the white man was superior. He had produced a fake gun with a bullet that could not harm anyone and used it upon himself to fool the Mizos. This

gave the impression that white men were a superior race who could not be harmed with bullets. He thought about how the higher authorities and English people in general would disapprove of such an action. Then he felt greatly ashamed by the way in which he had fooled Puilura's people himself (333). T. H. Lewin has mentioned this incident with the fake bullet in his book where he states how he used this trick to fool the Mizo chiefs and that this was a trick developed by Houdini ("A Fly on the Wheel" 202-204).

The author Lalnunchanga has attempted to subvert the colonial ideology and discourse through certain incidents in the novel. After the shooting between the British and Lalburha's men at Sesawng village, McCabe found out from a Vai soldier (subedar) that there was no record of the number of Lushai men who died since they did not leave behind the bodies of their companions. He gave orders for the dead to be buried away without recording their number because he wanted history books to portray the British as being mighty and strong. He was adamant that the Lushais should not find out about the true situation in the ongoing war because if they did, they could think that they could defeat the British as well (PNH 257). Here we observe the attempt to show the British as undefeated and mighty in their conquest of the Mizo chiefs.

Then the author shows a scene in which the British have been shown as not being true to their word. In the last attack between Puilura's men and the British led by Lt. Platt, Puilura's son Saingura was injured and was captured along with some of his men. He died in captivity like his father, because they had failed to give the captives food and water. Capt. Loch and Davies were appalled at this oversight (320). Davies also stated that the higher authorities should not find out since letting an injured captive die without food and water was shameful for a great race like the British (324). So, they lied and said that he had been sent to Aizawl (321). As soon as the exchange of prisoners happened, Puilura's *pasalṭha* came to know that Saingura had died and they had been lied to. Then one of Puilura's men told the British officers that they now realise they had been fooled and sarcastically added that they now know how faithful white men are to their word (330). Hence, the act of creation of colonial discourse through the whitewashing of the failings and use of subterfuge of the colonisers is observed here.

The attempt to subvert colonial ideology and discourse in also seen in the scene after Puilura's death when Chuaileni tried to persuade Nghalṭhianga to not take part in

raiding the plains. He tells her that they needed to find heads for her father's grave. Then when two of Puilura's elders Kâwlvêla and Chuaukunga pay him a visit to try and convince him to stop the plan of the *pasalṭha* to raid the plains for they feared that the retaliation from the British would destroy them all, Nghalṭhianga told them that they had to do it out of respect for the spirit of their chief (236). This scene shows how the practice of head-hunting has a purpose for the Mizos. Lalremsiama has pointed out that there are various reasons why the Mizos took the heads or a portion of the skin on the top of the heads of their slain enemies and that it was not because of their barbarism. The act was considered as a display of bravery and prowess in warfare for which warriors were admired. When a chief died, his subjects had to kill people who would wait for him at the entrance to the village of the dead and serve him as his slaves in the afterlife. He also mentioned that they did not kill people at random and only took the heads of their enemies (14-20). At the end of the novel, as Chuaileni pleaded with her husband Nghalṭhianga to stop being at war with the British, he told her that he could not do so since the last days of the *pasalṭha* was upon them, because of which they could not help but follow the footsteps of the *pasalṭha* who went before them (339). Thus, Puilura's *pasalṭha* are shown as being brave and faithful to the end.

Lunglenna as an emotional aspect of Mizo culture is an important component of Mizo identity both in the past and in the modern Mizo society, and serves as the link between the traditional Mizo society and the modern Mizo society. Towards the end of the first half of the twentieth century there began to emerge patriotic songs, love songs, songs about nature, among others. These were hybridised formations of the cultural interaction between the east and the west, that is, Mizo culture and western culture.

For the Mizos, music and singing are important forms of cultural expression. They are one of the most popular forms of Mizo cultural expression in the modern Mizo society and continue to commemorate all aspects of their life as before. In the traditional Mizo society, every significant event of their life involved the singing of songs. All poetic expressions in the past were in the form of songs (song poems) since songs were written in a kind of poetic language that could be differentiated from colloquial language. All the Mizo cultural festivals, celebrations of success in war and the hunt, and even death involved the singing of songs. The bulk of the extant forms of Mizo oral literature comprises of folk

songs and the act of singing of which can be considered as an important mode of cultural expression.

The Mizos were known for their fondness of and skills at singing even by the missionaries who observed them closely. Thanmawia has said, "Music to the Mizos, is as indispensable as air is to man and beasts" ("Mizo Poetry" 27). Songs were the means of expression of *lunglenna*, as a cultural component in the traditional Mizo society. Being '*mi lungleng*' (someone who is *lungleng*) was the hallmark of a great poet, that is, a songwriter since all poetic forms of expression in Mizo oral literature were in the form of songs. The possession and expression of this quality of being *lungleng* is considered as a unique and cherished cultural trait by the Mizos. It is to be understood that in the case of folksongs and songs, this concept of *lunglenna* did not only pertain to the lyrics but the tune in conjunction with it. Therefore, the act of singing and especially the practice of singing as a community activity becomes an important aspect of Mizo culture and identity.

In TNS (1981) by James Dokhuma, the *tumpangchal* (wild mithun or gayal of mythic proportions) which was named *Sihhuaia* inspired much fear and admiration among the people of the village. He even had a song composed for his sake called *Sihhuaia hlado*[6], which was to be sung by the man who managed to kill him, though everyone in the village already knew how to sing it. In the traditional Mizo society, every important and significant event was commemorated with a song. Therefore, Fehtea's killing of the *tumpangchal* was commemorated with a song. There is a difference in the expression of *lunglenna* in the past and the present. In Mizo oral literature, the majority of which comprises of folksongs, *lunglenna* was mainly expressed in connection to the appreciation of nature, romantic feelings or longing for loved ones, longing for the past or for a loved one or lover who died. Moreover, community singing during funerals or at festivals and celebrations helped to induce *lunglenna* through the establishment of a sense of connection with the community. It was expressed through the description of the natural environment and the metaphorical comparison of nature to one's mood or state of mind.

The modern-day expression of *lunglenna* connotes identification with a common Mizo identity and to a Christian identity as well. It is expressed through songs, and new forms of literature borrowed from the West such as novels and poems. Novels enabled the writing of descriptive passages in appreciation of the natural beauty of the natural landscape

and environment of Mizoram, or through songs being incorporated into the text. Within the novel, the natural landscape is used to express the heightened state of emotions of the characters concerning nostalgia or for a beloved or loved ones just like in the past, albeit in a more thorough form. The act of community singing as a cultural practice has always been a defining trait of Mizo culture and identity in the past and present and has often been portrayed in Mizo novels. However, in its modern Christianised form, it points to the hybrid nature of Mizo identity since community singing in the modern Mizo context mostly involves the singing of Christian songs. At the same time, it reveals how Mizo Christianity has become the defining trait of the modern Mizo identity.

Lunglenna is a literary device for displaying the emotions of the characters and for denoting their cognisance of and appreciation for the beauty of nature and longing for Mizoram. This creates the potential for the character to appear as being sensitive, caring, and displaying a connection to the land, which is a form of identification with the Mizo identity by extension. Moreover, participation in *lengkhawmna* or *zaikhawmna* (community singing) at church denotes active membership in church and helps to portray the character as a good Christian. There is also the act of attending a wake and singing *lengkhawm* songs for the entire night as part of the Mizo funeral proceedings which is considered as an act of *tlawmngaihna*. Songs and the act of singing are a very important component of Mizo culture in the past and the present. Since the Mizos love singing and the act of singing is considered as capable of evoking feelings of *lunglenna*, the inclusion of songs in the text of novels, and the inclusion of scenes where characters take part in community singing becomes significant. For the Mizo community, songs and the *lunglenna* they evoke foster a sense of connection to their community and to their Mizo identity or Mizoness.

Characters in Mizo novels who are portrayed as good Christians are shown as attending *lengkhawm* or *zaikhawm* (community singing) where the local church community would gather to sing Christian songs (usually *lengkhawm* songs) at the church for worship or at funerals to comfort the bereaved as a community. In ZTT (1977) the narrator mentions that in Phulpui village community singing (*zaikhawmna*) was very popular especially among married women in the village (5-6). When Remi's father Upa Liana (meaning, Elder Liana) who was a church Elder died, after the funeral, young men and women gathered at her home at night for the *zaikhawm* (community singing) as was the custom (16). On the first Christmas

after Remi's father's death, Remi did not have to wait for her turn to fill water from the water source since most of the young men and women had stayed up singing all night at the *zaikhawmna* (community singing) (20-21). Then towards the end of the novel, after Malsawma and Remi's wedding ceremony and wedding feast were over, the people of Biate village were invited for a community singing session (*zaikhawm*) at night (238).

The Mizo identity is defined by the attachment to a place (Mizoram) where the distinctive Mizo identity and history are located and in which the beauty of the natural landscape lent itself to literary expression. In Mizo literature including poetry and novels, the portrayal of the Mizo natural landscape is seen as being capable of evoking strong emotions of *lunglen* or *lunglenna*, that is, nostalgia evoked by a sense of attachment to a place or region. Thus, the geographical terrain of Mizoram serves an aesthetic function in the formation of the Mizo identity and symbolises a connection to the land and invokes a sense of identification and belonging to a common identity. For Mizos in Mizoram and the Mizo diaspora all over the world, the land of Mizoram has become an important marker of their cultural identity. Therefore, in addition to the mode of expression of *lunglenna* in the past, Mizo novels and modern Mizo songs (song-poems) began to include the longing for a return to one's land or longing for home as being located in a specific geographical area, that is, the land of Mizoram for the Mizo diaspora.

The concept of boundaries being introduced by the colonial government in the colonial era resulted in changes in the Mizo attitude of an even stronger sense of ownership and possessiveness towards the land of Mizoram. Their concept about their identity began to change, for identity is inextricably linked to a place or one's rootedness to a place. Pachuau has spoken about this concept of identification with the land and termed it "territorialisation." She described it as such, "Inextricably linked to a historical construction of identity was territorialisation, made significant because of the nature of their past. Colonialism in the Lushai Hills, as elsewhere, had the capacity to pin a people to a particular territory, which, I believe, led the Mizos to associate themselves uniquely to the hills where they lived" (84). She has also observed that even though the process of attributing qualities that instil pride in the land (Mizoram) is hardly unique, what is different about the Mizo story is that, the Mizo sense of belonging has been transformed "from a micro-locality to a macro-locality identified by a particular set of hills (128). Thus, with a change

in the worldview, the form of identification with one's village as in the past has been transformed in accordance with the emergence of a new singular identity that has included identification with the land of Mizoram.

The novel HLP (1936) depicts the *lunglenna* or sense of longing for home on the part of Hminga, his brother Liana and their friends Chhana and Zema since they were away from their land for ten years. In chapter 6 the narrator mentioned how the love and longing of the young men for their village, their friends and their families was as inevitable as the rising of the sun in the morning and the setting of the sun in the evening (146). In the depiction of their return, the narration focuses on the sense of happiness, joy, and *lunglen* (nostalgia) they felt on seeing the natural environment of the Lushai Hills reflected their sense of attachment to the land. As they took to exploring the forest nearby the *Tlawng* river where the army had encamped, they gazed at the surrounding natural scenery and trees. Then the narrator describes how Chhana, the son of the chief, could not help but look longingly at the trees that induced a sense of *lunglenna* in him (279). In a scene that took place the morning after the exchange of gunfire between some Mizo men and the soldiers of the British Indian Army of which they were a part, they explored the land near where they had encamped. The beauty of the natural landscape appeared to move them for the narrator says, "Perhaps they were touched by the sight for they stared at the scene in silence". Then as they were climbing into a boat Liana remarked on how beautiful the scenery was and even wanted to know the name of the place (282).

In NKP (1989) the protagonist Chhuana grew up in Zopui village and then went to Middle School in Shillong for two years, after which he continued his studies in Zopui due to financial constraints and because he felt nostalgic for home. Chhuana's elder brother Chhuankima also vehemently opposed the decision to send Chhuana back home because he studied in Shillong and looked down upon Zopui village with contempt. The narrator Chhuana's brother Chhuankima is portrayed as a person in whom colonial ideology and discourse have been ingrained to the extent of considering Mizo culture and way of life as inferior to that of the white man or western culture. On the other hand, Chhuana has grown up with a sense of pride in his village and pride in being a Mizo. Chhuana felt that it was better for him to have grown up in Zopui village rather than at Shillong where he would have developed a sense of inferiority and a desire for finer things in life (10). Here we

observe the rise of the postcolonial mindset among the Mizo youth in terms of the emergence of a new appreciation for one's culture and history.

In the same novel NKP (1989), in chapter 2 the protagonist Chhuana realised that one's homeland appeared most beautiful from the vantage point of being away from it in another land, even to the extent of forgetting its flaws and seeing only its beauty and charm (18). While the protagonist Chhuana was pursuing higher studies in Shillong, he always felt *a* longing for his lover Ngurthansangi and his home, that is, the village of Zopui. The narrator of the story is the protagonist Chhuanvawra. The novel begins with a description of the natural surroundings in the village of Zopui in October. The mist rising from the rivers in the valleys covered the areas while the misty clouds left behind by the monsoon rains covered the sides and tops of the surrounding mountains as the monsoon gave way to the winter season.

After describing the natural beauty of Zopui village, the protagonist Chhuana says, "For those who are prone to being *lungleng* this is a suitable time to experience *lunglen*" (1). From this description, the concept of being *lungleng* is associated with a vision of the natural landscape of Mizoram, and particularly that of the hills being surrounded by mists or the haze which hovered over and around the villages on the hills. This vision of the hills surrounded by mists or clouds is commonly expressed as a distinctive image of the landscape of Mizoram is a common trope or imagery used in Mizo literature to express *lunglenna* in Mizo literature. The beauty of *romei*, that is, the cloudy haze surrounding the tops and sides of the hills have inspired countless depictions in Mizo songs and novels.

Keivom's statement about the *ṭhal* (dry season of February-March) season can be observed as evidence of the importance of the land of Mizoram as part of the cultural imagination for the Mizos and even the Mizo diaspora. He believes that the *romei* (cloudy haze) is popular in Mizo literature because the Mizos are fond of hills and the beautiful panoramic views of distant hills from the tops of hills, because of which they have always built villages on hill tops. Such views are clearer during the rainy season. When the *ṭhal* season arrives, it blocks the view of distant hills and villages where their loved ones or lovers resided and since travelling to other villages was difficult in the past, this induced a sense of longing or *lunglenna*. Thus, over time, the *romei* came to be equated with *lunglenna* ("Zoram Khawvel" 108-109).

As for the portrayal of *lunglenna* in the novel ZTT (1977), the protagonist Vanlalremi (Remi) was forced to leave her village, in order to escape being forced to marry Lalmawia who was a drunkard. As Remi left the village and ascended *Zâwlpala Thlan Tlang* (the Hill of Zawlpala's Grave), she looked around and saw and heard the various elements of the surrounding nature in the heat of the *ṭhal* (dry season in the month of February and March). She saw the *farṭuah* (erythrina flowering tree) flowers in bloom and looked at the dark blue hills in the distance, then became "*lungleng*" as she reminisced about her childhood when both her parents were alive to take care of her (35-36). In this scene, the elements of her natural surroundings induced a feeling of *lunglenna* or nostalgia for Remi.

In PNH (2006), as Puilura's *pasalṭha* lay in wait while attempting to make an attack to kill some of chief Sangburha's people in retaliation for the killing of three men of their village in the midst of their fight for the *Zâwlsâng* mountain range, Nghalṭhianga's feelings of *lunglenna* is described here. When he thinks of how they had chased and defeated the enemies who had taken his lover Romawii captive, he looked at the land around him upon which the *romei* (cloudy haze) was scattered, and he felt utterly lonely and forlorn. Then he began to think of his lover Romawii whom he longed for. Romawii was married to another man since Nghalṭhianga's family took offence at Romawii's father's demand for their gun and set of gongs for the bride price. Such a bride price was higher than that of a young woman of the Sailo clan (25). Although the word *lunglenna* has not been used to describe Nghalṭhianga's feelings here, his feelings of longing for his former lover Romawii clearly shows that he is feeling *lunglenna* with which the *romei* is associated. The narrator describes how Puilura, the chief of Khiangzo village whose life and downfall on account of the onset of colonial rule is the main subject of the novel, is moved by the beauty of the land surrounding him, such as the vast expanse of Hmârkawrzar hill and the Zâwlsang forest adjacent to it, which he planned to claim as his own. Puilura describes the land as capable of making one *lungleng* while the narrator even declares it as "The promised land of songwriters" (15).

In the postcolonial context, there has emerged a sense of identification with a single identity encompassing all the Mizo-tribes or Zo *hnahthlak*. This identity is linked to a certain geographical terrain, that is, Mizoram, often referred to as 'our Jerusalem' by the

Zo diaspora scattered across areas in Manipur, in Myanmar, and other regions. During colonialism, the use of a common language and a common script, as well as the emerging practice of a common Christian religion, contributed towards the formation of a common Mizo culture, identity, history, worldview in accordance with which common cultural practices have been identified and practiced.

Colonial discourses premised on the idea of racial difference continue to inform contemporary attitudes regarding race and ethnicity. The idea of a common Mizo identity rooted in a pure essential identity with a common language, culture, and ethnicity for the various sub-tribes has resulted in an ethnocentrism of sorts in which the plains people (the Vai) from mainland India have been pitted as the 'other'. To further compound the sense of cultural and geographical isolation of the Mizo to mainland Indians, the violent suppression of the MNF (Mizo National Front) secessionist movement for independence by the Indian government during the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986) took place. Ania Loomba has observed that colonialism "reshapes, often violently, physical territories, social terrains as well as human identities" (155).

Colonialism has had an impact regarding the cultural and geographical isolation of the Lushai Hills and the northeast region from the rest of mainland India. The consolidation of the Northeast region under the state of Assam as a "Backward Tract" by the Government of India Act 1919, and declaration of the Lushai Hills along with other contiguous hill areas as an "Excluded Area", soon after by the Government of India Act 1935 further compounded this sense of distancing. After independence, the marginalisation of the states in the Northeast and especially of the Mizo people was worsened by the deep sense of neglect and alienation in the coming decades that witnessed the *Mautam famine* of 1959 which inspired the MNF secessionist movement of 1966-1986. The cultural, geographical, and political isolation of the region informed the kind of Mizo nationalism and ethnocentrism that emerged in the modern period, which was devoid of a sense of connection to the Indian independence cause. This was a nationalism that looked to create a strong sense of rootedness in a history that depicted the traditional pre-colonial Mizo society as the golden age of the *pasalṭha*.

Mizoram (which means the land of the Mizo) became a Union Territory in 1972 and was eventually granted full statehood in 1987 after the signing of the historic Peace

Accord between the MNF (the Mizo National Front) and the Indian government in 1986. The agreement between the warring parties was enabled by the intervention of the Mizo Church leaders, political parties, and civil society. This ended the 20 years of instability for the Mizo people and ushered in peace which has accelerated modernisation and development. In this manner, Mizoram has become the land of the Mizo, and the Mizo identity has become a point of reference that has served as a marker of inclusion or exclusion for some of the Mizo sub-tribes whose sense of affiliation to, or exclusion from this common Mizo identity continues to change over time. This reveals the modern Mizo identity as a construct. All the Mizo sub-tribes have not conformed to this common identity. Some sub-tribes have refused to identify with the term 'Mizo' while others living in the borders of Mizoram or neighbouring states have chosen to identify with it. This shows how identification with the common Mizo identity continues to undergo redefinition, and reconfiguration over time.

There are other factors to consider in connection with the formation of a common Mizo identity. The dispersion of villages that came about with the practice of grouping of villages by the Indian government to counter the insurgency during the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986) destroyed many villages and traumatised its inhabitants. Since many villages came to be grouped arbitrarily within selected villages called Grouping Centres under the command of the occupying forces of the Indian Army, the established connection with one's village was for many, lost. Also, with the gradual emergence of the modern Mizo society and the rise of the educated class, migration to urban centres increased significantly. In addition, the emergence of political awakening or awareness resulted in more political participation and entry into active politics upon independence. Furthermore, this political awakening gave rise to the awareness for a strong need of a distinct Mizo identity. This is seen in the change of nomenclature from the Lushai Hills District to the Mizo District in 1954, the same year in which the first Mizo political party formed in 1946, put an end to the rule of the Mizo chiefs.

It was the newly emerging class of educated Mizo who advocated for what can be termed Mizo ethnonationalism. Mizo ethnonationalism points to the creation of an identity that has been influenced by traditional Mizo culture and Mizo Christian identity. The role of the secessionist insurrection of the *Rambuai* years (1966-86) in uniting the Mizo people

and strengthening "the bond of brotherhood" is noted by M. Manzuala. According to him, it made people from the urban centres (towns), among whom the noble Mizo trait of being hospitable had been diluted by social changes attendant upon socio-economic development, realise the importance of this trait. Before the insurgency, people from the urban areas had begun refusing lodging to travellers from the villages, but when the insurgency forced them to flee to the villages for help and assistance, they were welcomed (117).

Pachuau has observed a change in the Mizo worldview in terms of the binary that has been created in which the concept of the 'other' has been crystallised. She says, "Thus the British policies in the Lushai Hills created a condition of bounded permanence that forced the crystallisation of identity and social practice within parameters they set out. For one thing, this crystallisation took the form of a binary, in the creation of a 'self' vis-à-vis and 'other'. For instance, one of the earliest such polarisations can be seen from the title of a monthly, mentioned earlier, *Mizo leh Vai*, or 'Mizo and the Outsider'" (104).

In terms of Mizo identity formation, Pachuau believes that the Indian state or the Indian nation-state had a role to play regarding the existence and continued perpetuation of the idea of difference based on identity for the entire Northeast region. According to her, after the creation of an Indian nationalism formed by anti-colonial struggle, the Northeast and especially the areas that constitute the Hills were largely excluded from the building of the collective Indian consciousness. In addition, "the language of 'tribe', a nomenclature inscribed by colonial administrative expediency as well as by colonial ethnography but in fact continued by the Indian state, created scope for articulating notions of difference based on identity." Furthermore, with the creation of linguistic states in the post-independence period, "Language thus becomes a key cultural trait in defining and determining one's identity." The implications of this for the tribes of the Northeast who speak Tibeto-Burman or Mon-Khmer languages in contrast to the Indo-Aryan or Dravidian languages spoken by the majority of Indians is that the idea of difference becomes more pronounced (52). Also, the abrupt annexation of the region to India on account of it being the frontier of the British Indian Empire did not provide grounds for the formation of a cultural affinity to a people with whom there were vast differences on racial, cultural, and linguistic grounds.

In the pre-colonial period, the concept of the 'other' as reflected in literature had been in the form of supernatural elements or beings, either of a benevolent or malevolent nature as seen in the folktales especially. This is in the form of characters such as, inter alia, the *keimi*(tiger-man), *vanchungnula* (sky maiden), and *Pu Vana* (god of the heavens). In the folktales which can be considered as a traditional precursor to the novel in the Mizo society, the human 'other' is found in the form of the man from the plains (Vai) or the Vai *Lalpa* (Raja) and traders such as those from the Paihte tribe. Historical records and oral literature of the Mizo and especially folktales reveal that the Mizo traded with the people from the plains and raided them occasionally. In fact, we have seen people from the plains portrayed as characters in Mizo folktales typically in the form of a Raja who is wealthy and who desire Mizo women for a wife as seen in folktales such as 'Rimenhawihi', and 'Zawlpala and Tualvungi'. They are thus perceived as a threat. Therefore, it is understandable that the Vai people or people from the plains have always been considered as the 'other.'

In the introduction to NKP (1989) B. Lalthangliana has observed that storyline of the novel NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa is similar to that of the Mizo folktale '*Zawlpala and Tualvungi*' in which Phunṭiha (who is a wealthy Vai Raja) comes in between Zawlpala and Tualvungi and separates them. In the same way, the antagonist Capt. Ranade Mengranga who is a Vai, comes between the protagonists Chhuanvawra Renthlei and Ngurthansangi Sailo (Sangtei) and separates them (vi). In the folktale, Phunṭiha makes an offer of a large sum of money for the hand of Tualvungi in marriage, and Zawlpala agrees to it on the belief that he would not be able to procure such a large sum of money. He ends up losing his wife when Phunṭiha arrives with the promised sum.

There is a prevailing discourse in Mizo novels by which the Mizo construction of otherness has mostly been in terms of the Vai or the people from the plains being perceived as the 'other.' The Vai have usually been portrayed as antagonists or villains, or as cowardly with the exception of some novels that are set outside Mizoram such as Shillong, Meghalaya for example, where the characters go to work or study. The Vai have been portrayed as being cowardly and weak in contrast to the Mizo man who is portrayed as being superior in bravery especially in novels that deal with the past. This is depicted in the novel HLP (1936) by L. Biakliana in which the Vai in the army have been portrayed as the other. In

the novel, the narrator describes how the Mizos were starkly different from their fellow army personnel, the Vai. The narrator goes on to comment on how these Vai soldiers were as reluctant about being a part of the expeditionary force as they were, of dying (224).

Given that this novel was the first Mizo novel which was written in 1936, conceptualisation of the Vai or non-Mizo, the people from the plains as the 'other', can be traced back to the Military Expeditions which the British colonial government undertook to subdue the Mizo Chiefs and which led to the annexation of Mizoram (the then Lushai Hills) into the colonial Empire in 1890. The Lushai Expeditions of 1871-72 and 1889-90 were known as *Vai len* (the rise of the Vai) on account of the British Indian Army mainly comprising of Vai soldiers.

In the novel PNH (2006) the Vai soldiers who are a part of the Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 are portrayed as being cowardly in contrast to the *pasalṭha* who are brave. When Saingura visited his father in prison, Puilura told him that even though "these Vai people" are numerous in number and have better equipment of warfare, if he felt intimidated by such considerations, then he would not be worthy to be called his son (217). Then when Puilura's *pasalṭha* raided a police outpost in the plains soon after Puilura's death, 28 of the Vai occupants ran away in fear as soon as they heard a gunshot. The narrator remarked that they were cowardly since they immediately ran away without attempting to defend the outpost (251).

In the novel DTT (2003) the Vai have been portrayed as villains whose actions triggered the protagonist Chhuana's downfall. In the novel, as Chhuana was travelling from Silchar, Assam to Aizawl in a Vai vehicle carrying goods to Aizawl since the bus tickets had sold out, he was annoyed at how loud they were. He compared them to noisy crickets said that the noise gave him a headache. He also complained about how strong their unpleasant smell was. (124). These five men were the ones who ended up beating him and robbing him after which they threw him out of the vehicle. The novel also portrayed the communal tension that ensued after Chhuana murdered the Vai driver and the handyman in revenge. Communal tensions between the Mizo and the Vai have intensified since the *Rambuai* years and have often resulted in misunderstandings, backlash, and the occasional inter-communal clashes since then. Such clashes have often turned violent especially in the areas or villages adjoining the Cachar District of the state of Assam in particular. Any

act or rumours of acts of violence or offences by the Vai against any Mizo has often resulted in backlash and violence against the outsider community.

R. B. Zairemmawia has observed how there have been several clashes or moments of tension between the Mizo and the Vai in his book *Mizo leh Zoram Diary* (1999). He has given a list of clashes that have happened since 1960. It is to be noted here that although the *Rambuai* period was a time of unrest, after the initial period of war in which the Indian Army was sent to quell the insurgency movement resulting in the exchange of gunfire and the burning of villages, this was followed by years of tension and suspicion between the Mizo and Vai. In 1979, there was a clash at Silchar because a Vai Public Works Department (PWD) worker at Saitual village was killed. Properties of the Mizo Presbyterian and Salvation Army churches were badly damaged and burned. Mizo transport buses, trucks, and a petrol station were destroyed (45-46). This appears to be similar to the clash between the Mizos and the Vais in Silchar because of Chhuana's murder of the Vai driver and the handyman in DTT (2003), There was also an incident in 1994 in which a Mizo driver and a handyman were stabbed by some Vais. Mizos responded in anger and damaged all the Vai shops in Aizawl. The Vai from Silchar were made to go back while the Mizos in Silchar came back to Mizoram (Zairemmawia 86-87).

Thus, one can see how Mizo novelists have attempt to reflect the Mizo reality and to assert the Mizo identity. In DTT (2003), the news of the murder of the Vai driver and handyman by the protagonist Chhuana disrupted trade between Mizoram and the plains, namely Silchar in Assam which is practically the only gateway through which all goods related to trade and commerce pass through. The body of the handyman was taken to Silchar where a crowd carried it around in a march of protest. They beat up any Mizo they came across and burnt Mizo buses. The borders were then closed except for the vehicles carrying food supplies which were heavily guarded by the army and the police had to protect the Mizoram house, the official guest house of the Mizoram government (176).

Thus, the trauma of the *Rambuai* years cemented the notion of the Vai as the 'other'. The process of 'othering' that has been magnified by colonisation and its aftermath, especially the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986), has resulted in a kind of xenophobia directed against the Vai or the mainland Indians which in the novel form, has translated into their being generally depicted as villains or enemies in Mizo novels. This portrayal also includes

novels that do not depict the *Rambuai* years such as *Damlai Thlan Thim* (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente. Novels that depict the *Rambuai* period and which have been categorised under *Rambuai* literature such as NKP (1989) usually include depictions of the atrocities committed by the Indian Army. In NKP (1989) when Chhuana returned to Mizoram after the commencement of the *Rambuai* period (1966-86), he was imprisoned in a camp at Tawito village for months before he could reach his village. While in prison, he was enraged and frustrated as he and the other male inmates could overhear desperate sounds of Mizo women being raped by Indian soldiers in the adjoining cell. Whenever the men tried to protest, they would be badly beaten up (81-82).

In speaking about the general sense of mistrust towards the Vai people from the plains, A. K. Agarwal has observed that the entry of non-Mizos into Mizoram is viewed with displeasure because of the fear of losing their identity in the long run. There is apprehension about the present rate of influx of large numbers of non-Mizos from the plains ultimately leading to a demographic invasion in all areas. They have thus considered the people from the plains as "dark colonisers" (183). Therefore, one can observe how colonial discourses premised on the idea of racial difference continue to inform contemporary attitudes regarding race and ethnicity through the creation of an us-them dichotomy between the Mizos and Vais.

Mizo writers and scholars have noted that it was from the end of the nineteen-eighties that Mizo novel production proliferated. Peace and development had ushered in an era of accelerated growth in numbers of the Mizo novel since the singing of the Peace Accord in 1986. Mizo writers have attempted to come to terms with *Rambuai* period which brought much devastation and backwardness in the progress of the Mizo society. Although the *Rambuai* years brought untold misery and suffering to the Mizo people, the expression of the trauma and suffering in Mizo literature has helped to enrich Mizo literature if only for the sheer volume of written works regarding the topic.

With the separation between the sacred and the profane, or Christianity and Mizo culture that happened as a result of colonialism, there is occurrence of ambivalence in the colonial situation which points to the fluctuating relationship between the coloniser and the colonised that has resulted in unsettling colonial dominance especially with regard to the indigenisation of Mizo Christianity. The Mizo postcolonial identity or the modern

Mizo society is a hybrid formation of the attempt at reconciliation of the conflicting impulses between the Mizo Christian identity (or worldview), and the traditional Mizo cultural practices that are accepted within Mizo Christianity. These are cultural practices which have been filtered or sanitised to be acceptable to the Mizo Christian sensibility and are in keeping with Christian teachings and morality. Despite the initial rejection of all aspects of Mizo culture, practices, and traditions of the past by the early Christians, the process of indigenisation initiated by the religious revivals helped to bring about the hybridisation of Mizo Christianity through the emergence of hybrid forms in Christian practices such as worship in the church, weddings, funeral proceedings, and also in Mizo literature such as the *lengkhawm* songs, novels, and other forms of modern literature.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview and the resultant identity that has emerged is a common and unified Mizo identity or Mizoness which is a collective identity encompassing all the Mizo clans and sub-tribes. This identity includes those who consider themselves as being part of the Mizo or Zo diaspora, having a common identity, language (Mizo), religion (Christianity), and land called Mizoram. The postcolonial situation that gave rise to a Mizo nationalism as part of the attempt at cultural reclamation or restoration has resulted in the search for a common history or the portrayal of Mizo history as the golden age of the *pasalṭha* (warriors). Thus, Mizo novels that portray the pre-colonial past have invariably depicted the lives of the *pasalṭha*, and Mizo cultural traits such as *tlawmngaihna* which they embody, as well as the cultural trait of *lunglenna*.

Moreover, the attempt to create a singular identity rooted in the essence of a common history, language, religion, and Mizo identity has resulted in an ethnic nationalism that has reinforced the us - them dichotomy set against the non-Mizo people of the plains. This reveals how colonial discourses premised on the idea of racial difference continue to inform contemporary attitudes regarding race and ethnicity. Therefore, the Mizo postcolonial worldview is a hybridised formation which has given rise to a modern Mizo identity or a Mizoness that is shaped and consolidated by hybridised Mizo cultural practices, the practice of Mizo Christianity that is indigenised, notions of a singular Mizo ethnic identity within which various aspects of Mizo culture have been included, and the reclamation and reinforcement of the culture and traditions of the past through Mizo literature of the past and Mizo novels at present.

It is a worldview and an identity within which one can locate the lasting influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, as well as the emergence of a postcolonial mindset. The continuation of the effects of colonial ideology in the modern Mizo society is mainly through Mizo Christianity as an institution. At the same time, with the emerging postcolonial awareness, Mizos have begun to recognise the effects of this ingrained nature of colonial ideology and have sought to challenge it. Attempts at cultural reclamation and assertion of the Mizo identity have taken place among Mizo writers and especially novelists, who have taken on the role of restoring, reviving, and reclaiming pride in their culture and cultural heritage. This is observed in the cultural self-expression seen in the novels about the Mizo society of the past.

END NOTES

[1] *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) gives quite a comprehensive explanation for the concept of *lungleng*, (v. the modified form of which is *lunglen* or *lunglenna*) as, "To have the heart go out with thoughts or feelings of devotion, love, tenderness, sentiment, longing, emotion, etc.;…to be in a devotional frame of mind; to experience warm devotional feelings; to have the imagination stirred or seized; to be pensive, or thoughtfully sad; to muse or ponder with tender longings; to muse or ponder over the past or future; to be home-sick; to be love-sick; to indulge in day dreams; to have the heart respond to any emotional appeal. adj. sentimental (as song); mournful, plaintive, devotional (as hymns which produce yearning, longing for heaven, etc" (Lorrain 302).

[2] The achievement of the *thangchhuah* status essentially represented the practice of the Mizo value of *tlawmngaihna*, which was the guiding force that regulated societal rules in the traditional Mizo society. The *thangchhuah* status was attainable through two means that is, *in lama thangchhuah* (*thangchhuah* from home) and *ram lama thangchhuah* (*thangchhuah* from the forest). The former path required the provision of a series of feasts and ceremonies involving large quantities of rice, meat, and *zu* (Mizo rice beer) for the village. The latter path required a man to be a brave and skilled hunter since it involved the killing of a list of wild animals according to the rules laid down for the process. In both cases, the process of acquiring the *thangchhuah* status ensured the sharing of forms of acquired wealth and was thus egalitarian in nature. This was a status attainable only for men and which ensured a passage to *pialral* (Mizo version of heaven or paradise). Women could attain a passage to *pialral* only if their husbands acquired such a position.

[3] *Puma zai* or *tlanglam zai* - *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) describes the word *puma zai* as, "n, the name of an anti – Christian song (also known as *Tlanglam zai*) the avowed purpose of which was to oust the Christian hymns. It became unbelievably popular throughout the Lushai country during 1908 and was sung everywhere with feasting and communal dancing such as had never been witnessed in the Hills before. It soon, however, passed into oblivion, leaving the Christian hymns more popular than ever" (Lorrain 447). The word *zai* refers to the creation of a type of tune which is then popularised and based on which tune, other composers then compose songs. All such songs are categorised as belonging to that particular *zai*. In this manner, Mizo folk songs or traditional

songs contain a rich trove of *zai* (which are essentially songs) such as *chawngchen zai*, *ṭhuthmun zai*, *Lalvunga zai*, *Darthiangi zai*, etc. In fact, the earliest known song among the Mizo is believed to be the *ṭhuthmun zai*. The *Puma zai* gradually gave rise to the *tlanglam zai* and the word *tlanglam* refers to the dancing of the community of a village in accompaniment to the tune created.

[4] The *lengkhawm hla/zai* or *lengkhawm* songs which were composed by Mizo poets (or songwriters) helped to incorporate the aspect of Mizo culture or the Mizo cultural trait of *lunglenna* as part of Christian worship at church. Around this time, the strictures imposed on Mizo Christians by the Church leadership in terms of the clear division between the sacred (Christianity) and the profane (traditional Mizo culture) was at its height. The introduction of *lengkhawm hla* was important especially regarding Mizo literature because it marked the point from which traditional Mizo literature and culture began to be accepted by the church, thereby resulting in the hybridisation of Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo* (2010) describes *lengkhawm zai* as, "n. group singing, gathering song, communal singing; act of singing together" (Vanlalngheta 248).

[5] The *Chapchar kut* is one of the most celebrated Mizo cultural festivals held annually in March in commemoration of completion of the clearing of the forest for cultivation. This festival is significant for postcolonial studies since it was revived in 1962 in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram as part of the cultural efforts to revive and preserve the cultural traditions of the past. It was then discouraged for being linked to pre-Christian cultural practices. Then after the turmoil of the initial years of the *Rambuai* period (1966-86), and soon after the granting of the Union Territory status to Mizoram, the festival began to be celebrated and cherished as an important cultural event since the 1970s. The annual celebrations of the *Chapchar kut* have been held at Aizawl each year and sanctioned by the Government of Mizoram. It has become one of the biggest events in Mizoram. Earlier, celebration of the festival had been rejected since it was perceived as being part of the indigenous faith practice which was considered as un-Christian and heathenish.

[6] In the traditional Mizo society, those successful in the hunt triumphantly sang the *hlado* (victory chant/song) to commemorate their killing upon reaching the village, and the *Sihhuaia hlado* was especially composed for the famed *tumpangchal* (wild gayal or mithun of mythic proportions) whom the villagers called *Sihhuaia*. *Sih huai* refers to evil spirits

dwelling in swampy areas of the spring water, and who inspired fear in the old Mizo society for being capable of inflicting harm on humans. Since the mithun inspired great fear and awe, and was the most popular topic of conversation in the village, the villagers appeared to consider it fitting that the *tumpangchal* should be so named to refer to the fear and awe it inspired.

WORKS CITED

Abraham, Taisha. *Introducing Postcolonial Theories: Issues and Debates*. Macmillan Critical Texts, 2007.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Anchor, 1994.

Agarwal, A. K. "Changing Socio-Economic Dimensions in Mizoram." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.177-186.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 1995.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2007.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literacy and Cultural Theory*. 1995. 2nd ed., Manchester UP, 2007.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2012.

Chatterji, N. *The Earlier Mizo Society. Tribal Research Institute,* 1975.

Chhakchhuak, Rema. *Mingo Phurrit* (*Zofate Ṭobul Chhuina leh Thusep Dangte*). Rema Chhakchhuak, 2019.

Chhawnmanga. *Mizorama Michengte*. Hnamte Press, 1985.

Childs, Peter, and R. J. Patrick Williams. 1997. *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*. Routledge, 2013.

Dokhuma, James. *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*. J.D. Press, 1992.

Groot, Jerome De. *The Historical Novel*. Routledge, 2013.

Hminga, Chhangte Lal. *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*. Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987.

Keivom, L. *Zoram Khawvel* (*The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*). 2nd ed., M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1994.

Keivom, L. *Zoram Khawvel 2* (*The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*). M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1993.

Kipgen, Mangkhosat. *Christianity and Mizo Culture: the Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*. Theological Conference, 1996.

Lalfakzuala, Joseph K. "Land Settlement, Land Privileges and People's Response in Mizoram." *Mizo Narratives: Accounts from Mizoram* (*Revised and Enlarged*). Edited by Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii. Scientific Book Centre, 2018. pp.158-175.

Lalremsiama, F. *Milu Lak Leh Vai Run Chanchin*. MCL Publications, 1997.

Lalthangliana, B. *History of Mizo Literature: Mizo Thu leh Hla* 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

Lalthangliana, B. "Mizo Identity." *Seminar and Important Papers*. Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2008. pp.15-23.

Lawmsanga. *Theology of Mission: Postcolonial Perspective*. Lalmuanpuii, 2016.

Liangkhaia. *Mizo Chanchin, Bu I & II Hmun Khatah, Zopa Kutchhuak History Ziak Leh Chhut Chhuah Hmasak Ber*. 1938. Reprinted, Mizoram Publication Board, 2002.

Lloyd, J. Meirion. *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills*. Synod Publication Board, 1991.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2005.

Lorrain, J. H. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. 4th Reprint, The Asiatic Society, 2008.

Manzuala, M. "Mizoram at the Crossroads." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.115-136.

McCall, A. G. *Lushai Chrysalis; with a Foreword by Sir Keith Cantlie*. 1949. 2nd Reprint, Government of Mizoram, Tribal Research Institute, 2003.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester UP, 2010.

Nunthara, C. "Mizo Pasalṭha (Socio-Cultural Perspective)." *Seminar and Important Papers*. Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2008. pp. 43-49.

Pachuau, Joy L. K. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford UP, 2014.

Radhakrishnan, R. "Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity." *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1993, p. 750-771., doi:10.2307/2932208.

Ralte, Lalhruaitluanga. *Zoram Vartian: Chanchinṭha leh Thuziak Khawvar Tan Dan*. Synod Press, 2008.

Rao, Raja. *Kanthapura*. George Allen and Unwin, 1938.

Thanmawia, R. L. "Harhnain a Hrin Hla leh a Phuahtute." *Harhna: Mizoram Revival Centenary Souvenir* (*1906-2006*). Edited by R. L. Thanmawia et al. Synod RevivalCommittee, 2006. pp. 578-592.

Thanmawia, R. L. *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, 1998.

Tiffin, Helen. "*Plato's Cave: Educational and Critical Practices*." *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction*, edited by Bruce King. Clarendon Press, 1998.

Vanchiau, C. Lalawmpuia. *Tapchhak Theory*. Lalrinpuia Ralte, 2011.

Vanlalngheta, J. T. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo*. 2010. 3rd ed., Lalchungnungi, 2015.

Vanlaltlani, T. *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh*. Mizoram Publication Board, 2005.

Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Blackwell, 2001.

Zairemmawia, R. B. *Mizo leh Zoram Diary: AD 700-1998*. R. B. Zairemmawia, 1999.

Zatluanga. *Mizo Chanchin Bu Hnuhnung*. 1966. Reprint, Zasanga, 1996.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTIANITY AND
THE MIZO POSTCOLONIAL WORLDVIEW

The Mizo postcolonial worldview is one that locates postcolonial cultural valorisation and reclamation of the traditional Mizo culture as sites where a postcolonial outlook has begun to emerge. At the same time, it is a worldview wherein conformity to norms established by Mizo Christianity and affinity towards westernisation are sites that locate the ideological continuation of colonial discourse. Mizo Christianity has permeated all aspects of Mizo culture and literature. The Mizo postcolonial worldview is one that continues to reconstitute and restructure the modern Mizo identity, which is hybridised in nature. It has led to the formation of a literary discourse or a prevailing discourse in Mizo literature vis-à-vis Mizo novels, according to which the effects of colonial ideological discourse and postcolonial cultural reclamation and valorisation can be observed. The process of indigenisation of Mizo Christianity was actuated by the various religious revivals (*Harhna*) that occurred intermittently throughout the twentieth century. Such revivals continue to be a defining and distinctive trait of Mizo Christianity even today.

This chapter will focus in particular on how the ingrained notions of cultural hierarchy and supremacy of the white coloniser, as established by colonial ideology and discourse, continue to permeate the Mizo postcolonial worldview vis-à-vis the lens of Mizo Christianity, which in turn affects the writing of Mizo novels. Thereby, an attempt has been made to show how Mizo novels have tended to follow a rigid, set, or formulaic pattern of representation regarding characterisation, choice of themes, and plot construction. It involves the creation of a story arc or framework where good Christian conduct is rewarded with a happy marriage or a happy ending symbolised in union with one's lover, while evil or flawed characters who refuse to lead a good Christian life, meet with a tragic or undesired fate. Most Mizo novels that depict the Mizo Christian society usually do not deviate from this pattern. Although Mizo novels are entertaining and are unique, this set pattern of representation limits the potential of Mizo novelists in general.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview also impacts the writing of Mizo novels by portraying the modern Mizo identity as a Christian identity. The mode of portrayal of this identity is suggestive of a sensitivity to the Christian values and ideals of the Mizo readership in general, because of which Mizo writers appear to be careful about their choice of content for storytelling. Christian moral didacticism has become the framework within which the

modern Mizo society has been depicted in the novels. Bhabha describes the process of ambivalence which is central to the idea of the colonial stereotype as,

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated…as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved. (94-95).

Bhabha also writes, "The stereotype can also be seen as that particular 'fixated' form of the colonial subject which *facilitates* colonial relations, and sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised" (112). Nag has defined the characteristics of the imported and transplanted European modernity of or "colonial modernization" that has been experienced by many societies in Asia and Africa through colonial power and the missionaries as such, "They considered indigenous people savages, their culture and social formation primitive, and their faith pagan and animist. Therefore, they set out to modernize their faith by introducing and converting them to a world religion like Christianity and thereby to rescue them from savagery. In doing so they, on the one hand, destroyed indigenous culture and religion and, on the other, introduced modern education, literature, medicine, and hygiene" (xvi). The foreign report of the Presbyterian Church of Wales of 1941-42 referred to the Mizos as "the inhabitants, who were known as notorious head-hunters" and as "a nation of barbarous head-hunters completely changed" (Thanzauva 169).

The Manichaean logic or binary of the missionary discourse that established a clear separation between the heathen past and Christianity became deeply influential in the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and identity where Christianity is the focal point of identification. Abdul JanMohamed describes the Manichean binary as being based on an economy of Manichean allegory which he refers to as the central trope of imperialist duplicity as part of colonialist discourse, and which is "based on a transformation

of racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference. Though the phenomenological origins of this metonymic transformation may lie in the "neutral" perception of physical difference (skin color, physical features, and such), its allegorical extensions come to dominate every facet of imperialist mentality" (61).

The influence of colonisation and the lasting effects of the notion of superiority of the white man and his culture (western culture) vis-à-vis Christianity among the Mizos is apparent in the lack of criticism of the colonisers and of the effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse regarding the formation of the modern Mizo culture and identity, as observed in Mizo novels. This reveals the extent to which the cultural superiority of the West has been ingrained among the Mizo. Beginning with the arrival of the missionaries J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge at Aizawl (present-day capital of Mizoram) in 1894, missionaries introduced the Gospel and modern medicine to the Mizo people, and thus the process of conversion began. The establishment of colonialism among the Mizo has led to the ideology of the civilising mission being deeply rooted among the Mizos through the introduction of Christianity, formal education, and modernisation that resulted from it. The missionaries became authority figures in the religious and secular front since they were placed in charge of school education in the Lushai Hills (Mizoram).

The influence of Christianity can be seen in the first Mizo novel HLP (1936) by L. Biakliana where he has used Christian frames of reference (biblical metaphors and allusions) in the narrative voice to describe the situations faced by the characters and their frame of mind in response to it. As observed by Pachuau, "One important aspect of Mizo identity is its adoption of and complete identification with Christianity. In fact, the religion is an important tool for incorporation into and exclusion from Mizo society" (5). Referring to the importance of the Christian identity in the formation of the Mizo identity, Lalmalsawma Khiangte has noted that even though Mizos have not stated that they cannot really accept non-Christians as Mizos, but those Mizo sub-tribes (such as Mizo Israelites) who are not Christians cannot really find wholehearted acceptance with Mizo societies (160). According to Kipgen, the Zo (Mizo) people living in Mizoram had very little contact with the outside world prior to British colonial rule, and the influence of other cultures and religions upon theirs was limited. Their traditional religious culture remained intact till the arrival of Christianity. Some impact of outside influence was felt only in their material culture such

as "agricultural implements, personal ornaments, a variety of musical instruments and weapons of war" (54).

Concerning the study of the Mizo postcolonial worldview, a thorough understanding of Mizo Christianity is required since it has become the defining component of the modern Mizo identity and worldview. The discourse of colonialism as it functions within the context of Mizo society is through the denigration and demonisation of the pre-colonial past. Bhabha writes, "The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (101). Since all aspects of the traditional Mizo society were linked to their indigenous faith practice, the reclamation of aspects of the past culture has always been problematised under a Mizo Christianity that predominantly informs the Mizo postcolonial worldview. As a result of colonialism, Mizo Christians came to view the missionaries who introduced Christianity and modernity to them as saviours who brought enlightenment to their heathenish ways. This mindset, coupled with the influence of the rational Enlightenment mode of thinking that was introduced with modern formal education, has placed Western culture and civilisation as ideals to be achieved or to progress towards. This has been the legacy of colonial rule on the culture of peoples across colonised nations.

According to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism in *Orientalism* (1978), Western colonial conception of the Orient was as the binary opposite of everything western and civilised. This relegated the Orient to an assumed state of being an Other that is inferior to the West, thus necessitating and justifying the civilising mission of colonial discourse. According to J. H. Lorrain's report in the Annual Reports of the Baptist Mission Society (BMS) of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, the main objective of their Christian mission in Mizoram was to evangelize the "savage Lushais" and to convert them from their tribal beliefs to Christianity (qtd. in Lalpekhlua 91). Lorrain also said, "Satan had held complete sway for ages, and in seeking to appease him with sacrifices the Lushai had lost almost all knowledge of God" (qtd. in Lalpekhlua 103). In connection to this, besides the common depiction of the pre-colonial traditional Mizo society as the golden age of the *pasalṭha* as described in the previous chapter, the depiction of the Mizo society of the past has often

involved the depiction in Mizo novels about the past, of paranormal encounters with spirits who inspire fear or cause harm to humans, or those who are benevolent.

The deeply ingrained notion of the consideration of colonial ideology by which the colonised (the Mizos) have been considered as the Other is seen in the lives of two British citizens, that is, the British military officer Col. T. H. Lewin whom the Mizos called Thangliana, and the missionary Edwin Rowlands whom they called Zosapthara, both of whom married Mizo women. Their close association and affinity to the Mizo people was frowned upon by the missionaries and colonial administrators alike. When Zosapthara was accused of being in a relationship with a young Mizo woman, he did not appear to have the full support of his peers and was eventually removed from service among the Mizos. His removal from his ministry among the Mizos was a significant loss since he was one of the most prolific composers and translators among the missionaries. According to C. Thansiama in the article "Tom Herbert Lewin-Thangliana" (1990), the British colonial government did not allow him to return to Mizoram after 1873 since his ideas about uplifting the Mizo tribe did not align with the policies of the colonial government (qtd. in Ralte 110-111). C. Lalnunchanga has portrayed Lewin's story in PNH (2006) where the British officer McCabe disapproved of Lewin's actions and stated that the intention of the East India Company was to subjugate the Lushai chiefs and not to establish friendships and win their favour (226).

When the missionaries began proselytising, they soon realised that the concept of sin was alien to the Mizo idea of faith. Consequently, they began to lay emphasis on projecting Christianity as a religion that could relieve them of their fear of evil spirits. During the first half of the twentieth century, the missionaries built a hospital and began training Mizo women in nursing. The introduction of modern medicine resulted in the healing of many illnesses which helped in easing the transition process from their tribal faith practice to Christianity. Since the illnesses which the Mizos believed as having been caused by the evil spirits were somewhat troublesome for necessitating sacrifices of appeasement involving domestic animals which were hard to come by, it appears that Christianity could have been rather appealing to the early converts.

Zathanga who was a small orphan in the chief's house at Pukpui village in Lunglei district, and who eventually became a well-known minister in the Baptist church recalled

what the missionary D. E. Jones had said during his visit in 1899 which was, "Mizo sacrifice is the worship of evil spirits. They are worthless in the sight of God, the Maker of all things. He is greater than all such spirits. Whoever worships Him has no need of a sacrifice. God will heal him, for God alone can heal" (Lloyd 48). In a report of the foreign mission of the Presbyterian church of Wales (1898-99), it is written, "The first difficulty which the Lushai raises against accepting Christianity is the danger that he will be killed by the Evil Spirits, they say in answer that our religion does for us and theirs for them. Yet some are ready to believe in Christ if they will be kept from illness in so doing" (Thanzauva 4).

Salvation or being assured of going to heaven or *pialral* through faith in Jesus or *Pathian* (God) who had power over evil spirits, would have meant that it was now possible to go to heaven without having to attain the *thangchhuah* status which was beyond the reach of most people. It also meant that they no longer had to offer the numerous and costly sacrifices to appease the evil spirits (Hminga 63). In addition to this, the emergence of the *Puma zai* (1908-09), considered as the heathen revival by the missionaries, as well as the complete separation of Mizo Christianity and traditional Mizo culture that ensued enabled the formation of a discourse that negated and denigrated the precolonial past. Therefore, in missionary discourse, there emerged a *Manichean binary* by which the Mizo past was rejected as heathenish and backward. Rosiamliana Tochhawng has noted that in the light of missionary teachings that portrayed the white man or race as being superior to other races in the world, the Mizos began to consider themselves as being inferior. Then they began to refer to things that were good or beautiful, well-made, and stylish as "sap zaih" (which can be translated as, "this is so very sap" where sap refers to the English/ European/white man) while things that were ugly, old-fashioned, or outdated as being "zo ṭiah ṭiah" (which means, "that is so very Mizo") (117).

Many colonial missionaries and administrators and later, Mizo historians and scholars of Mizo history have described the indigenous faith of the traditional Mizo society as animism. This is in accordance with the ideology of the colonising mission. However, this belies a true understanding of the traditional Mizo way of life. It would appear to be a part of the process of colonial discourse formation for it was the attempt on the part of the colonisers to try and inscribe their understanding of the Mizo belief system or indigenous primal faith within the parameters of Christianity. Labelling the indigenous faith or

traditional belief system of the Mizo as animism imputed a sense of backwardness and primitivism to it. The missionary portrayal of the pre-colonial Mizo faith as the worship of evil spirits helped to project Christianity as a religion that liberated the Mizo from their heathen past. In traditional tribal societies, their socio-cultural and customary practices are connected to the practice of their religion or belief system, which is a trait commonly shared in general among tribal faith systems. This ensured the well-being of the community and fostered a sense of solidarity within the close-knit tribal society. Lalsawma has noted that,

In the old Mizo society religion was strictly a matter of personal and family relationship with the Deity and the spirits, and this note of individualism relegated religious things to the background of public life. This does not, however, mean that the people were not religious. On the contrary, every aspect of life had something to do with religion. What is claimed here is that the distinctively religious observance was personal and concerned family affairs and it did not offer occasions for public religious expressions. (23-24)

The Mizo traditional faith practice or worship of *sakhua*[1] is, at a basic level, a conflation of the word *sa*, who is the creator and *khua*, who is the protector. Worship of the specific *sakhua* of one's clan was personal and at the level of the individual family, while worship of *Pathian* was at the community level with the village priest (*sadawt*) invoking the blessings and protection of god on behalf of the entire village. Worship of the clan *sakhua* was handed down from father to sons. The word *Pathian*, which the Mizo used to refer to their god, was appropriated within the context of Christianity and then used to refer to the Christian God. The traditional or primal religion of the Mizo involved the offering of sacrifices to benevolent spirits to seek their blessings and protection, and the offering of sacrifices to malevolent or evil spirits to appease and propitiate them since they were believed to be capable of bringing misfortune, illnesses, and suffering upon them.

The evil spirits called *huai* were believed to inhabit forms in nature ranging from caves, large trees, to the steep edges of cliffs. Among these, the *ramhuai (*evil spirits or demons believed to reside in the forest) are considered as being the largest in number and were believed to inhabit the entire land (Zairema 77). Evil spirits could bring harm to

them in their daily lives and then retract the infliction of harm or pain caused it they so wished. Consequently, they feared the evil spirits more than they feared *Pathian* and offered sacrifices to appease them (Hrangṭhiauva and Lalchungnunga 35). It is to be noted that the Mizos did not immediately embrace Christianity enthusiastically, for the early converts faced severe backlash, vehement opposition, excommunication, and expulsion from their families and their village community, and even torture in some instances. The non-Christian response to Christianity was seen in the persecution of Christians by the Mizo chiefs, and in the emergence of the *Puma zai* (1908-09) or the heathen revival. The Mizo chiefs had perceived of the spread of this new religion which strongly eschewed the old way of life, and thus they considered it as an affront to, as well as undermining their authority and rule.

The Foreign Report of 1906-07 for the Presbyterian Church of Wales states that the year 1906 "will long be remembered as the year in which persecution broke out, and for many months the Christians were in great fear." The government intervened by punishing the chiefs. Many Christians were driven from their houses and out of their villages. They were beaten up , threatened, and ostracised. Their public meetings were prohibited, their children were forbidden from going to school, and they were not allowed to buy food (Thanzauva 34). Consequently, many of the chiefs subjected the early Mizo Christians to discrimination and persecution, so much so that there were instances in which the missionaries intervened with the cooperation of the colonial administrators, by giving a warning to the Mizo chiefs. Moreover, the act of refraining from practising the indigenous faith practices, which included cultural practices that were rejected by the Christians, would have been considered as an affront to their authority and as a disruptive force undermining the unity of the community. Therefore, during the initial years of colonisation, the chiefs were strongly opposed to Christianity.

A teacher by the name of Vaikhawla recalled how the Mizo chief Vanphunga was angry at Christians in his village because they refused to drink *zu* (Mizo rice beer) on a Sunday and held fellowship sessions which the non-believers could not be a part of. Thus, he began mistreating and persecuting the Christians (Lalhmuaka 16-17). The persistent persecution by the Mizo chiefs led to the creation of Christian villages in some cases. Such persecutions began to die down upon the intervention of the colonial authorities who

co-operated with the missionaries. The spread of the religious revivals across the villages in Mizoram led to wide-scale conversions, which resulted in the exponential growth of the Mizo Christian population during colonialism. Ultimately, such revivals reached the villages where Christians were persecuted earlier. In his account of the history of the Church in Mizoram, the missionary Lloyd observed how the Mizo Christians began taking up the task of evangelising since 1900 and began gaining more confidence as time went on (56).

The exponential growth of Mizo Christians can be attributed mainly to the religious revivals (*Harhna*) which had been pivotal in bring about the conversion of the Mizo people to Christianity on a mass scale by the middle of the twentieth century. According to the Census (of the Mizo Church) taken in 1941, there were 98,108 Christians in a total population of 1, 52,786 (65.97%), and the 1951 Census shows that there were 1,57,515 Christians in a population of 1,96,202 (80.31%) (Lalhmuaka 1). In contrast, the first Census of 1901 showed that there were 45 Christians (7). Religious revivals have continued to occur in Mizo Christianity, and those that occurred during colonial rule were instrumental in not only fostering the acceptance of Christianity among the Mizo but also in helping to indigenise Mizo Christianity.

In the case of the modern Mizo society, despite the emergence of a postcolonial awakening, colonial ideology and colonial discourse have produced a deeply rooted notion of the superiority of the white man or of western culture coupled with the notion of the pre-colonial society as being primitive, backward, and heathenish. In the Mizo postcolonial worldview, a Manichean binary has resulted from the binary that has perpetuated the difference between traditional Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity during colonialism, and has also impacted the writing of Mizo novels where a sanitised and idealised version of the traditional Mizo society has been presented. Within this binary, the Mizo cultural past has always been negotiated with on the basis of the differentiation between the licit or the illicit, the religious and the blasphemous, and the sacred and the profane when it comes to questions of its inclusion within the Christianised modern Mizo identity.

Despite the military takeover and defeat of the Mizo chiefs by the British Empire through various punitive military expeditions and the two major Lushai Expeditions of 1871-72 and 1889-90 which helped secure colonial rule in Mizoram, colonialism in the Lushai Hills is differentiated by the lack of an anti-colonial sentiment or movement for

self-determination and independence from colonial rule. This could perhaps be attributed to the placement of formal education in the hands of the missionaries rather than the government and stands as a testament to the impact of colonial ideology in the minds of the Mizos. The 'white man' was looked upon as a benevolent benefactor for having introduced Christianity and modernity through education, thus saving them from a primitive, backward, ignorant, and heathenish past.

Missionary education established the superiority of the white man by laying a foundation of imperialist ideology and colonial discourse which was profoundly influential among the Mizo. Lalthangliana opined that the continued admiration held by the Mizos for the white men till today is a testament to the success of the lessons taught in The *Mizo Primer Book* which was part of the curriculum in schools (published in 1915 and 1929) and which referred to the superiority of the white man. The book mentions that there are five kinds of people in the world, that is, the black, the brown, the yellow, the red, and white people and among them, white people are the wisest and most powerful (101). Although the first school textbook taught to Mizo students was *Mizo Zir Tir Bu* (1896), from 1915 onwards, students were taught the textbook *Zirṭan Bu* written by the missionary J.H. Lorrain. Such books included biblical stories and teachings and were intended to mainly serve as moral lessons.

Mizo Christian ideals continue to frame Mizo conceptions of their identity and self in the modern Mizo identity where one can locate the tension as well as the dialectical relationship between the postcolonial reclamation of traditional cultural practices and the reluctance and wariness with which they have been imbibed into modern Mizo culture. This tension was first observed in the counter-discursive practices as seen in the indigenisation of Mizo Christianity through the religious revivals by which the authority of the missionaries was disrupted which then challenges the ideological effects of colonial discourse. Since Christianity has become an indispensable component of the modern Mizo identity, the consideration of traditional Mizo culture as being regressive, while ironically accepting hybrid forms that are in line or are acceptable with Christian practices, reveals the continued effects of colonial ideology. In addition, the wearing of western clothes by Mizo men and of western-style tops with the Mizo *puan* (traditional woven cloth worn like a sarong) by Mizo women at church services can be perceived as a testament to the

influence of the missionaries, as much as it is a testament to the emergence of cultural hybridity. Since the missionaries were admired, their manner of dress was emulated by the early Mizo Christians.

The Mizo cultural practice of holding a wake by the village community or locality in cities and towns is also a cultural practice where the hybridised modern Mizo identity can be seen. During the wake, the Mizo cultural practice of comforting the family of the deceased by singing Christian hymns and songs throughout the night is conducted under the supervision of the YMA (the Young Mizo Association) leaders of the locality. It is followed by a funeral conducted the next day by the church and officiated by the church pastor or a church elder. Such examples of hybridised cultural practices have become defining traits of the modern Mizo identity. Such practices reveal a postcolonial reclamation of the past within parameters dictated by Mizo Christianity.

Lalhmingchhuanga Zongte has commented on this element of wariness concerning the reclamation of aspects of traditional culture within the modern Christianised Mizo society. He has noted the strict practice of wearing a suit coat for preaching by pastors, elders, or layman preachers while preaching from the pulpit irrespective of weather changes. He points to this as evidence of a mindset influenced by admiration for the white missionaries, which resulted in the reluctance or refusal to change the traditions of worship that have been established under their guidance. At the same time, he also points to the disapproval and criticism often directed by church leaders (pastors and elders) towards church elders who wear coats made in the various patterns and styles of the Mizo traditional cloths during church services, as symbolising the reluctance with which Mizo Christianity has accepted the indigenisation process (131).

The indigenisation of Mizo Christianity which was initiated by the various religious revivals have paved the way for the acceptance and introduction of Mizo traditional literature and aspects of Mizo culture or cultural practices within Mizo Christianity. L. H. Lalpekhlua has observed that “there has been a significant continuity of traditional culture in Mizo Christianity” (239). Since songs have formed the largest component of Mizo oral literature, it is fitting that the process of indigenisation began with this form, resulting in the creation of hybridised forms that have been influenced by western literature and the Mizo oral literature. Religious revivals that been occurring intermittently since the first revival in

1906. It was with the emergence of the *lengkhawm* songs during the third revival (1919) that the development and growth of modern Mizo literature began. It paved the way for the emergence of the modern Mizo songs such as love songs, patriotic songs, and songs about nature. From then on, modern Mizo literature gradually emerged. In particular, the third revival (1919) is significant for ushering in this process of indigenisation which paved the way for the gradual acceptance of aspects of the traditional Mizo culture within the folds of Mizo Christianity, thus resulting in a hybrid Mizo identity that has incorporated elements of traditional Mizo culture or cultural practices.

The *lengkhawm* songs which emerged around this period were composed by Mizo poets (or songwriters) and helped to incorporate the aspect of the Mizo cultural trait of *lunglenna* as part of Christian worship at church. Around this time when the *lengkhawm* songs emerged, the strictures imposed on Mizo Christians by the Church leadership in terms of the clear division between the sacred (Christianity) and the profane (traditional Mizo culture) was at its height. Lalthangliana thinks that these songs and their tunes were born in the shade of the translated Christians songs which had been tweaked to appeal to the Mizo mind. He believes that this does not negate the value of the songs which continue to hold pride of place among Mizo Christian songs (171).

Mizo *lengkhawm* songs were not included in the *Kristian Hlabu* (the hymn book of the Mizoram Presbyterian and Baptist churches) until 1985 when some of the songs were incorporated into it. At first *lengkhawm* songs were released as a separate hymn book called *Hla Thar Bu* (Book of new songs) in 1930. Thanmawia has observed that most of the *lengkhawm* songs composed before 1930 were excluded from this hymn book for various reasons including that of rejection based on the lyrics. He opined that Mendus's foreword to the book reveals the fear held by the missionaries that the *lengkhawm* songs would be admired and preferred over the translated English Christian songs. In the foreword to the *Hla Thar Bu*, the missionary E. L. Mendus stated that it should be observed that the composers of the *lengkhawm* songs had been inspired by those songs from the preceding hymn book which had been composed by some of the holiest and most skilled of composers ("Harhnain" 590).

The indigenisation of Mizo Christianity, which was actuated by the religious revivals, held great appeal for the Mizos in acclimatising themselves to the newly adopted

religion. The major revivals are believed to have occurred in 1906, 1913, 1919, 1930-1935, 1945, 1984, 1987, 2013-2015, although revivals on a smaller scale have continued to occur among various local churches around Mizoram throughout the twentieth century and beyond. Although the major revivals have been noted, some Mizo historians and scholars believe that the religious revivals often occurred on a small scale across various villages throughout the course of the twentieth century in Mizoram. Each of the revivals had a distinct theological theme or thematic emphasis that helped in enabling a deeper understanding of the Gospel among the Mizos.

Although each of the religious revivals had a thematic emphasis concerning theology, the theological emphasis that arose during the 1906 revival was the concept of sin. This fostered the understanding of the idea of sin among a people for whom such a concept was alien. The first religious revival made the Christians view things differently, and the differentiation between the idea of the sacred and the profane, as it related to Christianity, became more pronounced. Also, the complete rejection of cultural aspects and practices of the past was to safeguard the early church from the attractions posed by the old faith and to help in maintaining high moral standards within the Christian community (Kipgen 256).

Lawmsanga describes the revival movement in Mizoram as "an antidote to the relentless process of westernisation". He has noticed that, although the form of the revival in Mizoram shares features with those found in charismatic and Pentecostal movements, it has "assumed a distinctive indigenous form and is closely related to Mizo Christian identity". There are common features or a general pattern among the revivals in Mizoram which is that of being "a phenomena marked by a state of excitement" and of joy which is accompanied by enthusiasm in singing to the accompaniment of the Mizo drum, ecstatic movements of the body and dancing, preaching, community gathering and feasting (119).

The introduction of dancing in church worship because of the religious revivals shocked the missionaries in some instances, and they advocated for exercising restraint. Since dancing was a cherished cultural trait of the traditional society, its emergence in the context of Christianity has aided in the indigenisation process. There is a popular Mizo saying, "*Khuang lova chai ang*" (which translates as 'singing and dancing to the *Chai* song without a *khuang*') which implies that Mizo festivals would not be enjoyable or

complete if the playing of the *khuang* (traditional Mizo drum) did not accompany the singing of the *Chai* song. Thanmawia has translated it as "festival without drum or music" ("Mizo Poetry" 27). This reveals the importance of the *khuang* in Mizo culture.

Earlier, the *khuang* (the traditional Mizo drum) was considered as an instrument of devil-worshipping or for the worshipping of evil spirits. Despite the reintroduction of the *khuang* in church worship during the third revival (1919), it should be noted that it did not gain acceptance for a long time by the white missionaries as well as sections of the Mizo Christian society such as the Mission *veng* (Mission locality) which continued to reject the *khuang* even in 1964. The Mission *veng* church set a precedent of continuing to reject the *khuang* which was followed by the churches of localities such as Dawrpui and Durtlang (Sangkhuma 7-12), though this is no longer the case today. It is to be noted that the Mission *veng* church is the seat of authority of the Mission (the governing authority for the missionaries in the Lushai Hills) and was therefore stricter in terms of maintaining European standards of worship in church. This is an example of the tension between indigenisation and Christianity, which is at the heart of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and identity formation vis-a-vis Mizo Christianity.

The *Puma Zai* (1908-1909) or the heathen revival, was considered by and large to be a Mizo cultural revival which the Mizo Christians and the missionaries considered as the work of the devil. It mainly involved the emergence of a new form of Mizo traditional songs, a cultural movement which spread throughout the Lushai Hills and had a significant influence on the Mizo converts many of whom renounced Christianity in order to be able to practice the *Puma Zai* and its attendant activities. Even though the *Puma Zai* was short-lived, it effectively changed the attitude and response of the missionaries and the Mizo Church towards Mizo culture and traditions, which was that of wariness towards it and rejection of cultural practices.

Regarding the formation of colonial discourse, the colonial administrators and the missionaries reinforced each other. During colonial rule, it was the resolve of the civil officers in charge of the administration of the district to ensure that Mizo cultural practices and indigenous customs were preserved. There were some instances in which the administrators clashed with the missionaries. McCall has spoken about this situation saying that the chief forces which influenced the people away from their indigenous culture were

the Mission and their staffs with individual exceptions (7). However, the cautionary approach of the missionaries to the indigenisation process was justified by the emergence of many Christian cults or separatist sects that have deviated and broken away from the mainstream Christian faith and have been a testament to the excesses that have been a part of the various revivals. At the same time, he also suggested that civil officers should convey a sense of pride and confidence among the Mizo "especially in all that can be considered sound in indigenous culture…" (8).

This goes to show that the colonial government supported upholding Mizo culture and customary practices, but this was limited to those aspects which the British colonial government considered as sound. In general, the colonial administration and the missionaries supported each other. For example, one of the superintendents of the Lushai District, Col. John Shakespear whose tenure was at the turn of the twentieth century, firmly supported missionary work and was of the opinion that the Gospel could do much good to the Mizo which no government was capable of doing (Lloyd 43). The superintendent Major Cole also advised the missionaries to be role models, "The missionaries should in all things live so much above the natives as to set before them a goal which they should strive to reach, and a model which they might follow" (Thanzauva 35).

Nag has stated how the missionaries and the colonial administration worked together, "One conquered them politically, the other consolidated them by conquering them morally and culturally. The former looked after peace, law, and order, while the other established new social and cultural institutions. The conquerors annexed them to the empire, while the missionaries made them English" (34). Although colonial discourse as imparted through the Mizo Church and through education in schools helped to ingrain notions of the superiority of the white man and his culture, there were missionaries who actively worked to maintain links with indigenous culture. For example, this is seen in the formation of the YLA (Young Lushai Association) by the missionaries. However, this act of retaining or preservation has always been mediated by Mizo Christianity which is made clear by the statement made by Grace R. Lewis in *The Lushai Hill: The Story of the Lushai Pioneer Mission* (1907). She says, "whilst a few of the national customs are worth saving for their innocence and picturesqueness, the majority require the patient energy of the missionary to uproot and destroy" (qtd. in Lawmsanga 152).

In the past, there was no single or unified Mizo identity and one's identification was with one's village and one's chief. *In Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India* (2014), Pachuau has argued that "despite confusions over who constitute the Mizos, the Mizos rely on 'cultural practice' as the chief determinant of identity and as the boundary marker of identity" (11). In this connection, the indigenisation of Mizo Christianity and the gradual acceptance of aspects of traditional Mizo culture and cultural practices, albeit in a sanitised form acceptable for Mizo Christianity, becomes important. Pachuau also observed that for the Mizos, "Christianity frames and structures life (and, one may add, the afterlife) on an everyday, as well as a life-cycle level" (148). In the old Mizo society, only certain capable men who achieved the *thangchhuah* status could acquire a place in *pialral* (the Mizo version of paradise). Within Christianity the pinnacle of achievement concerning religion, that is, heaven or paradise was now accessible to all, thus causing a significant shift in perspective.

Hybridised Christian practices have helped to instil a sense of belonging and of sharing common cultural practices and have thus consolidated the modern Mizo identity as a Christianised one. Such hybridised cultural practices include the holding of annual Christmas and New Year feasts wherein the entire church community or locality gathers to participate, in a pattern reminiscent of the old Mizo society feasts. Mizo Christian marriages now include the practising of the Mizo customary law of the traditional Mizo society concerning marriage. However, only those aspects that are found to be acceptable within Mizo Christianity have been chosen.

The discourse of colonialism as it functions within the context of Mizo society is through the denigration and demonisation of the pre-colonial past. Since all aspects of the traditional Mizo society were linked to their indigenous faith practice, the reclamation of aspects of the past culture has always been problematised under a Mizo Christianity that predominantly informs the Mizo postcolonial worldview. As a result of colonialism, Mizo Christians came to view the missionaries who introduced Christianity and modernity to them as saviours who brought enlightenment to their heathenish ways. This mindset, coupled with the influence of the rational Enlightenment mode of thinking that was introduced with modern formal education, placed Western culture and civilisation as ideals

to be achieved. This has been the legacy of colonial rule on the culture of peoples across colonised nations.

The Foucauldian collusion or conjunction of power and knowledge is apparent in colonial relations. The Mizo worldview or perception is coloured by accounts or documentation of the subject races in accordance with colonial ideology by which the colonisers have been portrayed as the superior race, that is, by the colonial administrators and the missionaries who essentially changed the socio-cultural, economic, religious, and intellectual life of the Mizo people. In the selected novels, the effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse may be discerned in the manner by which the 'white man', in the form of colonial administrators or figures of authority and missionaries, has been portrayed as a benevolent and respectable character. In contrast, the martial nature of the pre-colonial Mizo society has often been the main point of focus for stories depicting the Mizo pre-colonial past.

Thus by implication, the portrayal of the Mizo as martial people or race in the focus and emphasis placed on depicting the traditional Mizo society or of Mizo history in general as the age of the *pasalṭha* (warriors), has served to reinforce the colonial projection of the early Mizo as backward, uncivilised, and indulging in the savage practice of head-hunting. Taking the exception of the seminal work of Mizo postcolonial fiction PNH (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga, Mizo novels have hardly portrayed the white colonisers in a starkly negative light nor has there been a critical assessment of their role in perpetuating colonial ideology and colonial discourse.

The effects of colonial ideology as it has been ingrained among the Mizos is seen through the acknowledgement of the superiority of the culture or the military power of the British as seen in NKP (1989), through the absence of a critique of colonialism and its consideration as an unquestioned part of Mizo history as observed in the novel HLP (1936), through the display of admiration for the white man as seen in ZTT (1977), and through the emergence of a set or overarching pattern of storytelling influenced by the Mizo Christian worldview. The importance of Mizo Christianity in the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview is reflected in the emergence of this set or overarching pattern of representation that generally characterises Mizo novels. This refers to a pattern in which Christian moral didacticism is reflected in the emphasis placed on good Christian character and conduct or

the lack of it, as the deciding factor concerning the fate of the characters. Zoramdinthara has observed that Mizo novels were written to serve as moral lessons and portray religious people as successful while evildoers suffer and meet with their downfall and death (259-260).

In the third chapter of NKP (1989), the narrator and the protagonist Chhuana stated that the British came and conquered the Mizos only because of their superiority in strength, and had the Mizo people been stronger, they would have ruled over the British instead. He also realised that the Vai had clearly occupied the seat of power vacated by the British Empire (23). Here Chhuana as the narrator acknowledges the superiority of the British in strength and offers no critique of colonialism beyond merely mentioning it.

Admiration for the white man is observed in the admiration for the missionaries as seen in ZTT (1977). In this novel the missionary Pi Zaii (Miss Katie Hughes) has provided training in vocational skills to the protagonist Vanlalremi (Remi) and this enables her to earn respect as a skilled tailor in the end. With the emergence of a postcolonial outlook among Mizo scholars, thinkers or commentators, theologians, and writers, attempts have been made to negate the workings of colonial ideology and discourse. As seen in C. Lalnunchanga's writing of PNH (2006), Mizos are now beginning to grapple with the ingrained effects of cultural inferiority as a result of colonialism, and have begun to make attempts in recovering, reinterpreting, renegotiating, and reclaiming Mizo history and culture to restore pride in the Mizo past.

In chapter 6 of the novel HLP (1936) by L. Biakliana, the white man is portrayed as a benevolent saviour figure for Hminga and his friends, and as they were celebrating their promotion in the army, the narrator mentioned how they had all given up drinking alcohol because their British soldier held the opinion that it is not good to drink alcohol (219). The British soldier is regarded with respect, and his opinion is considered and followed even though it was not an order. After Hminga and his friends ran away from their village and found their way to Hringchar (Silchar), it was this British soldier who decided to recruit them into the British Indian army. He had often heard about the Mizo and how they often took to raiding the people of the plains (219). This impression of the Mizos as savages who raided and plundered the people of the plains is in keeping with the colonial portrayal of the Mizo in accordance with colonial discourse.

In the novel HLP (1936), colonialism and the Lushai expedition (1871-72) form the historical background in this novel and yet there is no critical assessment of the historical situation or its impact on Mizo society. Concerning the Lushai Expedition taken up to try and subdue the Mizo chiefs, there is no anger or indignation directed against the colonial masters on the part of Hminga and his friends, nor do they show any hesitation, anger, or indignation in being a part of it. They appear to consider their participation as the act of merely fulfilling their duty as soldiers of the British Indian Army. Instead, the focus of the novel is on their journey home and their happiness at the prospect of returning home. Even though there has been an attempt at cultural valorisation as seen in Mizo novels, colonialism is by and large, perceived as being responsible for bringing civilisation to the Mizo people. This appears to reflect the worldview of the author and reflects the influence of colonial ideology. Since L. Biakliana was the first Mizo novelist, it is understood that he would have been educated under the missionaries, which would reflect the notion of colonialism as a positive occurrence.

There is a scene in the novel HLP (1936) where Pari saw the slain heads of the enemies which the young men of their village brought home from Pu Rala's (Pari's maternal uncle) village. Pari was horrified and felt a strong sense of anger about the practice of head-hunting (269). Given the strict process of enculturation from a young age in the traditional Mizo society, decapitating enemies as a practice of warfare would have been the accepted norm. Therefore, Pari's expression of horror is reflective of the influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse by which Mizo practices of the past have been considered as backward, savage and primitive. This incident may be considered as the insertion of the author's view as a Christian educated by the missionaries.

In the novel NKP (1989), Chhuana's Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) interview reveals his admiration for the British. When he mentioned how the Indian army committed atrocities and wrongs against the Mizos and raped women, burned villages, and looted their wealth and possessions, one of the interviewers told him that wrongdoings had always been a natural part of warfare. Chhuana agreed and explained that warfare was a part of their tribal past, but once they had become civilised, they did not expect such things. When he was asked further if he had not heard of civilised people taking part in wars, he said the Mizos took part in the Second World War, then went on to praise the

British whom he said were mighty. When it was suggested that he sided with the British simply based on having fought on their side in the world wars, Chhuana mentioned how the Mizos had fought against colonial rule in 1889-90 but were defeated. He also stated that the British never robbed the Mizos and raped their women, and even when they took water and food, they paid for it (144-145). His consideration of participation in tribal wars as being savage while participation in the world wars as being civilised, as well as his consideration of the Mizos as being civilised and his praise of colonialism reveals the impact of the ideology of the civilising mission.

In the preface to the novel ZTT (1977), we learn that the novel was the result of a submission made by the author Khawlkungi in a competition for Christian love stories for which she won the first prize (iv) From this, it is understandable that the story will be Christianised in terms of its thematic elements. As pointed out earlier, the novel has the distinction of being the first Mizo novel written by a Mizo woman. As the author has mentioned in the preface, this is a didactic novel that teaches the value of living a life in keeping with Christian morality, by which a person is portrayed as being richly rewarded in the end. In the introduction to the novel ZTT (1977), the Mizo scholar and literary critic

Siamkima wrote that the author had honoured the female protagonist Vanlalremi (Remi) by depicting her as living among the Zosap (a term used to refer to the British missionaries). Moreover, she even got married while under the guardianship of a Zosap (Miss Katie Hughes, also known as Pi Zaii). He also mentioned how the author has portrayed Christian love through Remi and Malsawma's relationship, and how she has also portrayed the life that Christians must refrain from living through the character of the antagonist Lalkhawthangi (Khawlkungi vii). This preface shows how Mizo writers and Mizo Christians, in general, tend to regard the missionaries with respect and admiration.

The role of female missionaries among the Mizos is respected and cherished as seen in the novel ZTT (1977). Remi's friend Biakkungi who introduced her to the missionary Pi Zaii spoke about how they were trained by the missionaries into becoming teachers and were also trained in vocational skills like sewing and weaving. Knowledge about hygiene, care of infants, and first-aid was also imparted to them (38-39). Miss Katie Hughes, or Pi Zaii as she is fondly known among the Mizos, was a Christian missionary who played a very important role in women's education and in Mizo history. She is one of the founding

members of the YLA (Young Lushai Association) which preceded the YMA (Young Mizo Association). The training Remi received from Pi Zaii enabled her to become self-sufficient and to earn the respect of her in-laws as the only tailor in their village because the novel is set around the time of the Second World War when there were hardly any tailors to be found in the villages of Mizoram. Her father in law became very proud of her since she was able to earn money for the family through tailoring (246).

A postcolonial outlook revealing the role of colonial discourse and ideology instilling notions of the inferiority of Mizo culture and way of life in the past is beginning to emerge especially among Mizo theologians and scholars. To name a few, theologians such as Rev. Zairema (2009), Rev. Vanlalchhuanawma (2006), Rev. Dr. Lalsawma (1994), Rev. Z. T. Sangkhuma (2016), Lawmsanga (2016), and L. H. Lalpekhlua (2007) have discussed this. On this basis, contextual theology has begun to emerge. Lawmsanga has espoused the need for a contextual theology regarding Mizo Christianity. He advocates the validity of divine revelation in Mizo traditional religion and notes that, although Christianity appears to be indigenised to a great extent, "But an in-depth study, however, reveals that Christianity has not taken root, deep within the Mizo culture. It is, therefore, the task of Mizo tribal theology to develop a hermeneutical principle to fill this lacuna" (265). He even described Jesus as a *tlawmngai* person par excellence (273).

This is in keeping with the increasing popularity of the practice of contextual theology among the Mizos which aligns with postcolonial hermeneutics, and in which Jesus Christ has been portrayed as the consummate *pasalṭha*. In Mizo society, the *pasalṭha* as a cultural icon is a symbol of the newly formed Christianised Mizo identity and this shows the potential of cultural markers as having the agency to serve current needs in new contexts, thereby continuing to have relevance in the modern Mizo society. At the same time, it also serves as a marker of cultural authenticity and reveals the admiration of the *pasalṭha* and the cultural value of *tlawmngaihna* they embody in the past and in the present. This is because the *pasalṭha* and *tlawmngaihna* which they embody are considered as well-suited to the Christian ideal of self-denial and self-sacrifice as shown by Jesus Christ.

In the traditional Mizo society, their religion or indigenous faith practice included the personal worship of *sakhua*[1] and the worship of the Supreme Being called *Pathian* (God) whom they worshipped through rituals on special occasions for securing his

protection in their daily lives. However, he was believed to be uninvolved in the day to day lives of humans. It also included the opportunity of being able to achieve the *thangchhuah* status, which was the highest pinnacle regarding the attainment of social status, the equitable distribution of wealth, and also linked with their indigenous belief system that ensured access to *pialral* in the afterlife. Zairema has mentioned that the Lusei clan worship *Pathian* separately whenever they worship '*sa'* (70). This shows how *Pathian* holds an important position as the supreme being and explains why the missionaries chose to refer to the Christian God as *Pathian*. According to Zairema, the Mizos were afraid of displeasing *Pathian* who was believed to be averse to the killing of any human being, whether it involves murder or killing enemies. They were often at war with other villages and other clans or races, but they did not like to have to kill many, and even refrained from handling the corpses of their enemies in a rough manner. Although those who killed many enemies were honoured by being called *pasalṭha*, such men were not the first choice for a husband when it came to women (68-69).

This reveals how the concept of the *pasalṭha* being shown as desired as husbands and admired by women as shown in novels such as TNS (1981) and PNH (2016) is most likely a reinterpretation of history in accordance with the attempt to idealise the *pasalṭha*. It also shows the attempt to inscribe the *pasalṭha* within the Christian worldview as cultural icons and as being desirable for having *tlawmngaihna*. In TNS (1981) before Fehtea's reputation was maligned by Sangtuala, he was admired and desired by young women. Both Fehtea and Nghalṭhianga in PNH (2016) were admired and each ended up marrying the daughter of the chief of the village.

In DTT (2003), the protagonist Chhuana as the narrator, recalls the three people of Mualnuam village who cared for him and were there for him when he was dejected because of his father's alcoholism and his mother's adultery, he refers to the people who cared for him as "Krista pasalṭhate" (meaning, the *pasalṭha* of Jesus Christ) and said that he would never forget them for their kindness (33). They were, Upa Lalkhuma who was the church Elder of Mualnuam village, and Thlamuana and Hmangaiha who were young men and active members of the church youth group. They would visit him, comfort him, and pray for him. Chhuana also recalled how Thlamuana and Hmangaiha would invite his father to attend church and to participate in church activities such as the church choir (31). Here we

find an instance of the title of *pasalṭha* being used in the Christian context which shows how the *pasalṭha* has become an important cultural marker in the Mizo postcolonial worldview, just as much as it reveals active members of the church as ideal characters.

There is an emerging postcolonial outlook among Mizo writers and critics who have begun to critically analyse colonial domination and its implications for the loosening of morals, lack of rootedness, discipline, and a sense of purpose and dedication among the Mizo in general. The Mizo writer Lalhmingchhuanga Zongte discusses this lack of rootedness to Mizo culture in his work *Savun Kawrfual* (2017). He points to the separation of Mizo Christianity and Mizo culture and the resultant uneasy relationship between the two, as being the leading cause behind the lack of faithfulness and rootedness to the practice of the values and teachings upheld by Christianity. He has observed this as having led to the decline of morals and discipline, leading to substance abuse, corruption and crime becoming rampant in the modern Mizo society. Works by L. Keivom (1991), Mangkhosat Kipgen (1996), Lalhmingchhuanga Zongte (2017), C. Vanlal Ruaia (2017), and Rema Chhakchhuak (2019) are some of the recent non-fiction works that have also contributed towards decolonising the Mizo mind. They all refer to the problem of cultural reclamation within the modern Christianised Mizo identity.

The Mizo church has become the authoritative force determining the inclusion and exclusion of aspects of the old Mizo culture which have been retained in a sanitised form that is acceptable within Christianity. Christianity informs the cultural frame of reference, and this is observable, especially in the Mizo novels depicting the modern Mizo society or Mizo society in transition from the pre-colonial to the modern one. It can also be said that Mizo Christianity can be attributed as being a factor behind the emergence of a unified and common Mizo identity. Khiangte has noted that at present, the influence of the Church has moved beyond religion and is one of the biggest and most influential social institutions, and observed that even the Young Mizo Association (YMA) had the pursuit of Christian virtues as one of its objectives since it was created by the missionaries (160).

Mizo scholars and theologians have observed that many positive changes appeared with colonialism. Hminga has argued strongly that the Mizo conversion to the Christian faith changed the physical appearance of the village and the people. It changed their social life, raised the status of Mizo women, brought changes in customary practices, refined

Mizo *tlawmngaihna* and brought about their intellectual and spiritual transformation (288-306). The quality of *tlawmngaihna* helped to exhibit what is referred to as '*zonunmawi*' (which means, the beautiful Mizo way of life) which is seen as declining in the modern Mizo society. With the emergence of a postcolonial outlook among the Mizo, it is generally believed among Mizo scholars, commentators, writers and theologians that the separation of Christianity and Mizo culture at the outset of acceptance of Christianity did more harm than good for the Mizos. It impeded the process of enculturation within the context of Mizo culture and tradition especially concerning the inculcation of Mizo traditional values.

In colonial societies around the world, the modernisation of traditional institutions and practices was done through the collaboration of the colonial administration and the missionaries with the indigenous middle class, leading to a form of colonial modernisation that was premised on the ideology of a civilising mission as also observed by Nag (xvi). As debated by Robert Eric Frykenberg's *Christians and Missionaries in India*: *Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500*, *Studies in the History of Christian Missions Series* (2003), for the missionaries in the Mizo Hills, conversion was not simply about Christianisation but also involved the reclamation of the people from savagery to civilisation. For them, civilisation was identical with westernisation (qtd. in Nag 33).

The wholesale rejection of all elements of culture in the traditional Mizo life at the outset of Christianity left a vacuum in the psyche of the Mizo people. The failure to achieve the ideals of Mizo Christianity can in part, be attributed to the lack of a well-defined process of enculturation as with the *zawlbuk* in the traditional Mizo society, which Chatterji described as such, "The Zawlbuk was indeed a superb institution of the Mizo society which succeeded in building up their unique style of life. While it prevented crude conformity and anomic laissez-faire, on the one hand, it implanted in them a deep love of freedom and real respect for their community-based social organisation on the other" (67). As part of the effort to find a suitable social organisation to replace the *zawlbuk* as an institution for the preservation of Mizo culture, the Young Lushai Association (YLA) was formed in 1935 by the Welsh Mission, the leaders of the Presbyterian Church, and the missionaries Rev. D. Edwards and Katie Hughes along with some of the Mizo leaders. It was a forerunner to the present-day Young Mizo Association (YMA) (1947), which is the largest non-profit, non-governmental social organisation with the objective of preservation

of the Mizo cultural heritage, and which has come to be associated with the idea of *tlawmngaihna*.

In the modern Mizo society, although knowledge of the traditional Mizo society and Mizo culture have been imparted at the school level, there is the lack of a cultural process by which knowledge of Mizo history and the traditional Mizo society can be imparted to children and the youth within the social setting at the level of the locality and the church. Since most of the cultural practices within the traditional Mizo society were linked to their indigenous faith practices, only those aspects of traditional Mizo culture or cultural practices that could fit into Mizo Christian practices and the practices of the YMA (Young Mizo Association) have become a part of the modern Mizo cultural identity.

The YMA and the Church have become societal institutions that have helped to create a sense of unity and solidarity among the Mizos which is rooted in a common and singular Mizo identity. The YMA was created with the purpose of encouraging the Mizo to make good use of their leisure time to be of benefit to others, to strive for the progress of Mizoram, and to uphold and honour the practice of Christian virtues. As Sangkima has observed, the YMA noticed that the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* had declined in Mizo society, and have actively worked towards encouraging members to preserve those good aspects of the customs, practices, and traditions of the traditional Mizo society that had relevance in the modern Mizo society (258).

The process of westernisation of the Mizo society initiated by conversion to Christianity has created a sense of cultural affinity with the West. Cultural products of the global West pertaining to entertainment such as music, movies, literature, and fashion trends tend to be readily consumed especially by the younger generations. Although colonial rule has come to an end, western notions of progress have become a part of the Mizo cultural ethos, thus pointing to the hybrid nature of the Mizo identity. Keivom observed that the early Mizo Christians thought that they were supposed to emulate western culture which they equated with Christianity. Therefore, they imitated the missionaries in manner of dress, cut their long hair, and rejected songs that had a traditional element while preferring western songs and hymns which had been translated (42).

The consideration of westernisation and modernisation as being linked is seen in NKP (1989) the narrator who is the protagonist Chhuanvawra (Chhuana) spoke about the

village of Zopui and stated that they were among the most "*changkang"*(advanced) in all of Mizoram (11). He also stated that the young men and women of the village were united in purpose and were second only to Aizawl city in terms of producing an abundant harvest and advancement in education. He goes on to say that the village roads were smooth, and the entire village was clean, including the toilets (11). The reference to cleanliness points to the effect of colonial discourse and the ideology of the civilising mission by which the filthiness of the natives has often been highlighted. Major Cole who was a superintendent of the Lushai Hills said in an interview that took place around 1906-07, "By nature the Lushai is one of the filthiest men on earth" (Thanzauva 35).

M.S. Dawngliana has noted that there is a deep divide between the aspects of Mizo culture that have been accepted or rejected. Cultural aspects that have been accepted include those which have been accepted within Christianity such as that of being a *tlawmngai* tribe, and qualities such as friendliness, faithfulness, industriousness, resilience, independence, charitability, generosity, willingness to lay down their lives for their friends, a respectful attitude towards elders, and the admiration they hold for good character. He Those traits which he called "our bad Mizo cultural traits" are that of being known as head-hunters, fierce savages, their appeasement of demons (evil spirits), their lack of hygiene as a foolish tribe, their fondness of *zu* (Mizo rice beer) and merrymaking or jollification displayed in their fondness for their festivals and indulging in folk dances (243). The point of view mentioned above reflects the general opinion among Mizo Christians concerning the Mizo past, and although postcolonial reclamation of the past is beginning to gain currency, the tension and Manichean view by which colonial ideology has been ingrained has resulted in the consideration of white men as being culturally superior.

In the modern Mizo society, the term *changkang* or *changkanna* which denotes advancement or progress has now included a new dimension to it. It has now taken on a distinctly western connotation and refers to progress in connection to economic prosperity coupled with modernity and a western outlook. It refers to the acquiring of a westernised sensibility and the emulation of western culture and way of life. In the same novel, Chhuana mentions a few people who have contributed towards the modernisation and the advancement of the village such as his father who is a doctor, the headmaster of the middle

school Pu Zalawma (the protagonist Ngurthansangi's brother-in-law) who is also a Church Elder, and the former chief of the village Pu Khawvelthanga. The chief had been an able ruler who was well-respected by his people and who had put in more effort towards the "changkanna" of the village than the chiefs of other villages (12).

In the modern Mizo society, Mizo writers, scholars, commentators, and thinkers have noted that there is a decline in moral values in the modern Mizo society. Various factors may be considered. There are some who have pointed to the disconnect between the modern Mizo identity and traditional Mizo culture as leading to the lack of being grounded in one's culture, thus resulting in the propensity towards the easy inculcation of western secular values and materialism. Also, the division between religious and secular life brought on by materialism and politics has also been considered as a contributing factor to the moral degradation of the society.

The contrast between the disciplined nature and lack of criminality in the traditional Mizo society and the rampant corruption and moral degradation in the present has been perceived as the failure to retain traditional values of selflessness and *tlawmngaihna*. In the opinion of R. N. Prasad, the capitalist path of modernisation and the enlargement of the money economy have led to the decay of *tlawmngaihna*. This is observable in the loosening of social bonds, money lending at high rates of interest, and a modern lifestyle and culture which has resulted in a strong trend of becoming more individualistic (170). However, the Mizo cultural value of *tlawmngaihna* continues to be represented as an ideal in Mizo society and in novels, as the defining Mizo cultural trait which reflects Mizoness or the Mizo identity since the protagonists are usually portrayed as possessing it.

In the modern Mizo society, the emergence of capitalism imported from the west has given rise to a new "westernised social sector" influenced by economic considerations rather than social and religious considerations (Agarwal 102). With the granting of the Union Territory status in 1972, the Mizo people experienced unprecedented changes. The erstwhile deprived and neglected Lushai Hills District now enjoyed rudiments of statehood with funds pouring in from the Union government. The availability of funds ensured the easy availability of secure government jobs, and lenient recruitment processes dampened the spirit of labour and industry. An average Mizo could now trade his traditional agrarian vocation for a comfortable and secure government job. This in part led to indolence among

members of a traditionally agrarian society. According to Keivom, after Mizoram became a Union Territory (1972), the modern Mizo society became more fixated on attaining material wealth than on raising the standards of knowledge and education. Corrupt government officers have siphoned off central government funds for their own profit (98).

The failure and corruption among Mizo political leaders and political party workers has led to Mizoram becoming a land of political opportunism and the absence of proper developmental efforts towards progress. Politicians who become wealthy from funds intended for the people have been considered as shrewd and seasoned politicians (Manzuala 119-122). The Mizos are now in danger of dichotomising religious life and secular life, and the real dangers to the Christian faith are nominalism, materialism, and secularism which have come into Mizo society (Hminga 305). Mizo novels such as H. Lallungmuana's *Ram Leh I Tan Chauh* (1995) depict this corruption that came about with the influx of funds from the Central government after Mizoram became a Union Territory (1972).

In connection to the emergence of individualism in the modern Mizo society, L. H. Lalpekhlua's study of the difference between traditional Mizo religion and Christianity may be considered. In *Contextual Theology: A Tribal Perspective* (2007) he has observed how the Christology they have inherited from western Christianity is individual and otherworldly and inadequate to address the socio-economic and political problems of contemporary Mizo society. He states further, "Moreover, in the perspective of this inherited theological tradition, Mizo culture is seen as either evil or merely preparatory to the Gospel. Such a view not only undermines the values of Mizo culture, but also fails to provide for Mizo Christians with a theological basis for their struggle towards their religious identity" (5-6). In his study about the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram and the Mizo community, Lawmsanga has also observed this process at play, and has said, "In the Mizo context, the tension between the Gospel and Mizo traditional culture is still problematic, and debates are going on as to the extent to which the Mizo Christian should abandon or retain their traditions, customs and culture" (12). Lal Dena (1988) has said that Mizo preachers have preached about the transition from being savages and head-hunters to Christians and have instilled a sense of shame among their tribesmen. In this way, they began to accept pro-western values uncritically while still being moored to their traditional mores, thus becoming caught up in the contradicting pulls of the traditional and the western (qtd. in Lawmsanga 96).

In consideration of the considerable influence and reach of the YMA in Mizo society, the loosening of its ties with the Church in 1946 and its increasingly secular character can be understood as providing space for the limitation of the influence of the church and the separation of the sacred and the profane in some ways. According to Sangkima, since 1946 when the first political party was formed, the Church began to loosen its ties with the YMA. During the period from 1935 to 1948 the YMA had religious and political aspects, and since 1948 to the present day, it has now become more or less free from the influence of other organisations (255-256).

Since the YMA became more secular, it appears that the mores and Christian values and moral principles as applied within Mizo Christianity have not been strictly applied within the purview of the YMA despite the practice of Christian virtues being one of its objectives. The YMA can take actions against individuals for anti-social activities. Therefore, the directives of the YMA that pertain especially to "the observance of social mores in the society" are followed without question (Sangkima 260). The YMA often expels anti-social elements from a locality such as drug dealers for example, even though it has no legal sanction to do so. However, the influence of the YMA is so pervasive that people readily capitulate. Till today, YMA authorities across various localities especially in the towns undertake the task of policing their localities at night.

In DTT (2003), the author Lalrammawia Ngente appears to make a commentary on the misuse of the power of the YMA in its attempt to reform Mizo society. The JAC (Joint Action Committee of various non-governmental social organisations within a locality) members who mistook Chhuana and his friends for being drunk and thus assuming they were a nuisance, were themselves drunk. They had punched him in the face and questioned him and disparagingly referred to him as a stray mongrel whom the government officer Thandanga took pity on and looked after (102-107). Chhuana expressed that this incident woke up the desire to sin which had lain dormant in him. He remarked that social institutions like the VDP (Village Defence Party), the YMA (Young Mizo Association), and the JAC (YMA Joint Action Committee) have noble objectives but often, those who are placed in charge of implementing these are not good people and have thus made many people feel traumatised, hopeless, and dejected. He remarked that it was because the general public usually turned a blind eye to such wrongdoings that sin has become rampant among the

Mizos (110). Mizo fiction writers have thus used Mizo novels to reflect the moral corruption and evils in the Mizo society, and have thus tried to bring about positive changes, as also observed by Zoramdinthara (259).

Looking at the problem of corruption and moral degradation in the modern Mizo society, Lawmsanga has observed the negative aspects of *tlawmngaihna* which is based on the principle of self-sacrifice or selflessness. He says that the main weakness of *tlawmngaihna* is that it is strictly situated within the social structure where it is practised. There is the lack of a critical foundation for differentiating between its rights and wrongs because of which, people simply assume that behaviour which is expected or accepted by the Mizo society is right or good. The same holds true for Mizo Christianity where there is a tendency to consider all things done in the name of the Christian faith as being justifiable. He then says that since Mizos are generally uncritical, the principle of *tlawmngaihna* prohibiting criticism against others and teaching selflessness could prove to be one of the indirect causes of rampant corruption in the contemporary Mizo society. Thus, people hesitate to call out the corruption of politicians, government officers, and leaders of local level organisations (254-255). The British administrator Parry has referred to *tlawmngaihna* as "a very good moral code enforced solely by public opinion" (19), which corroborates what Lawmsanga has said.

One of the major concerns of postcolonial theory is that the implications of the cultural, economic, and political changes brought about by colonialism have a significant impact on the process of cultural production. The emergence of modernisation, capitalism, and politics, and the role of the YMA and the Mizo Church in attempting to grapple with the reality of moral degradation and corruption in the Mizo society may be considered as factors affecting cultural production vis-à-vis Mizo novels, leading to the didactic tone commonly observed in Mizo novels. Mizo novelists understand that they are catering to a predominantly Christian readership and therefore tend to portray stories of a didactic nature that reflect the values of the society, and what it regards as achievements, or as sacred or profane. Since most of the Mizo novels are historical or realist novels, the novelists can be perceived as carrying the burden of representation. Consequently, Mizo writers tend to showcase what is good and aspirational about living the life of a good Christian or adhering to Christian morality and virtues and the undesirable consequences that befall those that disregard the teachings of

Christianity. This reveals the extent to which Mizo Christianity informs and influences the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its influence on Mizo novels.

The tales from Mizo folk literature have been a form of entertainment, however, they were also didactic in nature and sought to impart the moral philosophy of their society (Vannghaka, "Folk Literature" 28). The virtue rewarded, vice punished model, which is also observed in the Mizo folktales, is seen as the overarching framework in Mizo novels, albeit in a Christianised form. In Mizo folktales, deviation from the established norms of the society or defiance and disobedience of figures of authority, and the disregarding of received wisdom usually resulted in causing the endangerment of the lives of the villagers. In some folktales, the disobedience of patriarchal authority by young women was portrayed as being the cause of endangerment to the village community as seen in folktales such as *Ngaitei* and *Chawngchilhi*. However, in Mizo novels, the concept of divine retribution or divine justice by which a character who indulges in wrongdoing receives punishment is in line with the Christian concept of punishment for sinning, by which it differs from the morality displayed folktales. This is because the modern Mizo identity and the morality that is encouraged is one that is deeply informed by the Mizo Christian identity.

To cite an example, the element of forgiveness is seen in the novel HLP (1936) when Hminga and his brother reconcile with their stepmother after they return home. She shows remorse for how she had treated them in the past. This element of forgiveness is a deviation from the pattern of tales dealing with cruel or evil stepmothers as found in Mizo oral literature. Forgiveness here, appears to denote the Christian virtue of forgiveness whereby, to be forgiven is to be free from retribution which reflects divine retribution. Such a kind of forgiveness is devoid of retribution and deviates from the virtue rewarded and vice punished model of the past in accordance with the display of forgiveness in the Christian context.

The kind of forgiveness espoused in TNS (1981) also reflects the Christian teaching of forgiveness as an imperative. The story concludes with a message of moral instruction from Fehtea's uncle. In it, he said that revenge against Sangtuala was out of the question and he hoped the wedding of the chief's daughter to Fehtea would be a harbinger of blessings for the entire village community. He instructed everyone to refrain from being selfish, greedy, and jealous and to forgive and forget the wrongs of the past so that they could look forward to a life of harmony (116-117).

The Mizo postcolonial worldview is a hybrid formation in which the conflicting impulses of Mizo Christianity and the postcolonial attempt at cultural valorisation have constantly redefined and renegotiated the modern Mizo identity. With regard to Mizo Christianity in particular, its influence has been felt in Mizo novels through the formation of a set pattern of storytelling commonly employed by Mizo novelists, and by which the didactic mode of promotion of Christian values, ideals, and good Christian conduct is reflected in Mizo novels. This is observed through the binary of good and evil seen in the storyline and in characterisation.

The binary of the Christian worldview or the conflict between good and evil or between the sacred and the profane has become a marked feature as well as an indispensable component of Mizo novels. In Mizo novels, the portrayal of the triumph of good over evil is typically denoted through love stories in which good characters end up in happy relationships or marriages and are thus rewarded with a good or desirable fate while bad, evil or immoral characters ultimately meet with tragic or undesirable fates. This has lent a didactic tone to most of the Mizo novels, that is, through the projection of good Christian living, and Christian morality and values as ideals worth emulating or following.

Christian morality as represented in Mizo novels is through the display of Christian values and good Christian character. It typically involves the act of refraining from indulging in practices connected to the moral degradation of the Mizo society such as alcoholism, drug usage, sexual promiscuity or sex outside the sanctity of the Christian marriage (in accordance with the rules of the church). Thus, it may be said that the binary model, as commonly seen in Mizo novels, reflects the influence of Mizo Christianity in Mizo novels through the attempt to tell a story that will conform to the sensibilities of the modern Mizo Christian readership. As a result, Mizo novels reflect Mizo Christian didacticism in portraying and critiquing the modern Mizo society that is beset with various problems, and in presenting Christianity as the solution to these.

The novel DTT (2003) is a social critique and commentary on the social evils that plague the modern Mizo society such as alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, corruption and crime, and the inability and failure of social institutions such as the church and the YMA to cope with it. In chapter 11 of DTT (2003), the protagonist and narrator Chhuana speaks about Christians who besmirch the name of Christianity by failing to practice their faith in

their daily lives. Then in response to the advice of his friend Muana's mother to be more involved in church activities, his other friend Zuala playfully responded in jest that they did not need to do so. He says that they do not drink alcohol, nor do they do drugs, nor did they have bastards and therefore, do not have to participate in Church activities. Then he said that he knew many Christians who call themselves born-again Christians and act like model members of the church community and the locality, yet who are extremely corrupt and promiscuous. He stated that such people made him lose interest in being involved in church activities (74). Through this scene, the author offers a critique of the hypocrisy in Mizo society by which Christianity can be used as a mask to appear as a good Christian despite being corrupt or promiscuous, which reflects the moral degradation of the modern Mizo society.

In the same novel DTT (2003), as the narrator, Chhuana suggests that criminals fail to get out of a life of crime because society is judgemental thus making it difficult to reintegrated reformed criminals into Mizo society without being suspected and judged. Chhuana tried to change his ways after his prison sentence was over. He found employment as a truck driver and worked hard, but his employer Hrâtliana fired him when he found out about his criminal past (256). Then when he tried to avail of a loan for the uneducated under the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) scheme, he was honest about his past in the interview and as a result, he was not given the loan (269-271). After the shock of experiencing being rounded up to be questioned in relation to another murder case by the police for the first time, as well as being kicked out by his landlord upon finding out that he was a former convict (272-277), Chhuana lost all hope of ever living like a normal person. He also realised that the option of having a respectable job and an assured income like a government job was no longer available for him (280). The didactic tone of the novel is evident in Chhuana's speech where he says, "What I have tried to show in full is all the sordidness of my life! In case the shouts of this hopeless person can awaken the Mizo people. As for me, even though it is too late for me to be saved, there are many others who need to be saved" (284).

In DTT (2003), Muana who was one of Chhuana's friends and who had been imprisoned with him, had joined a Revival Team after being released and eventually became a Revival Team Speaker. In Mizoram, revival teams occasionally organise camping and

crusade events upon the invitation of churches at the local level where church members are taught the word of God and are inspired to become born again Christians (to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour) and to be thus renewed in their faith. Muana was transformed, and he began living life as a devout Christian. As observed here, becoming a good Christian is shown as enabling the emancipation of the characters from the life of sin as seen in the case of Muana. Towards the end of the novel, Muana tried to inspire Chhuana to restore his faith in God but Chhuana had given up hope (347-349). Chhuana also realised that contrary to his opinion that his church had rejected him, they had been trying to integrate him into their fold by giving him responsibilities at church. He also realised that when he had been kicked out of his house and ashamed, what he had imagined to be their low opinion of him, was actually his own thinking (348). Therefore, although the author has criticised the hypocrisy among certain corrupt and promiscuous Christians who use Christianity as a cover, it can be observed here that the church community is held in high regard by Chhuana, and by the author by implication.

In the preface to the novel ZTT (1977) by Khawlkungi, the author mentioned that this was a Christian love story and she has quoted the advice which Remi's father gave her, which was to preserve her modesty as a young woman and to be careful around men since women who acquired a bad reputation during their youth always ended up living miserable lives (iii). This piece of advice reveals the didactic nature of the story as a lesson in Christian morality and conduct. In the modern Mizo society, being a Sunday school teacher is considered as having a respectable standing in the one's local community and church and is often the hallmark of being a good and respectable Christian and citizen.

In the novel, Remi had two suitors who were both eligible bachelors. Malsawma was a schoolteacher by profession and a Sunday school teacher while Biakkunga was the son of a wealthy shopkeeper and holding the position of a youth leader under the Young Lushai Association (YLA which is the precursor to the Young Mizo Association), thus making them both eligible bachelors within the Mizo society depicted in the novel. The fact that a devout Christian like Remi was given the choice of having to choose between two eligible young men while a promiscuous and immoral woman like Lali did not even have the option of marrying the father of her child shows the disparity between the conditions of these two young women. Following the didactic nature of the novel which the author

herself has mentioned in the preface, the one who was a devout Christian was rewarded with a blissfully wedded life, while the immoral one Lali, met with a tragic fate of becoming a single mother having to bear the burden of raising her child on her own in the end.

The selected novels have shown the effects of the ingrained nature of colonial ideology and discourse, especially through the use of Christian frames of reference, the presence of the Christian binary worldview representing good triumphing over evil, and demarcating between the sacred versus profane in terms of sexual purity in relationships leading up to a Christian marriage as an overarching framework in the novels, and through the sense of admiration shown towards the white man, and especially the missionaries who have been admired and respected. The form of storytelling concerning Mizo novels in general, and especially those novels that came out during the twentieth century have a rigid or set pattern or structure of representation consisting of stock characters and situations which uphold Christian values and ideals. Criticism of the effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse is scant and hardly ever expressed or denoted in Mizo novels. In this light, the commonality of the theme of love or love stories culminating in a happy and fulfilling Christian marriage as an overarching theme in Mizo novels can be explained. It is an extension of the Christian worldview of good triumphing over evil, which is seen as reflecting the transition of the Mizo society from the dark and heathenish past to present day Christianity.

Although romance or love stories are a common feature in works of literature across the world, a particular form of the love story which is seen as the common feature of Mizo novels is that of the love between a young man and a young woman culminating in a fulfilling Mizo Christian marriage. Thus, the love story as seen in Mizo novels serves as a medium for the propagation of Christian values or the Christian worldview, with marriage sanctioned by the church projected as the norm which all Mizos are expected to aspire towards achieving. The most common and suitable pattern by which Christian values have been promoted is through love stories that culminate in the marriage of the lovers, where a happy marriage and a happy ending is seen as the hallmark of a good Christian life. The inverse applies to those characters who are immoral, flawed, or evil. Such characters tend to face unfortunate, tragic, deplorable, or undesirable fates. This is observed in the selected novels depicting the modern Mizo society. The emphasis placed on Christian

morality or the practice of Christian virtues in connection to sexual abstinence and purity before marriage is the foundation of the family, which is an important institution within Christianity. It is this aspect of Christian morality that is didactically idealised in the Mizo postcolonial worldview and in Mizo novels.

The majority of Mizo novelists have portrayed their characters into two main types, that is, characters that are God-fearing and admirable who end up becoming prosperous, or characters that are worldly and have a lack of faith in God who end up having to face their shame. The protagonists are rather suitable to be used as examples for how a Christian life must be lived (Vannghaka 241). Romantic love culminating in marriage is an indispensable component of Mizo fiction and has also observed that there is no "free and frank treatment of sex" in Mizo novels (Zoramdinthara 261). Vanchiau has observed two features as being present in most Mizo novels which is, the relationship between a young man and a young woman being the main point of focus and portraying the male or female protagonists as being heroic. He has noted that there is no place as yet for the ordinary man having a "simple human existence" to be portrayed as the protagonist among Mizo creative writers because there is a tendency to portray them as examples of extremes of types ("Rambuai Literature" 83). Love stories have become an indispensable component of Mizo storytelling vis-à-vis Mizo novels. The novel *Thlahrang* (1977) by Lalzuithanga which is the first Mizo detective novel, is one of the rare works without any inbuilt love story and a hero or heroine (Zama and Vanchiau 32).

In NKP (1989) and in ZTT (1977), the protagonists end up marrying their lovers in a Christian wedding in the end unlike Chhuana in DTT (2003) who does not live the life of a good Christian. In ZTT (1977) the protagonist Vanlalremi (Remi) is a good Christian who is the daughter of an elder in the church and who has received education and vocational training from the missionary Pi Zaii (Miss Katie Hughes). Chhuanvawra (Chhuana) who is the protagonist of NKP (1989) was a Sunday school teacher in his village and then becomes a successful Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. This shows how characters that are good Christians end up marrying their lovers and have fulfilling relationships.

According to Bhabha, "The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual… It is a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range

of differences and discriminations that inform that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization" (96). The missionary discourse as it was manifested in the context of the Mizo through the institution of excommunication of members as practiced in the Mizo church since the early days, has served to firmly ground the differentiation between Christianity and the traditional Mizo society. Accordingly, the transformation towards Christianisation and modernisation or westernisation which was premised on the ideology of the civilising mission has served to denigrate and demonise those aspects of the traditional Mizo society which were considered as being diametrically opposed to Christianity. These include the consumption of *zu* and the practice of sex outside of wedlock.

The life of a Mizo typically revolves around the church. The entire life span of an individual is marked by the Church right from Baptism, to the confirmation ceremony when a child is accepted as an adult member of the Church, to marriage, and death. There is a Church service for almost every day of the week across the different denominations, and active participation in church and its activities ensures respectability within the locality or the village. The local church exerts a great moral influence over its members and is a great leveller in terms of creating a platform for uniting its members. The practice of excommunication must be understood in order to gain a deeper and more complex understanding of Mizo Christianity. It has played a large role in regulating the practice of Christianity since the early days, for the act of being excommunicated represents one's failure to adhere to an ideal of Mizo Christianity in its modern form.

The present-day Mizo Christianity (at least concerning some of the largest Christian denominations within Mizoram such as the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church, the United Pentecostal Church, and the Salvation Army which functions as a church in Mizoram) still hold sexual abstinence before marriage as an ideal and as an important aspect of Christian morality. Meanwhile, the consumption of *zu* (Mizo rice beer) is no longer considered as warranting excommunication by one's church. Therefore, the rules of excommunication have changed over time. Over the twentieth century, the grounds for excommunication have changed in the modern Mizo society.

The early Church leaders followed the words of the Bible literally, especially around 1920-1935. During that time, all activities, including washing clothes and playing games,

were forbidden on Sundays. Consumption of alcohol was forbidden and the practice of having a *lâwm* (chosen partners who help each other at farming during one season of cultivation) was forbidden (Lalnghinglova 24). Excommunication as practiced today, is based on grounds such as premarital and extramarital sex. From the early days of Mizo Christianity, excommunication has served to differentiate between fidelity to the Christian faith and the failure to live according to Christian virtues.

In Mizo novels, sexual abstinence is often represented as a positive attribute or quality possessed by the main characters, while excommunication by one's local church is portrayed as a source of shame as seen in ZTT (1977) by Khawlkungi. When Malsawma's wedding to Remi was cancelled because of the false accusation levelled against him by Lali who claimed that he impregnated her, he was dejected. He felt like leaving Reiek village where he worked as a schoolteacher. Even though he knew he was completely innocent, he wondered what the damage to his reputation would be. Although the chief and the council of elders in the village had deliberated over the matter and ruled in his favour, he was disturbed by the sense of shame attached to being accused and wondered what the Mission authorities would think (150). Even though Malsawma was not even in a relationship with Lali, let alone sleep with her, the sense of shame attached to sexual promiscuity and premarital sex can be seen here. Since formal education was in the hands of the missionaries, Christian teachings and morality were also imparted to students. Since the Mission (the governing body of missionaries) was in charge of imparting education, they had to be scrupulous about the conduct of the teachers who were expected to be exemplary Christians. This was because the practice of Christian missionaries was to establish schools from where their evangelical works began, as seen among the Mizos.

In the Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the report of 1933-34 speaks about the value of schools in their evangelising process. It says, "That the schools are a help in Lushai in the spreading of the Gospel cannot be gainsaid; most of our teachers are real evangelists and of the greatest help in building up the Church" (Thanzauva 121). Therefore, Malsawma suspension as a schoolteacher of the Boys' M. E. School (158) in ZTT (1977) becomes understandable. Even though the headmaster informed Malsawma that he believed his version of events, and that the deliberation concerning his case had been postponed only because the higher authorities of the School Board Committee

had gone home for Christmas holidays, Malsawma decided to quit out of shame and even cancelled his wedding to Remi (163-164). In the selected Mizo novels, the emphasis on sexual purity and abstinence before marriage reflects the good Christian character of the characters. The didactic tone commonly noted in Mizo novels is also observed in Mizo novels that have sought to represent the traditions and culture of the past. Some accounts of Mizo history in colonial records and even among Mizo historians have spoken of premarital sex in the traditional Mizo society as being actively encouraged among young men.

In the traditional Mizo society, the act of having slept with a young woman was considered as a considerable feat that could grant the same acclaim to young men as having killed an animal in the hunt (Lianthanga 136). However, since sex is acceptable only within the bounds of marriage in Christianity, the influence of the Mizo postcolonial worldview or Mizo Christianity can be seen in Mizo novels through their portrayal of sex before marriage as a cause of shame. This is observable even in novels about the traditional Mizo society or the age of the *pasalṭha*.

In such novels, the portrayal of the *pasalṭha* can be roughly divided into two types, that is, their success or the potential threat of damage to their reputation, whether from their own actions or from the actions of others. Their success involves success in the hunt or in warfare, and their success in getting to marry a young woman of their choice, who is mostly portrayed as a beauty of the village or someone who is a *nula fèl* (which means a good young woman in accordance with the standards set by their society). The potential cause of their reputation being sullied is usually portrayed through the accusation of being sexually promiscuous or the accusation of having falsely maligned a woman's reputation by claiming to have slept with her. In the latter case, the matter would then be deliberated over by the chief of the village and his council of elders which would be a cause of much shame since the people of the village were permitted to listen in on the proceedings of such deliberations.

In TNS (1981) Fehtea is falsely accused of being promiscuous and boasting about having slept with all the young women of the village. In HLP (1936), it is the protagonist Hminga's lover Pari whom Khuala (the son of an elder in the chief's council) maligned by boasting that he had slept with her. Their case too is deliberated over by the chief and his

elders. In ZTT (1989) Remi's fiancé Malsawma is falsely accused of impregnating Lali and the chief of Reiek village and his elders decide in favour of Malsawma. The focus on Fehtea's marriage to Saithangpuii as his great fortune and the ultimate reward for killing the *tumpangchal* (wild gayal or mithun of mythic proportions), can be read as an example of the import and emphasis placed on marriage as a marker of respectability within modern Mizo Christianity. In the novel, the narrator mentions how those who are good and who surpass others have a lot of jealous people trying to bring them down, and he attributes "this sinful world" as being the cause (32). The mention of 'sin' which is a Christian concept in this story set in the pre-modern traditional Mizo society is an example of the common use of biblical allusions and terminology by Mizo novelists thus revealing the influence of Christianity on the author.

In the foreword to the novel ZTT (1977) by Khawlkungi, Siamkima Khawlhring noted that the author had presented an ideal image young men and women living the Christian life which is an ideal that most people fail to attain (x-xii). He also observed that it was as though Remi and Malsawma were predestined to be happily married in accordance with the "Kohhran Dan Thianghlim," (which means, the Holy law of the Church), also called "Kohhran Dan Puitling" (which means, the established law of the church), while Lalkhawthangi was destined to commit the sin of having premarital sex and to meet with a dreadful fate in the end (ix). Among the selected novels NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa and ZTT (1977) by Khawlkungi have the love story of the protagonists culminating in a Christian marriage, which is portrayed as an achievement .

In the modern Mizo society, marriage in accordance with the first law of the church (*Kohhran Dan khatna*) which is also referred to as the Holy law of the Church (*Kohhran Dan Thianghlim*) or the established law of the church (*Kohhran Dan Puitling*) has become one of the yardsticks for evaluating good Christian character and conduct, and the standard or criteria by which a man's suitability for becoming a church elder is judged. Local churches select their elders from among devout and respectable members in their church membership. Church elders hold leadership status within their church and local community and usually command a high level of respect. For a young man or woman, getting married according to the Holy law of the church accords respect in Mizo society, while excommunication is perceived as a source of shame. Therefore, abstinence before marriage

has become an indicator of Christian morality and good Christian character. In this connection, the depiction of characters in Mizo novels as exemplars of good Christian conduct and morality could be interpreted as a reflection of this aspect of modern Christianity.

If church members under excommunication decide to marry during the excommunication period, they are not permitted to marry inside the main church building. Instead, they are permitted to get married in the church hall or at any other location of their choice outside the church. While under excommunication, which usually lasts up to a certain period, the member is not allowed to participate in church practices such as the election of church elders and communion, although they are permitted to attend church. After about six months the candidates can opt to be reinstated. Most of the Mizo Christian denominations practicing excommunication of their members on various grounds have emphasised on the importance of marriage in the Church or 'marriage in accordance with the first law of the Church'. Such marriages are honoured by the presenting of citations and wedding gifts on behalf of the Church members. Thus, the practise of sexual abstinence has become the yardstick by which Christian morality has been judged, especially among the unmarried youth.

In the novel NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, this issue of excommunication is touched upon. Towards the end of the story, when the protagonists Chhuana and Sangtei decided to get married in Zopui village, they were concerned that they would not be able to have a church wedding in compliance with the "dan puitling" (the established law of the church) (201). Since Sangtei had been raped and forced into prostitution, they were not sure they qualified to avail of it and were ready to even get married according to the "dan hnuaihnung zawk" (the lower order of the established law of the church) (202). Then the pastor told them that they could get married according to the "kohhran dan" (which means church law and is another term for *dan puitling* or the established law of the church), since Sangtei did not wilfully commit sin and had been swept by the currents of misfortune beyond her control, to commit sin (204-206).

In NKP (1989) there was an incident which was a testament to Sangtei's forbearance and adherence to sexual abstinence before marriage. When she and Chhuana became each other's *lawm* (partners who select and help each other at farming during one season of

cultivation) and helped each other out at their respective jhum (shifting cultivation), he could not resist attempting to sleep with her, but she rejected his advances. She then insisted that she loved him but refused to sleep with him to preserve her purity till marriage. That night he felt a great sense of remorse when he thought about how he used to be her Sunday school teacher who taught her about good Christian conduct. Therefore, he felt that there could be no Pharisee among the Pharisees who could surpass him in hypocrisy (42-45). The use of biblical allusion and the reference to sexual purity can be seen here.

In *Lali* (1937) which is written by L. Biakliana the author of HLP (1936) and which is the first Mizo short story to have been written, there is the depiction of excommunication. At the end of the story, there is mention of a young man called Rozika and a young woman called Zami who were going to be excommunicated because they had premarital sex. This shows how Mizo Christianity and the Manichaean binary between the sacred and the profane in accordance with missionary discourse has deeply influenced the writing of Mizo novels. Given the sense of shame attached to excommunication in the modern Christian society, its practice has served to define a person's standing in one's local church community to a significant extent.

Instances of excommunication on the grounds of consumption of *zu* and indulging in premarital sex has been mentioned in *Zoram Nghahchhan* (2003) by Lalnghinglova (201-202). According to the statistics maintained in the *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957* as compiled by Thanzauva, the Lushai church had expelled two people in 1905, 17 people in 1911, 602 people in 1931, 934 people in 1943, 1714 people in 1952, and 1820 in 1960 to note down a few. The strict demarcation between the sacred and the profane as practiced by the early Mizo Christians and the missionaries has continued to influence the practice of Mizo Christianity. Initially, during colonial rule, excommunication from church membership was strictly implemented, and actions such as consumption of *zu* (Mizo rice beer), which is no longer the case in the modern Mizo society. In ZTT (1977), Remi's aunt's husband Rova expressed his anger and disgust at the church services and the church elders in a drunken rant, for having excommunicated him because of his drinking habits. He said that the church elders who had excommunicated him were no better than him (22). The novel portrays the strict nature of excommunication carried out by the church on grounds such as the consumption of alcohol.

The wholesale rejection of all elements of traditional culture involved, for the early Mizo Christians, a break from the practice of their indigenous faith but also a break from their cultural practices all of which had ties to their faith and which invariably involved the consumption of *zu* (Mizo rice beer). In the Mizo traditional setup drinking of *zu* was an important part of their culture and was an essential component of social practices, rituals and *Kût* or festivals. It was used to honour brave men at times when they displayed prowess at war and the hunt. Also, when a man would attempt to attain the coveted *thangchhuah* status, he was required to have copious amounts of *zu* as one of the requirements since he had to provide it for the many feasts required. *Zu* was used in honouring the bravest and most *tlawmngai* of men. The chief of a village would confer the highest form of honour for a deserving young man of the village by giving *zu* (Mizo rice beer) in a special cup called the *Nopui* (cup of honour) which was made for such occasions. The cup of honour was offered to those that exemplified the embodiment of the Mizo moral code of *tlawmngaihna*. James Dokhuma, whose novel is a part of this thesis, includes *zu* in his list of cultural rules and practices of the Mizo society in his book *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* (1992). Lloyd has observed that the Mizo word for wealthy (*hausa*) implies the possession of enough rice to serve as a means of sustenance for the family for a year (57). Therefore, the possession of *zu* was a luxury which only those who produced surplus rice could afford.

In the novel TNS (1981), when Fehtea arrived alone in response to the summons of the chief, the chief told him that even though there were many brave men young men in the village who were fit to be selected for honouring with the *Nopui*, he had attempted to find out who was the best among them, a test which only Fehtea managed to pass (20). The use of *zu* to honour brave young men in the past by presenting the *Nopui* containing *zu* in front of other young men and women, as well as the consideration of being intoxicated as shameful, shows that the pre-modern Mizo advocated the consumption of *zu* in moderation. In the novel, the chief asked his daughter Saithangpuii to give Fehtea *zufang* (a type of fermented rice liquor) from the ladle as a reward for answering his summons (21).

In the strict demarcation of Christianity and the old Mizo culture in the early years, the consumption of *zu* (Mizo rice beer) provided grounds for excommunication, but this is no longer the case. Over the twentieth century, the grounds for excommunication have changed

in the modern Mizo society. The focus of excommunication is now on sexual immorality in connection to abstinence before marriage as the primary ground for excommunication to the exclusion of *zu* as requiring excommunication. This reveals a shift in the attitude of Mizo Christians towards the nature of what is considered as sacred and profane. It is a testament to the emergence of postcolonial cultural valorisation that seeks to overturn the effects of colonial discourse and based on which, *zu* has come to be understood as a vital component of all community activities of the traditional Mizo society has now emerged.

In relation to the vilification of *zu* in Mizo society, Keivom also point to the fact of *zu* being closely associated with the culture and traditions of the past as the reason why the missionaries and the early church leaders rejected it. They believed it would impede Christianity from securing a deep foundation among the Mizo people despite the fact that in the past, the Mizos consumed *zu* and drank it in moderation but never allowed it to lead them towards misconduct or as a license to commit wrongdoings. This led to the development of two views regarding *zu*. Firstly, in the past, those who became Christians regarded the act as necessitating a complete break with Mizo culture and traditions, faith practices, and community entertainment. This act of refraining from participation led to the disruption of the unity of the village community. Secondly, those in the modern society regarded the consumption of *zu* as a license for wrongdoing, based on the thought that if they committed the grave sin of drinking *zu*, then might as well have no qualms about committing all other sins. Keivom points to this as the root of the erosion of Mizo cultural values and morality (39-42).

Keivom also observed the irony in the difference of attitude towards *zu* during the early days of Mizo Christianity and in the modern Mizo society. He noted that when the educated Mizos began studying outside Mizoram and took to watching films from the West, they realised that white men were the ones who were fond of drinking *zu* (alcohol). Since then, there arose the impression that one had to drink *zu* to become like white men. Therefore *zu*, which white men (the missionaries) tried to eliminate from Mizo society, had inevitably returned to Mizo society because of white men, but the same cannot be said for that of reviving the culture of the past which has become a difficult process (42-43).

In ZTT (1977), alcoholics such as Lalmuana and Rochhinga have been portrayed as being cruel and ill-mannered and antagonistic towards the church community. Remi

did not want to marry a young man called Lalmuana even though he was quite well-off as the son of an elder in the chief's council because he was a drunkard. Before her father died, he had instructed her to never marry a drunkard (10). Her paternal aunt Ṭhuami had married a drunkard Rochhinga and had suffered. After Remi began staying with them after her father's death, one day he scolded her for attending church and he spoke about Christians as being addicted to attending church. He hated the church Elders who had excommunicated him for being an alcoholic (22). The novels DTT (2003) and *Rintei Zunleng* (2009) by Lalrammawia Ngente deal with the problem of alcoholism and substance abuse in the modern Mizo society. In DTT (2003) it is Chhuana's father's alcoholism which was the catalyst that destroyed their family and sent Chhuana down a path of promiscuity, alcoholism, and criminality.

Zu continues to be an issue even today, since there is a considerable section of the Mizo population who consume it, and there is an ongoing debate about whether the MLTP Act (Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act) (1995) should be implemented or not and so on. Political parties get involved with an eye on the polls. Meanwhile, the Synod, which is the apex body of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (the largest denominational church body within Mizoram) maintains a strong stand against it. Thus, there has always been a measure of tension and friction regarding the extent of retention, incorporation, and inclusion of the cultural practices of the traditional Mizo society into the Mizo Christian cultural identity.

When the MLPC Act (Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control Act 2014) was introduced to permit the regulated sale of alcohol, the large volume of sales was a testament to its popularity even in the modern Mizo society that claims to be highly Christianised. Herein lies a crisis regarding the Mizo identity since *zu* had been rejected since the early days of Mizo Christianity. Therefore, the tension in the modern Mizo identity that has arisen due to the hybridisation resulting in the interaction between the old Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity, is believed to be one of the major causes behind the crisis in Mizo identity and worldview.

The influence of the Mizo postcolonial worldview on Mizo novelists is seen in the general adherence to self-censorship and self-consciousness in their attempt to entertain while being careful to refrain from offending the sensibilities of a Christian Mizo readership. A common practice among Mizo novelists is the use of prefatory explanations for having

written their works. This refers to a self-imposed check by Mizo writers regarding the content of their writings to ensure that they do not put down anything that would offend the church or their Mizo Christian readership, and which would be deemed as not befitting the practice of a true Christian. Mizo writers tend to portray stories of a didactic nature that reflect their Christian values and moral ideals as well as the idealised Mizo cultural traits. This reveals how the morality of an author is tied up with the content of his or her writing. The rejection of aspects of the traditional Mizo culture during the early days of Christianity contributed towards implementing self-censorship in writing. It resulted in the implementation of censorship with regard to song lyrics and tunes, which was to have far-reaching consequences on how censorship or self-censorship has continued to have an impact on the formation of modern Mizo literature.

Perhaps this is because of the close-knit nature of Mizo society especially at the level of a locality or a village where all members usually conform to societal norms as a form of belonging. Within a locality, the YMA and the local Church are institutions that have fostered a sense of belonging to a local community. Furthermore, the centralisation of command of the YMA (as a non-governmental and non-denominational organisation) and the various Christian denominations has instilled a sense of connectivity with the people in other towns and villages throughout Mizoram. Prefatory explanations also suggest the understanding of Mizo novelists that the Mizo readership have come to expect the representation of Mizo society and characters in the novels to have verisimilitude value or to be true to the aspects of Mizo life they portray. Since the most popular forms of Mizo novels are historical or realist novels, the attempt to conform to what the society has established as the norm in accordance with the Mizo postcolonial worldview can be observed in Mizo novels.

In relation to Mizo novels, it has been observed that in general, there is a hesitation among the Mizo novelists towards including content of a sexual nature and this can mainly be attributed to the importance and prominence of the standing and role of the church within the communities. This does not mean to imply that all Mizo people are religious. There have been exceptions to the rule in terms of including the depiction of sex or references to it, such as the novels *Lungrang Laiawrha* (1993) and *Lungrang Hmangaihna* (1995) by Lalhmingliana Saiawi however, explicit descriptions are avoided. Also, *Rambuai*

novels depicting the rape of Mizo women include its mention, as seen in NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa. Vannghaka has also made a similar observation (238-239). NKP (1989) also depicts Chhuana rescuing Sangtei from sex trafficking. The prevailing discourse in Mizo novels is apparent as observed in the lack of variety in terms of characterisation and in the prevalence of romance, and the fixation on what is generally accepted as attributes of Mizo realist fiction. This is applicable for most of the Mizo novels that have been written since the first Mizo novel HLP by L. Biakliana in 1936 wherein the discourse of depiction and promotion of Christian morality and values is inherent.

In the preface to one of his most famous novels *Thla Hleinga Zan Bu 1 & 2-na* (2012), James Dokhuma apologises to his readership in advance should the timeline of events that happened during the Second World War period as portrayed in the novel not be accurate (10). B. Lalthangliana, who wrote the "Introduction" for the novel NKP (1989), stated that he will overlook the romantic gestures between the lovers, the drinking of alcohol (whiskey) which is depicted, and references to sex, and go beyond this to discuss the main ideas and message of the author (v). In this instance, the scrupulous adherence to Christian morality by which Mizo writers typically refrain from writing explicitly about sex and sexuality is observed.

Part of the projection of the Christian worldview in Mizo novels involves the use of the narrative voice as a reflection of the prejudices, assumptions, beliefs, and opinions of the author with the common usage of biblical metaphors, allusions, terminology and direct comparisons of the characters to biblical characters. This is a noticeable trait among Mizo writers of fiction and non-fiction such as articles or essays in newspapers and magazines and reflects the influence of the Mizo postcolonial worldview. Use of biblical references by the narrative or authorial voice can also be seen in Mizo novels that involve the representation of the age of the *pasalṭha* of the Mizo past.

The hybrid nature of modern Mizo literature is seen for one can find the influence of Mizo oral literature and the literature of the West in it. The influence of Christianity and biblical language is evident in Mizo literature, particularly in Mizo novels. Mizo novel writing is replete with biblical metaphors, characters, and events, an aspect which will be examined in the selected novels. In the novel HLP (1936) there are several instances in which the narrator has compared the story to biblical characters and events such as when

the narrator compared the Biblical story of Eve and her succumbing to the temptation of the snake (the devil) to the situation in which Hminga and his friends found themselves. In the novel, Hminga and his friends desired to acquire a higher rank in the army. The narrator regards this constant desire for better things or situations as the reason why the world is full of sin and suffering (222). The fact that the narrator uses a Biblical story to compare a situation which took place in a pre-colonial, pre-Christian setting shows how the narrator is firmly rooted in his Christian identity and reveals the impact of Christianity on the Mizo language as well.

The influence of Christianity on the author is also made evident in HLP (1936) for he has referred to angels, who are a part of the Christian religion, as a means of comparison in a story taking place in the pre-colonial pre-Christian Mizo society. The narrator has commented on Pari's beauty by saying that it would be easy to think that her beauty exceeded that of angels when observed from a distance during a moonlit night (181). In chapter 13, Pari was in a state of dejection and despair because her father had decided to relocate their family to his sister's village. It was a shame for them to remain in the village after her reputation had been falsely maligned by Khuala who spread a rumour that he had slept with her. She had cried and prayed to her Maker, pleading with him (*Pathian*) to be with her for she was heartbroken (255). Referring to God as "Maker" and as *Pathian* who was her Maker, is Christian in nature.

In the traditional Mizo society, the Mizo *Pathian* was regarded as the Supreme Being and protector was never referred to in terms of being a Creator and besides, worship of *Pathian* in the past was a community event. In the same novel HLP (1936), as Pari was bidding farewell to her friends Ngaihi and Mawii, they spotted three flashes of light coming from a distance and Pari took it as a sign that God was going to send help to them (290). Since the Lushai god or *Pathian* is considered as being uninvolved in human affairs except to bless them generally, it appears that this reference is closer to the Christian God. So even in the narrative voice or narratorial description, we find the influence of Christianity at play. The mention of God as being profoundly and pro-actively involved in the affairs of men does not fit into the idea of god in the traditional faith practice.

In NKP (1989) when Chhuana took part in an Inter-College debate which he won, the topic of the debate was whether inner goodness or morality is more important than

science or the arts for the good of the world and for its progress. The main point he put forward was that "the world and its desires pass away". Then he stated that morality that is based on the belief in God is important for the good of humanity and for its progress. Without inner goodness, humans are already damaged and only God can repair that damage through morality (97). This speech reveals the importance of Christian morality within Mizo novels as the form in which the kind of morality that influences the folktales has been transformed with a change in the worldview from the past to the present. The main point refers to a passage from the bible, that is, 1 John 2:17 which states, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (The Holy Bible 1399).

In DTT (2003) the narrator referred to his father's descent into alcoholism after their relocation to Mualnuam village as an attack by the devil which his father was unable to resist (12-15). In this manner, Christian frames of reference have been used by the narrator to depict the story. Then when Hminga befriended Chhuana, his aunt's family accepted him with open arms as their own and Chhuana wondered if Hminga was the angel who helps those in trouble whom his mother had often told him about during his childhood (41). Then when Hminga's aunt and uncle questioned Chhuana about his parents and his background, he was reluctant to answer. He was afraid that if he revealed his situation to them just as clearly as Jesus revealed who he was to Pilate, they might consider him a bad person (47). Here we find the biblical reference to Jesus and Pilate, the Roman governor responsible for arbitrating over his case, and who ultimately gave orders for his death by crucifixion.

In the same novel, when Mawitei whom Chhuana considered as a sister, told him that her friend Dawngi's was interested in him, he was reluctant to pursue her for believed that if she came to know about his family background, she would not accept him. Then Mawitei assured him and warned him that those who look back on their past often end up turning into a pillar of salt like Lot's wife (80). This refers to Lot's wife of the Old Testament who turned into a pillar of salt when she failed to heed the angel's warning and looked back at the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which were being destroyed by God.

In DTT (2003), the protagonist Chhuana who is the narrator, speaks about his mother's adultery. He mentioned that he never imagined that she would dare to be a fool

who would "rush in where angels fear to tread" (10). This saying has also been used by Siamkima to describe the downfall of Lali in the introduction to the novel ZTT (1977) by Khawlkungi. This saying which was popularised by Alexander Pope in his poem, 'An Essay on Criticism' (1711) has been commonly used among Mizo writers including novelists and is a testament to the influence of the English literary canon among Mizo writers. Considering the education of the first generation of Mizo writers who received formal education in which works of the English literary canon have been glorified as touchstones of literary excellence, it comes as no surprise that such references have commonly been used in Mizo fiction and non-fiction writing even today by writers who have followed in their footsteps.

Biblical allusions are also seen in DTT (2003) when Chhuana met Mawitei after his prison term was over, he asked her how her parents were doing, and at that moment, he felt as though he was like Joseph asking his brothers about their father Jacob, and he felt emotional because of it. In response to her request for him to return he refused and said that he would be "like a wolf in sheep's clothing" since hers was a God-fearing family and he had brought shame and suffering upon them (243). The wolf in sheep's clothing is a biblical allusion often used by Mizo writers, and this recalls Thomas Macaulay's famous 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835) which promoted the westernisation of Indian education.

There have been many translations of popular works of the English literary canon into the Mizo language, and it is assumed that these would have helped shape the Mizo sensibility vis-à-vis the writing of Mizo novels. This has revealed the influence of colonial ideology, Christianity, and westernisation in the formation of the modern Mizo identity and cultural imagination. Towards the end of DTT (2003), Chhuana had begun to experience the depths of despair and hopelessness that came with being judged and dismissed for being a former convict. He was despised and judged whenever people came to know about his past, just like how the Jews despised the Samaritans (278). The use of a biblical allusion here points to the narrator as identifying with Christianity.

The development of the modern Mizo identity is to a certain extent, detached from rootedness to the noble aspects of the Mizo traditional culture where *tlawmngaihna* and the fulfilment of one's prescribed role within the society were regarded as ideals. At the same time, the emergence of capitalism, modernisation, and economic prosperity have led

to the furtherance of westernisation. This has led to the influence of secularism, individualism, and a liberal mindset which resulted in a sense of detachment from conforming to social and religious norms especially among the younger generations. Mizo Christianity has formed the cultural frame of reference by which the Mizo postcolonial worldview of the modern Mizo identity has been portrayed in Mizo novels.

The absence of a well-defined mechanism or institution for reclamation of aspects of the traditional Mizo culture within a Mizo Christian identity has problematised the formation of Mizo ethnic identity in which, the culture of the past is always viewed under the light of the Christian present, that is, as a dark, heathenish, and ignorant past. This influence of colonial ideology and discourse is revealed in Mizo novels in the lack of criticism or scrutiny directed at the colonial authorities such as administrators and missionaries, or the negative aspects of their influence on Mizo society. This is especially true in the case of missionaries. There is also a lack of depiction or direct criticism of the material, psychological, and discursive onslaught of colonialism in Mizo novels. Similarly, Mizo novels rarely depict the traditional Mizo society in terms of subjecting its negative aspects to scrutiny and criticism.

To conclude, the Mizo postcolonial worldview is a hybrid formation in which the conflicting impulses of Mizo Christianity and the postcolonial attempt at cultural valorisation have redefined the modern Mizo identity. With regard to Mizo Christianity in particular, its influence has been felt in Mizo novels through the formation of a set pattern of storytelling commonly employed by Mizo novelists, and by which the didactic mode of promotion of Christian values, ideals, and good Christian conduct are reflected in Mizo novels. This is also observed through the binary of good and evil seen in the storyline and characterisation. Love stories serve as the medium through which Christian values are promoted and which therefore serve as the overarching theme in most Mizo novels, while a Christian marriage in accordance with the rules of the church is deemed as the ideal to which all Mizo people should aspire. Thus, Mizo novels reflect the Christian worldview of good triumphing over evil. The effects of colonial ideology and discourse may be discerned in the lack of criticism of colonialism or the colonial master in Mizo novels where the white man (colonial administrator or missionary) is portrayed in a positive light.

END NOTES

[1] *Sakhua* is defined by *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) as, "n. 1. an object of worship, a god. 2. ancient ancestors who are worshipped by the Lushai. 3. the spirit who presides over the house or household. 4. religion, religious rites and ceremonies" (Lorrain 401). This dictionary has been written by one of the first missionaries, J. H. Lorrain, and there appears to be a slight misunderstanding of the Mizo tribal or indigenous faith practice in that, the Mizos mention their ancestors in their incantations related to worship. Yet mention of these appears to be in relation to the gods whom their ancestors worshipped and does not appear to involve the direct worship of their ancestors.

WORKS CITED

Agarwal, A. K. "Development in Mizoram¯Issues and Perspectives." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.101-114.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2012.

Chatterji, N. *The Earlier Mizo Society*. Tribal Research Institute, 1975.

Dokhuma, James. *Thla Hleinga Zan Bu 1 & 2-na*. R. Lalrawna, 2012.

Dawngliana, M. S. "Hnam Hnatlang aṭangin Pen hnih khat." *Mizo Identity Bihchianna*, edited by B. Lalnunzira. SCMI ATC Unit, 2019, pp.231-244.

Hminga, Chhangte Lal. *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*. Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987.

Hrangṭhiauva, and Lal Chungnunga. *Mizo Chanchin*. Lalrinliana, 1978.

Keivom, L. *Zoram Khawvel* (*The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*). 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 1994.

Khiangte, Lalmalsawma. "Mizo Nihna leh Hnam Inpumkhatna." *Mizo Identity Bihchianna*, edited by B. Lalnunzira. SCMI ATC Unit, 2019, pp.154-165.

Kipgen, Mangkhosat. *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*. Theological Conference, 1996.

Lalhmuaka. *Zoram Kristian Hmasa Tihduhdahna:* (*Zirtirtu Vaikhawla Sawi*). The Synod Publication Board, 1985.

Lalnghinglova, Rev. *Zoram Nghahchhan: Kristian Puipate Sulhnu leh an Thukhawchang*. 1993. Saikungi, 2000.

Lalpekhlua, L. H. *Contextual Christology: A Tribal Perspective. Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (ISPCK), 2007.

Lalsawma. *Four Decades of Revivals, the Mizo Way:* (*Forty Years of Revival Movements in Mizoram*). Lalsawma, 1994.

Lalthangliana, B. *History of Mizo Literature: Mizo Thu leh Hla*. 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

Lawmsanga. *Theology of Mission: Postcolonial Perspective*. Lalmuanpuii, 2016.

Lianthanga, C. *Hmanlai Mizo Nun*. 2nd ed., Mizoram Publication Board, 2000.

Lloyd, J. Meirion. *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills*. Synod Publication Board, 1991.

Lorrain, J. H. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. 4th Reprint, The Asiatic Society, 2008.

Manzuala, M. "Mizoram at the Crossroads." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.115-136.

McCall. *The Lushai Hills District Cover* (*1931-43*). Tribal Research Institute, 1980.

JanMohamed, Abdul R. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 59-87., doi:10.1086/448321.

Nag, Sajal. *The Uprising: Colonial State, Christian Missionaries, and Anti-Slavery Movement in North-East India* (*1908-1954*). Oxford UP, 2016.

Ngente, Lalrammawia. *Rintei Zunleng*. Zorin Compugraphics, 2015.

Pachuau, Joy. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford UP, 2014.

Parry, N. E. *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*. 1928. Reprint, Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1928.

Prasad, R. N. "Modernisation of the Mizo Society¯Strategic Problems and Futuristic Introspection." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.151-176.

Ralte, Lalhruaitluanga. *Zoram Vartian: Chanchinṭha leh Thuziak Khawvar Tan Dan*. Synod Press, 2008.

Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957.

Compiled by K. Thanzauva. Synod Literature and Publication Boards, 1997.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1978. Penguin Books, 2003.

Sangkhuma, Z. T. *Mizoram Harhna Thlir Letna*. Z.T. Sangkhuma, 2007.

Sangkima. *Essays on the History of the Mizos*. Spectrum Publications, 2004.

Thanmawia, R. L. "Harhnain a Hrin Hla leh a Phuahtute." *Harhna: Mizoram Revival Centenary Souvenir (1906-2006)*. Edited by R. L. Thanmawia. Synod Revival Committee, 2006. pp.578-592.

Thanmawia, R. L. *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, 1998.

The Holy Bible. New King James Version. Thomas Nelson, 2006.

Tochhawng, Rosiamliana. "Identity thua India Hmar chhak Tlang mite Harsatna." *Mizo Identity Bihchianna*, edited by B. Lalnunzira. SCMI ATC Unit, 2019, pp.110-122.

Vanchiau, C. Lalawmpuia. *Rambuai Literature*. Lengchhawn Press, 2014.

Vanlalchhuanawma. *Christianity and Subaltern Culture: Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Westernisation in Mizoram*. ISPCK, 2006.

Vanlalngheta, J. T. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo*. 2010. 3rd ed., Lalchungnungi, 2015.

Vannghaka, K. C. *Literature Kawngpui* (*Theory of Literature*). Vanhlupuii, 2010.

Zairema, Rev. *Pi Pute Biak Hi*. Zorun Community, 2009.

Zama, Margaret Ch. and C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau. *After Decades of Silence Voices From Mizoram: A Brief Review of Mizo Literature*. New Delhi: Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, 2016.

Zongte, Lalhmingchhuanga. *Savun Kawrfual*. Ophel, 2017.

Zoramdinthara. *Mizo Fiction: Emergence and Development*. Ruby Press & Co., 2013.

CHAPTER 4

SITUATING WOMEN IN THE MIZO POSTCOLONIAL WORLDVIEW

In the context of this chapter, a close study of the status of Mizo women in the selected novels in the light of the Mizo postcolonial worldview will be given. The point of reference here will start with postcolonial feminism which is concerned with the representation of women in the postcolonial world in which countries that were formerly colonised have begun to express and assert their subjectivity, their individuality, and their cultural voices which had been negated and largely ignored under colonialism. Colonised women across colonised nations have had to face the double colonisation of being under the control of colonial power while being under patriarchal domination or repression simultaneously, on account of having been relegated to the position of the 'other' within their societies.

Colonialism and patriarchy doubly reinforce the power, influence, and control wielded by those in power against women who are barely, if not ever, given the opportunity to have a voice even in the anti-colonial independence movements. In this connection, postcolonial feminism poses a form of challenge to dominant patriarchal ideologies and accounts for feminist criticism of it. Deepika Bahri has noted that feminist focuses on the significance of gender issues in history, politics, and culture. It examines the relationships between men and women and is a study of, "the consequences of power differentials for the economic, social, and cultural status of women (and men) in different locations and periods of history" (200). She aptly summarises postcolonial feminism thus,

The topic of feminism in/and postcolonialism is integrally tied to the project of literary postcoloniality and its concerns with the critical reading and interpretation of colonial and postcolonial texts. A postcolonial feminist perspective requires that one learn to read literary representations of women with attention both to the subject and to the medium of representation. It also requires a general critical literacy, that is, the capacity to read the world (specifically, in this context, gender relations) with a critical eye…. It could be argued, in fact, that nearly all the issues central to postcolonial feminism are concerned with the various ways of reading gender: in the world, the word, and the text. (200)

There are similarities between feminism and postcolonialism since neither has claimed to have been authored by a particular theorist or even a group of theorists. At the same time, they both portray the historical as having been engendered by outside forces,

that is, the colonisers in the case of postcolonialism and patriarchy, in the case of feminists. In addition, there is no definitive school of thought associated with both since they have embraced diverse philosophical traditions and modes of activism. In the case of postcolonialism, this includes the politics of nationalist, internationalist, and anti-colonial struggle (of diverse ideological orientations), as well as anti-establishment post-structuralist critical practices, but also, crucially, modes of knowledge and concepts of social justice developed outside the West (Boehmer 342). These two schools of thought are concerned with the relationship between politics and literature in terms of the representation of women and the voice which they have acquired, that has emerged from the historical background of the suppression and marginalisation of women.

Postcolonial feminism is the attempt at theorising and critically analysing the diversity of experiences of women of 'Third World' women or women of colonised or formerly colonised countries, against the universalist assumptions or universalised notions of gender under Western feminism, as challenged by feminists such as Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003). In a critique of Western feminism Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "The relationship between 'Woman' - a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, judicial, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) - and 'women ' real, material subjects of their collective histories - is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address" ("Under Western Eyes" 19).

A study of the Mizo postcolonial worldview will look to see the position of Mizo women wherein they have come to enjoy a measure of freedom and now have opportunities affording them the agency to achieve their potential in the modern age. However, the dominance of the patriarchal narrative calling for the subjugation of, and control over women continues to persist. Therefore, this is a worldview in which traditional patriarchy and the patriarchal nature of Christianity reinforces the control over women for whom there is a 'glass-ceiling' or a limit in terms of achievement of potential. This limitation is poignantly felt in positions of leadership and authority in the field of politics and religion, two of the most culturally significant institutions structuring the formation of one's identity or the cultural identity of a people. The ways in which patriarchal or androcentric assumptions continue to regulate the role played by Mizo women will be explored and its

impact on Mizo novels assessed accordingly. The subject position of the woman (the young women in particular) as being inscribed within male dominion can be observed in the female characters in all the selected novels.

The identity of a woman in the traditional society was defined by her husband, and the ideal aim of a woman was to acquire a good husband embodied in the figure of a *pasalṭha* or a *thangchhuah pa* (a man who has achieved the *thangchhuah* status). In the novel TNS (1981) by James Dokhuma, Saithangpuii, the daughter of a chief finally marries the *pasaltha* Fehtea despite his being a commoner (he was a *hnamchawm*, that is, a commoner who did not belong to the ruling Lusei clan), since he happened to killed the magnificent *tumpangchal* (wild gayal or mithun of mythic proportions). In the modern society, the idea of a *pasaltha* has morphed from being a skilled hunter and warrior as in the past to that of a *pasal tha* (meaning: a good husband) who is educated and a good Christian. An example of this is seen in the figure of Chhuanvawra, the protagonist of the novel NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, who was an IPS (Indian Police Service) officer and a Sunday school teacher in his village at one point. At the end of the novel, after they were married, Sangtei tells her husband Chhuana, "You are not only my husband, you are a *pasalṭha* for everyone" (213).

The discourse of female subordination as seen in the novels is studied as being reflective of the reinforcement of traditional patriarchy and a patriarchal Christianity, and the continuation of the attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere which for women, is hailed as the ideal status achieved through marrying a good husband. The dominance of the patriarchal narrative has confined women to the role of domesticity. This refers to the general perception in the modern Mizo society that the true realm of success for women is in their prowess in the domestic sphere, that is, in terms of acquiring good marriage prospects, having children and running a household effectively.

As in the precolonial past, such expectations continue to define the expected role of women in the modern Mizo society irrespective of their success in their career or their other achievements in the field of their expertise. The novels have been studied as the effects of the Mizo postcolonial worldview in which androcentric assumptions about Mizo culture and identity have been accepted as the norm. Moreover, Christianity has been perceived as having reinforced the patriarchy of the past. Based on this understanding,

their stereotyping as being without a voice and without agency has been explored. The study has noted the need for the expression of the voice of Mizo women and their representation beyond their characterisation within the binary of good and evil in Mizo novels.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview may once again be briefly reiterated here as a worldview which is a hybrid formation in which the conflicting impulses of Mizo Christianity and the postcolonial attempt at cultural valorisation and reclamation have constantly redefined and renegotiated the modern Mizo identity. Mizo women now have the freedom and opportunity for self-realisation to some extent, although the traditional patriarchal dominance and control over women continues to be further reinforced by Christianity which is patriarchal in nature. Furthermore, the emergence of the postcolonial mindset seeks to valorise and revive aspects of the traditional Mizo culture, which is a patriarchal construct, thus resulting in the portrayal of women in accordance with male ways of thinking.

The emergence of the postcolonial mindset involving the valorisation and revival of traditional Mizo culture has served to reinforce the subjugation of women through the promotion and representation of a Mizo ethnic nationalism that has resulted from the formation of a common or singular Mizo identity. This cultural identity is embodied in the figure of the *pasalṭha* who is considered as a cultural icon who represents bravery and who also embodies the cherished cultural code of conduct called *tlawmngaihna*. The assertion of this identity is seen through the promotion of the *pasalṭha* as a heroic figure in novels that depict the precolonial traditional Mizo society. Mizo writers or novelists have attempted to preserve the cultural heritage of the past through the representation of the traditional Mizo society in Mizo fiction writing as well as the representation of aspects of the Mizo culture including cultural values such as *lunglenna* and *tlawmngaihna* which are cherished in the modern Mizo society. As mentioned earlier, Mizo scholars and theologians employing postcolonial hermeneutics have reinterpreted traditional Mizo culture and even portrayed Jesus Christ as being a *pasalṭha*. Even within the parameters of postcolonial studies and interpretation of the traditional culture, Mizo subjectivity continues to be thought of in male or patriarchal terms. Therefore, the traditional Mizo society represented in the Mizo novels is a patriarchal construct wherein male prowess in warfare and hunting had become important themes.

At the same time, the valorisation of Mizo culture has been shown in Mizo novels through qualities possessed by the male protagonists or the male characters to the general exclusion of roles and responsibilities of women as being worthy of note. This exclusion points to the exclusion of the perspectives or voices of women especially regarding narratives dealing with the traditional Mizo society. Since the concept of the traditional Mizo society as the golden age of the *pasalṭha* has risen into prominence in the cultural imaginary of the modern Mizo society, this has led to the emphasis on male prowess, undaunted courage, and valour as markers of Mizo identity. This has, in turn, established the idea of the past as the glory days of the brave Mizo warriors as seen especially in TNS (1981) and PNH (2006).

The seminal work of Mizo postcolonial fiction PNH (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga follows the struggles of the fictional Mizo chief Puilura and the people of his village as they contend with inter-clan or inter-village warfare for supremacy over land in the Lushai Hills. The novel depicts their struggle to maintain their sovereignty in the face of the attempt by the British Empire to subjugate and rule over the Mizo chiefs. The story is a representation of the colonial takeover of the Mizo chiefs which effectively put into motion the gradual decline of the rule of the Mizo chiefs. Thereby, pride in the modern Mizo cultural identity came to be linked to the concept of bravery of the *pasalṭha* and their role of protection of the village or the land of Mizoram, to the exclusion of the role of women as protectors.

Often, this pride in Mizo cultural identity and the sense of attachment and connection to a geographical terrain (Mizoram) has emerged as a marker of identification with one's cultural identity. This has been manifested via a strong sense of male protectionism and faith placed on male prowess in warfare even to the extent of taking up arms and going to war. Another instance of manifestation of cultural pride male protectionism and faith placed on male prowess is seen in the secessionist or independence movement of the MNF (Mizo National Front) against the Indian government which lasted for twenty years (called the *Rambuai* years). The Mizo men and young men who participated in the fight against the Indian army as soldiers of the MNF (Mizo National Front) army have been referred to as '*hnam pasalṭha*' (the *pasalṭha* of the tribe which can also be translated as nation), which thus points to their fight as the fight for the honour of the Mizo tribe.

The valorisation and revival of the traditional Mizo culture and traditions have involved the continued usage of some of the Mizo expressions and proverbs in common parlance and even in literature, and this is significant in reinforcing the denigration and subjugation of women and control over them in the modern Mizo society. In the traditional Mizo society, the ideal woman was the voiceless and silenced woman. Many sayings handed down through the oral tradition reflect this conception. Major A. G. McCall who was once the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills has said,

There is little in the Lushai background to disclose the sense of any great chivalry towards women. Without any ambiguity Lushai has been, and still is, a country for men before it is one for women, or even children. But where better placed Lushai spare their women the bondage common to the majority, the women retain their charm and grace well into the late years. But the attitude of the old Lushai (sic) is betrayed by an old saying on a par with our sentiment of old—"A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be." (26)

In the pre-colonial Mizo society, there were many sayings or proverbs that negated women. Their saying, "Women and crabs do not have a religion," is based on each clan having their *sakhua* or faith practice. Therefore, when a young woman was married, she had to follow the *sakhua* of her husband. Another saying was, "The wisdom of women cannot reach the other side of a stream," which is a denigration of the wisdom of women and suggests that women cannot be taken seriously. This is because women were not involved in important matters such as in the decision-making process or raids and hunting. There is also a saying; "A woman and a broken fence can be replaced," which suggests that women can easily be divorced at the whim of the husband. Though the Mizo customary laws allowed for women and men to divorce each other, the incidence of men divorcing their wives was more frequent (Dokhuma 287).

Another saying that continues to be used in common parlance in the modern Mizo society is as follows, "Women and dogs are easily won over by those who fondly caress them." This insinuates a denigration of women in comparing them to dogs who can easily be won over. It also projects men as being superior and having the agency to win over and to control women if they so choose. This is a testament to the prevailing nature of the Mizo traditional mindset or worldview concerning women, despite the many advancements

and changes that have taken place. However, this is not to suggest that women were completely disregarded or disrespected in the traditional Mizo society. According to Chatterji, "The status of women in their society was in no way inferior to that of men and she suffered none of those derogatory and discriminatory treatment as may be found in some of the more advanced societies" (2). Domesticity or the institution of the family was where their role and responsibility lay, and their respectability and status was inscribed within the institution of marriage and domesticity.

In the novel HLP (1936), there was an instance in which Pari was recounting the sequence of events leading up to the departure of Hminga, his brother and friends in the form of a story to some of the children of the village. The children began discussing the situation and a girl called Chhingi wondered if they would be able to fight the cruel stepmother if they were in the same situation. Then she said that they might not be able to do so since mothers were strong. In response, one of the boys said, " why should we be afraid of a mere woman" (246). This response of the boy is testament to the manner in which boys have been brought up in the traditional Mizo society, and it also reveals how the denigration of women is embedded into the Mizo language and naturalised or normalised. In truth, the Mizo language still contains certain words and expressions that denigrate women and continue to be used even today. In TNS (1981), when the antagonist Sangtuala went about in his campaign of attempting to malign Fehtea by convincing the young men of the village to spread false rumours about Fehtea, he points to the gullibility and stupidity of the young women of the village who would easily believe the rumours, by referring to them as, "these young women who are more foolish than us," (36). He also refers to them as "stupid and dull young women," (38). This refers to the preconceived notions of men as being wiser than women who are considered as being more foolish and more emotionally unstable and easily swayed compared to men.

In the modern society that came about with the onset of colonisation and the concomitant proselytising process of Christianity at the beginning of the twentieth century, the modern education system opened a window of opportunity for women to become financially independent. This was coupled with the introduction of money economy that created equal job opportunities for both men and women. Nowadays, many Mizo women are running their family businesses and have successful careers equal to men. However,

despite such advancements, care of the household and the family has still been regarded as the sole preserve of the modern Mizo woman according to established norms. This is in accordance with the structure of patriarchy which relegated the role of women to that of nurturing the family and supporting men. And just like in the pre-modern Mizo society, this nurturing and role of caring is especially regarded as the responsibility of the daughter-in-law (called the *mo* or *monu*) whose role within the modern Mizo society is perhaps the most scrutinised and judged. The ideal image of the Mizo daughter-in-law is that of a presentable and feminine woman who is industrious and diligent in taking care of the family, soft-spoken and unassertive and who obeys her husband's authority unquestioningly. In other words, the ideal bride is expected to aspire to become a woman who is completely under the authority of the male figure and is submissive.

In ZTT (1977) Remi was portrayed as a good daughter in law. Even after marriage when Malsawma had to undergo training, he left Remi with his parents in Biate village, and it is seen that his father was very proud of her since she was industrious and spent her time productively, earning income with her tailoring skills. Even though their family were more well off than most in their village owing to which they need not do hard work, yet Remi was not the kind of woman who wished to while away her time (246). In this manner, it may be observed that Remi was the consummate *mo* (daughter in law) who was hard-working and who helped contribute to the family finances, thus making her father-in-law proud.

In DTT (2003) the women have been portrayed as being exemplary wives. Even though Thangkimi whom he considered as his wife (although they were not officially married) was a bootlegger, Chhuana was surprised that she was not the kind of woman he expected her to be. He realised that she was a normal woman who knew how to love her husband, who was not narrow-minded and who was not the type to rant (320). In the same novel, when Chhuana sees his former girlfriend Thanpari, who had lived a life of debauchery, with a husband and a child, he was happy for her and thought that her husband was lucky since was caring and would dedicate herself entirely to look after her husband's interests (341). Thus, the status of women is seen as being elevated in relation to their fulfilment of their roles within domesticity.

In Mizo oral literature, the gendered demarcation of roles in the traditional Mizo society was represented in the Mizo folktales in which defiance of patriarchal authority

was projected as being a cause of endangerment to one's safety as well as the safety of the village community. This is in keeping with the postcolonial cultural reclamation and assertion of the Mizo cultural identity in Mizo fiction writing with the objective of restoring pride in the Mizo cultural heritage, as well as the attempt to remember and commemorate the storytelling of the past. Traditional thought in terms of patriarchal assumptions can be seen in the negative stereotype of the cruel or evil stepmother as in seen in Mizo folktales such as *Mauruangi* carried over to Mizo novels like HLP (1936) by L. Biakliana in which the stepmother of the protagonist Hminga is shown as being cruel to Hminga and his brother Liana, which is often seen in Mizo novels. Synonymous with the figure of the cruel stepmother is that of a hen-pecked husband (*thaibawi*) perceived as one who has relinquished his rightful role and therefore, reveals a lack in terms of the societal norms upheld by the Mizo society in the past and present. There is the general cultural perception among the Mizo that stepmothers are cruel especially towards their children, and this has also been depicted in Mizo novels.

In the same novel HLP (1936), Khuala, the son of one of the chief's elders, slanders Pari by claiming that he had slept with her, due to which her family had to relocate to another village. This incident proved that women were at the mercy of men and had to fulfil their role of being expected to please men and to refrain from displeasing them. Khuala was not portrayed as someone who was truly evil, but as one who was influenced by the machinations of Hminga's stepmother to slander and defame Pari. He had been led into believing that defaming Pari was a good way of taking revenge against her for having rejected his proposal for marriage and thereby humiliating him in the village community. Hminga's stepmother is portrayed as the ultimate evil woman who sought to destroy the lives of Pari and Hminga. Thus, the narrative reveals Hminga's stepmother as being the one who instigated Khuala to commit such a deplorable act (262). The trope of the stepmother as the evil character which is commonly found in Mizo folktales has been retained in Mizo novels as observed in this instance. This trope plays into the binary employed in the representation of Mizo women in Mizo novels in general.

The idea of an exemplary woman in accordance with the Mizo patriarchal construct is that of a beautiful, demure, soft-spoken and hard-working woman as portrayed in HLP (1936). The fathers of Hminga and Pari were friends, and in a conversation, they had

before both their children were born, they spoke about their idea of the ideal woman. Hminga's father stated that he wanted his wife to be kind and it did not matter if she was not that beautiful. He went on to say that he was disgusted by women who fought with their husbands (189). This shows that women assuming authority over their husbands by reducing them to being hen-pecked husbands was considered as a negative trait unbecoming of the ideal woman in the old Mizo society.

The traditional Mizo society was a patriarchal society with a strong kinship system in place in which the identity of individuals was linked to their village, and there was a demarcation of roles for men and women. The worldview of the Mizo in the traditional society was one that cherished values such as *tlawmngaihna, ṭhian chhan thih ngam* (sacrificing one's life for a friend), protecting the village, and showing genuine concern for those who were poor and helpless, such as orphans and widows. Within the parameters of the old Mizo society, the safety of the village and survival was of paramount importance, and men played a significant and vital role in ensuring this. Those who exhibited prowess in hunting and warfare were among the most respected members of society. C. Nunthara has observed that in the old Mizo society, the most noticeable marker of maleness was bravery. Every man was taught to be brave from childhood (43).

The demarcation of roles based on gendered lines began from a young age and in accordance with which, boys were destined to become brave and skilled huntsmen and warriors while girls were trained to excel in domesticity. For boys, enculturation into the Mizo society was made possible through the social institution of the *zawlbuk*. It was a community dormitory for young men who were trained to become becoming consummate warriors who were willing to defend their village community from wild animals and in warfare, or raids by enemies. The *zawlbuk* was an institution in which boys were taught Mizo customs, cultural practices, and cultural values such as *tlawmngaihna*. The young men of the village slept at the *zawlbuk* to ensure that they could always immediately be called upon to defend the village from all forms of danger.

In terms of domestic work, the main task of men in the traditional society was to clear the land for cultivation, to build the house, to make and provide the tools and implements required for work, and to help provide the women with the bamboo baskets they needed in order to go about their daily labour. It was their duty to ensure that their

family was provided for, concerning food as a means of sustenance. Apart from such activities, their time was spent in hunting. The young men spent a lot of their time in doing community work and in their free time, they would court the young women or pay them visits in groups at night (Thanga 16). Young boys in the traditional Mizo household had barely any work to do. All that was mainly expected of them was to collect firewood for the *zawlbuk*, and to go hunting in the nearby forest areas. Meanwhile, girls were expected to help their mothers and were taught to take care of the household at a young age. They were taught to cook, to babysit their siblings, to fetch water and wood, and even to weave cloth (19-20).

The traditional Mizo society was a patriarchal construct wherein men and women had to follow the gendered roles that were expected of them strictly. Men could achieve fame and glory by fulfilling their primary role of protecting the village and providing food through hunting. However, for women, the fulfilment of their gendered roles, which was mainly confined to domesticity, did not provide an opportunity for them to achieve fame and glory beyond that of being considered as a *nula fel* (a good young woman) for whom qualities such as beauty, purity, industriousness, and *tlawmngaihna* could ensure that she had good marriage prospects. In Mizo novels, young women who are the romantic interests or lovers of the male protagonists are usually portrayed as being a *nula fel* or a good young woman.

The well-defined division among the roles for men and women in the pre-colonial Mizo society was a rigid one, the conditioning and preparation for which began right from birth and extended even to the afterlife. According to Challiana, when a male child was born, it was said of him that he would defeat enemies or kill a wild animal and he was blessed to become "*Mipa huaisen sai kap tur*" (A brave man who will kill an elephant), while a girl was expected to become "*Se man tur*" (One who would be worth a mithun/ gayal) (2-3). As for the female child, it was said that she would catch a mithun (or gayal) for her family, that is, as the bride price. Thus, even at birth, the worth of boys was considered in terms of the active role of male agency, that is, his ability to carry out an action that could reap rich benefits for himself, his family, and the village.

Meanwhile, the worth of the girl child was considered in passive terms, that is, she will get married with the consent of her family through which her bride price and the

attendant demands will belong to her family. In this way, when the demand for valuable things as part of the bride price was met, it ensured that the bride's family gained wealth. Thus, young women were commodified to a certain extent. A Mizo bride was expected to be healthy and industrious enough to be an asset to her new family. A young woman was considered in terms of how beneficial she would turn out to be for the family of her birth and the family she would marry into, especially in matters like domestic work and cultivation. In ZTT (1977) the female protagonist Remi's uncle was an inveterate alcoholic who tried to force her to marry a young man named Lalmuana who was his friend and who had promised to give him a double-barrelled rifle as a bride price. Remi was a devout Christian, and marrying a drunkard was the last thing she wanted to do (26). Here too we observe how the system of marriage involves the linking of the act of giving away young women in marriage for material gain akin to a system of exchange by which young women have been commodified.

The novels PNH (2006) and *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2005) which is the prequel to PNH (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga portray the story of the fictitious chief Puilura and is a historical novel set in the end of the nineteenth century when the British began sending military expeditions to subdue the Mizo chiefs. In the novel *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2005), Nghalṭhianga who was one of the most famous braves of Chief Puilura's village of Khiangzo had rescued the love of his life Romawii from the clutches of the Sukte Pawih enemies who had taken her captive. Nghalṭhianga's marriage to Romawii was considered as being assured since he had rescued her from captivity.

However, Nghalṭhianga did not marry Romawii because her father's exorbitant demand for their family gun and their prized brass gongs as the customary bride pride angered his family who then refused to let him marry her. Such a bride price was even higher than the amount set for the daughter of a chief of the Sailo clan. Nghalṭhianga knew that if he had been adamant about marrying Romawii and had tried hard to persuade his father, the bride price could have been arranged. But because of the indignation and anger he felt at the ungratefulness of her family, he refused to make an effort because of his wounded pride. Thus, the marriage was cancelled and Romawii was forced by her parents to marry the son of one of the concubines of a descendant of the famous Sailo Chief Rolura (25-26). Her husband Seia was not even entitled to be made a Chief by his

father, and she had grudgingly married him. This shows the patriarchal attitude involved in the act of marrying off daughters in a type of barter system of exchange by which wealth could be acquired. This reiterates the act of treating women as a commodity, and the expectation of the role of the daughter in law as being an asset to the family.

In the same novel PNH (2006), Romawii's husband Seia divorced her by falsely accusing her of being a *uire* (an adulteress) after he was given the opportunity to become a chief over a village despite being the son of a concubine of the chief. Her father Chuaukunga believed that Seia looked down on Romawii after he became a chief and after she had two daughters, one of whom died, and did not give birth to a son, this was another reason why he no longer wanted her (152-153). This clearly illustrates the position of a woman in the traditional Mizo society and shows how sons were given more importance than daughters since inheritance was patrilineal. In the traditional Mizo society, a woman who had children with her husband was considered as "thisenpal" while a woman who did not yet have children was "thisenpallo". When a woman who is *thisenpal* is divorced, her husband has to pay up the full bride price, and in the event of her death her family can claim the balance of her bride price (Parry 38). This reveals the importance placed on a woman being able to bear a child.

In the traditional Mizo society, masculinity and bravery were qualities which every male was expected to have, and the men refrained from showing affection to their wives since they were afraid of being perceived as *thaibawih*, which means a hen-pecked husband which was a source of great shame (Vanlaltlani 26). The development of such a kind of mindset can be traced to the *zawlbuk* where the *Val upa* (Elder men leaders) would inculcate and ingrain the established patriarchal norms of their culture by which masculinity and manliness were championed. This would have ensured the smooth transference of the worldview of the adults to the younger generations. In the traditional Mizo society, if a husband and wife spoke to each other in gentle and kindly tones, it was believed that the *khuavang* (a benevolent spirit or god in the indigenous faith of the traditional Mizo society) would be jealous and cause them to get divorced. Therefore, husbands would talk in a curt manner to their wives. Open display of affection was frowned upon, and so, even those couples who loved each other dearly refrained from showing tenderness to each other in the presence of others (Dokhuma 288).

In the past, the position of being a village chief was the sole preserve of men with the exception of women who were the acting chiefs when a chief died and his successor was still not old enough to rule, thus in effect, acting in a capacity similar to a regent in the British monarchy. There were no female priests in the practice of their indigenous tribal faith. The role of being the *Upa* (elder) in the Chief's council of elders was the sole preserve of men as well. The patriarchal rules of society favoured men, while stricter rules were applied to women for similar offences or wrongdoings. This is revealed in the matter of chiefs and men being allowed to have concubines while women who commit adultery were vilified. Some of the Mizo chiefs had concubines besides having a wife, and children born to their wives were called *chhungpuifa* while those born to their concubines or *hmei* (concubine) were called *hmeifa*. In addition, the chiefs also had children from clandestine unions with girls of their villages at times. Children born from such unions were termed *sawn* which translates as 'bastard'. In terms of succession, the *chhungpuifa* were given first preference followed by the *hmeifa* and from there to the most competent *sawn.* This practice proved that a certain level of legitimacy was imbued to the extra-marital affairs of Mizo chiefs.

In the traditional Mizo society, the *pathlawi* (young married men, widowers, or men who were divorced) could court young women in same manner as the unmarried youths (Parry 23). In the Mizo society and especially in the society of the past, men or the *pasalṭha* who are divorcees are not portrayed in a negative light unlike the women. In Mizo novels, the status of being a divorcee has no bearing upon the status or portrayal of the male characters. In TNS (1981), the antagonist Sangtuala had been divorced two or three times and had four children from his marriages (32). Despite being thrice divorced he still harboured hopes of winning the hand of Saithangpuii in marriage. His jealousy of Saithangpuii's interest in Fehtea led to his slandering of Fehtea. The fact that a man like Sangtuala having already had three wives and four children dared to hope for the hand of the Saithangpuii, the beautiful daughter of the chief, shows how Mizo men were accorded much greater license in terms of re-marriage and committing adultery.

When Sangtuala's lies were revealed towards the end of the same novel TNS (1981), he is let off relatively easily despite his failure to uphold the conduct and values expected of someone in the influential position of being a *Val Upa* of a village. Although he confesses

to his wrongdoing in front of the other villagers, the story does not reveal that he is punished for his deeds other than the shame which he had to endure at the time of his confession. Had it been a female character, the outcome would perhaps have been different and the consequences much more severe as observed in ZTT (1977) where the female antagonist Lali is lonely, ashamed, and has to take care of her bastard son on her own in the end. In contrast to the widow and bootlegger Thangkimi's situation in DTT (2003), in PNH (1989), the *pasalṭha* Nghalṭhianga impregnated and then married a young woman called Ainawni after the birth of their child. However, Ainawni and her child died due to the *Ṭhingṭam* famine of 1880 (26). Nevertheless, he eventually married Chuaileni, the daughter of chief Puilura since she had fallen in love with him (162).

It would appear that the practice of having a concubine was permitted among common men as well, for the colonial administrator Parry has written, "A *hmei* is a concubine and according to Lushai custom anyone may keep a *hmei*. Nowadays as the real wife and the *hmei* always quarrel, it is practically only the chiefs who keep *hmei*, though a few rich man (sic.) do so also" (38). It is somewhat ironic that in a society which condones extra-marital affairs on the part of chiefs, it condemns the same when it comes to commoners and women. The term used to denote an adulteress is *uire nu* which is a derogatory term used to refer only to a woman, and to become a *uire nu* was a source of great shame, reducing the adulteress as the scum of the society.

Such a derogatory word with a negative connotation does not exist for men who have committed adultery. The term used to describe a man who had an affair with a married woman is *uiretu* which means, 'one who has made her a *uire*'. Parry also noted that, "According to Lushai custom the co-respondent in an adultery case is not liable to be fined and no compensation can be claimed from him" (49). In the traditional Mizo society being a *uire* was the highest offence that a Mizo woman could commit while there was no concept of being a *uire* when it comes to married men (Sangkhuma 54-55). Adultery was regarded as the gravest among the wrongdoings committed by women in the traditional Mizo society, and if an adulteress was caught, she was made to leave her husband's house with no clothes on (Lianthanga 155). This shows the discrimination shown to women and entitlement bestowed on the men.

In DTT (2003), although the protagonist Chhuana criticises his mother for ruining his life because of her adultery, he also criticises the inequality and difference in the treatment meted out to adulteresses and adulterers in the Mizo society in the past and the present. Chhuana thought about how unfair the punishment for adultery was for women, since adulterers did not receive the same amount of shame and derision as adulteresses. This is a reflection on the patriarchal mindset by which a woman's sexual deviance or promiscuity is imputed as the leading cause behind the wrongs in society. In contrast, the infidelity or sexual promiscuity of men is not held accountable. As a child, Chhuana's father had told him that his mother was disgusting, and that she was alive only because he showed her mercy.

When the protagonist Chhuana spoke about his mother's adultery, he felt that it was wrong and unfair that men who committed adultery remained unharmed and their reputation barely damaged in contrast to women. In the past, an adulteress would be subjected to a severe beating with some succumbing to their injuries. Some were paraded naked on the streets. It was believed that tigers were likely to maul an adulteress as well as to unearth the corpse of an adulteress who died without admitting to having committed adultery. The shame and disgrace experienced by adulterers was short-lived, and it never affected their prospects concerning marriage. Married men who committed adultery were not really condemned, and such men would be the ones taking part in shaming adulteresses or promiscuous women through shaving their heads. Chhuana felt that many of adulteries were instigated by promiscuous and evil men and mentioned that he condemned such a point of view not just because he supported his mother (8-9). Such a kind of derogatory treatment of women is no longer practiced, however, adulteresses tend to suffer more shame and derision than do adulterers. Thus, this shows how the repercussions or penalties were different for men and women regarding the same offences that were committed.

In the same novel DTT (2003), even though the protagonist Chhuana's father is a drunkard who occasionally beat up his wife and made his family miserable, the narrator Chhuana still makes mention of his redeeming qualities. He spoke about how his father showed mercy to his wife in allowing her to leave with her clothes on even though he had the right to deny her everything because of her adultery (6). Therefore, men tend to be given more license and are let off more easily than women in Mizo novels as observed

here. Women in the traditional Mizo society were vulnerable to being falsely accused, maligned or slandered, and wrongfully convicted of wrongdoings. This has been reflected in HLP (1936) when Khuala, who was the son of an elder in the chief's council, slanders Pari by claiming that he had slept with her. When the case was brought before the chief and his council of elders, they wrongfully ruled in favour of Khuala since he was the son of one of the elders. Having been shamed in the eyes of the village community, Pari's father decided that they must relocate to his sister's village (267-268).

Although women had a clear role outlined for them within the village community in the past, because of which women never had the opportunity to seek fame and glory even unto death and the afterlife, they were under constant threat of being accused of having a *khawhring*[1]. The concept of *khawhring* in the traditional Mizo society clearly revealed the status of women in it. This was because being accused of *khawhring nei* (having a *khawhring* or being in possession of a *khawhring*) was often misused to serve as a witch-hunt by which the reputations of young women were defamed by being accused of having a *khawhring*, mostly by young men whom they had rejected or by young women who were jealous of them. Being accused of having a *khawhring* resulted in such young women being feared and ostracised by the village community even unto the extent of being compelled to leave the village along with their family. In such cases, hopes of ever being married would then be dashed. This practice was put to an end by colonial administrators, and with the onset of Christianity, reports of such cases gradually petered out over the twentieth century. Parry has mentioned that persons accused of being *khawhring nei* (having a *khawhring*) were more frequently found among women rather than men. He also said that in the old days, chiefs would accuse people of having *khawhring* to turn them out of the village in order to confiscate their property and claim it (18).

In the Mizo household, women were expected to be subordinate to their husband and had to take care of all the work in household. They were always busy and tired and barely had a good night's rest. Even their free time was spent spinning cotton to make clothes for their family (Thanga 17). The entire life of a married woman was focused on taking care of her husband and her family. The backbreaking work of taking care of the household and participating in the cultivation process in a household wherein a woman was expected to unquestioningly fulfil the role expected of her as a *mo* (daughter-in-law)

in an exemplary manner, would surely have been a great burden to bear. Women also had to fetch water from the stream and firewood for cooking for the family as well as taking care of the domestic livestock. Besides this, they had to cook food and weave cloth for the family. After gathering the harvest, it was the responsibility of the women to unhusk the rice daily for consumption, which was a tiring and tedious task.

Since all work related to taking care of the household was considered as the responsibility of the women, the men did not help them, nor were they given credit nor bestowed merit and appreciated for it. In the matter of marriage, a young woman barely had any say in it. The ultimate decision lay with her parents or the men in her family. A wife was expected to be able to have a son without whom she could not really secure a place of honour in her new household. If a woman died in childbirth or during the last six months of her pregnancy, it was considered as inauspicious. Having a stillbirth was called *raicheh*, which was greatly feared by all women. According to Dokhuma, the death of a woman by *raicheh* (stillbirth) was considered as one of the most horrifying and dreadful forms of dying in the Mizo society of the past. Whenever there was such a death, a day or rest or of doing no work was observed, and every household placed a leafy branch of a tree on their doorway to prevent a member of their family from facing such a kind of death. This was done because they believed that the spirit of the woman who died by childbirth would try and enter their house (133).

The onset of Christianity with the arrival of the Welsh missionaries J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge in 1864 paved the way for a complete change in the indigenous faith system of the Mizo tribal community. Where before, women had no say in public affairs, it was seen that during the first religious revival which took place in 1906 at Aizawl, a woman made a public confession of her sins in front of the entire congregation. Her speech greatly moved them and since that incident, the spirit of the revival was experienced in full swing. This was an unprecedented event since there was no scope for the word of women to be taken seriously in a public forum or in matters of indigenous faith practice in the pre-colonial period since, only men could become priests and women had no option but to follow the practice of the worship of their god (*sakhua*) by the men in their lives, that is, one's father or husband. With Christianity and the introduction of modernity in the form of formal education, money economy and salaried jobs, the status and condition of

women improved considerably. In TNS (1981), Saithangpuii's parents are quite progressive in that they had decided to not force her into marriage with another chief nor the son of a chief. Arranged marriages among the children of the Mizo chiefs were commonly practiced during the pre-colonial days. This progressive stance taken by Saithangpuii's parents reveals the influence of a modernised mindset in the construction of a story taking place in the traditional Mizo society.

Nevertheless, in the modern Christianised Mizo society, despite the many advancements and opportunities that have been made available for women, they have not been placed in leadership positions such as that of pastors and Church Elders (*Kohhran Upa*), who are the leaders and officiating heads of the Mizo Church. Although Mizo women may study theology and acquire degrees equivalent to men, they are not permitted the same opportunities related to working as pastors in accordance with the established norms by which men take positions of leadership.

The revivals in Mizoram brought a considerable change to the Mizo society with nearly the entire population of the Mizos becoming Christians by the end of the twentieth century. Besides helping to indigenise Mizo Christianity the revivals have about changes for the better regarding the position of women in the Mizo society. In the pre-modern traditional Mizo society, women could secure a place for themselves in *pialral* (the Mizo version of heaven or paradise) only if their husbands happened to achieve the coveted *thangchhuah* status. Moreover, the personal practice of faith called *sakhua* was passed on from generation to generation through the male head of the family, although there were exceptions wherein the male head of the house could switch to the *sakhua* of another clan. However, this practice was not common, although it was allowed. Under Christianity, women could now become Christians and follow a religion based on their own volition and had the option of attaining salvation in Christianity which ensured that one secured a place in heaven.

The condition of women in Mizoram has reasonably improved over the years especially post the legislation of the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014. Traditionally daughters had limited right of inheritance but under this law the right of inheritance of daughters has been made coextensive with that of sons where before, they had been denied such rights. Furthermore, in case of divorce a Mizo wife can now

claim up to 50 percent of the husband's wealth as alimony. In connection with modernity, although the modern Mizo woman is portrayed as being afforded equality of opportunity in terms of education and careers and yet, upon a closer look, there is a kind of glass ceiling when it comes to career choices for women especially in the fields of religion, politics, and even with the Young Mizo Association (YMA) which is the largest and most influential non-denominational non-profit social organisation in Mizoram.

Although women have advanced in all walks of life in government jobs and educational institutions, there is a limitation imposed on women when it comes to leadership position in terms of the norms practiced in Mizo society. This limitation is poignantly felt in positions of leadership and authority in the field of politics and religion, two of the most culturally significant institutions structuring the formation of one's identity or the cultural identity of a people. Lawmsanga has opined that even in the modern society Mizo women are still oppressed, alienated, and discriminated against on the grounds of their gender. He mainly attributes as the cause, the impact of the patriarchal nature of the traditional social structures that has been further reinforced by traditional patriarchal interpretation of Christianity by the missionaries and the leaders of the Mizo church whom they influenced (243).

This glass ceiling is also manifested in the idea of a woman being 'too educated' or having too prestigious or too high-ranking a job for men to want to marry since the assumption is that men often do not want to marry women who are more intelligent and more skilled than they are. This plays into the idea of the spinster or the unmarried woman being considered as something that young women want to avoid becoming, which can be gauged in the importance placed on young women being taught or advised to act appropriately, behave appropriately and to attempt to become a *nula fel* (a good young woman) which will help them in securing a good husband. This concept has remained unchanged more or less even in the modern Mizo society and has served as a mode of control over women by patriarchy, according to which the status of Mizo women continues to be defined by the parameters of domesticity and their role in the family. Spinsters or much older girls are often derisively or jokingly referred to as '*nula* senior' which translates as 'senior young woman.' Spinsters have often been at the receiving end of jokes even at social gatherings.

In the Mizo postcolonial worldview, certain aspects or patriarchal assumptions of the traditional worldview continue to be retained. Such aspects continue to have a bearing on the status of women in relation to domesticity and the presence of a male figure as deciding factors for the determination of their social standing or status in society. In the traditional Mizo society as well as in the modern society, *nuthlawi*(a young woman who is divorced or widowed) and *hmeithai* (a widow) are generally considered as being disadvantaged and in general, are not accorded the same respect granted to married women. In the Mizo society, it is the *nuthlawi* who are in the position of having to contend with the general assumption among the general public and especially among the men, that they are more prone to being more promiscuous than other women. Such preconceived notions continue to be observed even in the modern Mizo society. This is applicable especially for those women in the lower income brackets who do not have a strong male figure to support them, or are not financially independent and are therefore, vulnerable to being preyed on by some men.

In the novel DTT (2003), Thangkimi whom Chhuana treated as a wife, had tried to earn a living after her husband's death she but became a bootlegger since was not able to keep any job. This was because when she would begin working at an office or at a private business establishment, she would come across men who would try to sleep with her. In some cases, it so happened that some of the owners who were married and had children would try to get her to sleep with them and would thus be more open to taking advantage of her since she was a *nuthlawi* (divorcee). Thangkimi decided to look for other means of earning an income and tried to find a means of earning a living where she did not have to face such a situation and in looking for one that could help her reap profits easily, she became a bootlegger. Although the position of being a bootlegger was disrespectable, she was careful and hired an assistant to do delivery work and tried to live as respectably as she could. Even when men came to her house to buy alcohol, she would not let them drink inside and thus maintained some respectability on her part (314-315). The author has made a comment on the status of Mizo women and their respectability and status as being tied to men and to domesticity through his portrayal of Thangkimi. He also displays the moral degradation within the Mizo society and the social evils that are often overlooked, thus leading to the Mizo society falling short of its Christian ideals.

In ZTT (1977) Lalmuana was a proud alcoholic who tried to take advantage of Remi by attempting to rape her after her father's death and she had narrowly escaped (28). He had attempted to rape her since he believed that women were the weaker sex and the shame attached to being raped would prevent her from speaking out (13). This reveals the helplessness of the young woman without a male figure in her life. This incident is reflective of the situation of women who live alone or are not under the protection of male figures as in the case of widows or orphans. A woman without a male figure in her life to protect her becomes vulnerable to being taken advantage of by men such as Lalmuana.

Love stories in Mizo fiction can be understood as a didactic means of presenting Christian morality and good Christian living as ideals to be aspired towards. Thus, there has been an established pattern in Mizo novels according to which good characters who fulfil the roles expected of them by their society ultimately meet with happy endings and bad or evil characters who reject Christian morality or the Christian way of life meet with a tragic or unwanted end, as described in the previous chapter. In this connection, Mizo novels place emphasis on the stereotypical depiction of the young women in binary terms, that is as good and exemplary women or otherwise, as bad or evil women in accordance with the didactic mode of promulgation of Christian values and teachings through storytelling vis-à-vis Mizo novels. In the first Mizo novel HLP (1936), the love story appears to be the main thread joining the three components that make up the novel, namely, life in the village after Hminga and his friends have left, the return of the four friends to the village, and the rescue of Pari and the villagers by Hminga and Zema. It is Zema, the consummate young man whose last request before his death was to make Pari's father promise to let his daughter marry Hminga, thus securing a happy ending for the lovers Hminga and Pari. This reveals the love story as being an important theme in the novel and an indispensable part of the storyline.

The portrayal of women into good and bad types in accordance with the didactic mode of depiction of characters and of storytelling in accordance with Christian morality can also be traced to the virtue rewarded, vice punished mode of storytelling and inculcation of values as observed in Mizo folklore. This is because they both project the ideal type of woman as submitting to the patriarchal authority of the male figure of authority in her life, whether it be her husband or her father, and in being the perfect wife who takes care of her

husband and his family, or as a young woman who is the perfect candidate for a wife. Thereby, the ideal role and status of women is portrayed as being within the bounds of domesticity. In folktales such as Ngaitei and Chawngchilhi, the safety of the village is compromised by the defiance of patriarchal authority through the threat of a flood overtaking the village in the case of Ngaitei, and the threat of the village being destroyed by a snake born of the union between Chawngchilhi and a snake in the folktale of Chawngchilhi. While in the folktale Rimenhawihi, a Raja (or *Vai lal* which can be translated as a chief who is an outsider) from the plains captures Rimenhawihi after she defies her husband's instructions to remain in the house while he had been away travelling. The binary in the depiction of good women or potential wives and bad or evil women is seen in the folktale Mauruangi where Mauruangi is the industrious while Bingtaii is lazy and ugly. In this folktale, Mauruangi ends up marrying a rich *Vai lal* (Raja or a chief who is an outsider) who takes good care of her.

In Mizo novels, the ideal woman continues to be portrayed as one who is an ideal wife or potentially an ideal wife who is beautiful or attractive, pure or virtuous, hard-working and who takes good care of her parents or her husband. However, the kind of morality of the traditional worldview that is espoused in Mizo folktales or legends differs from the novels. The novels portray Christian morality as being rooted in the idea of attaining worldly success or having a fulfilling relationship resulting in a Christian marriage as the culmination or reward for having and maintaining good Christian character and conduct on the part of the characters. Thereby, ideal young women are portrayed as being beautiful, hard-working, kind, and maintaining sexual purity and innocence to be able to get married in accordance with Christian marital rules as practiced within Mizo Christianity. Even in novels that portray the precolonial past, ideal women are those who are sexually pure and untouched, which thus makes them as suitable candidates for marriage.

In TNS (1981) which depicts the precolonial society, the narrator says that Saithangpuii did not have a bad reputation among all the young men of the village (26). As for married women, the ideal woman is one who respects the authority of her husband and who takes good care of her husband and family. Therefore, Mizo novels have invariably portrayed women into two types that fall within the binary categories of good versus evil, or as good Christians or promiscuous women. In DTT (2003), Chhuana's mother is

portrayed as having destroyed and brought shame upon her family because of her adultery and failure to adhere to this ideal.

Hawilopari (Pari) of HLP (1936) is portrayed as the perfect woman who patiently waited for Hminga's return. From being made to wait for her lover's return, to being slandered by Khuala's lies, to relocating to another village based on her father's decision, and in being rescued by Zema and Hminga from the Pawih enemies who had taken her captive, significant changes related to Pari's life happened through the actions of the men in her life. Pari fulfils her role of being a woman faithful to her man even in the face of the uncertainty of his return and manages to keep other suitors at bay at all costs. She faces the risk of losing her youth and beauty in waiting for Hminga, and of losing the opportunity to marry favourably by rejecting others, even with the possibility that Hminga could have been married already. She even rejected the marriage proposal of Khuala, the son of one of the chief's elders who, in the past, would have been considered as a good marriage prospect. There is also the chance that Hminga would have died by then. Pari is considered beautiful, patient and having the forbearance to hide the secret of the escape of Hminga and his friends from the village despite being questioned by the chief and his elders.

In the same novel HLP (1936) Pari is also portrayed as being industrious, and helping to take care of her family, which adds to her portrayal as the perfect woman. She is described as a good and attractive young woman and a dutiful daughter who often worked hard at the jhum (area where shifting cultivation is practiced). Once, Pari's father was invalidated for he was recovering from a snake bite and she had to clear the jhum for farming in his place. She and her mother completed the work, but each went on alternate days since they had to take care of her father. In the traditional Mizo society, the task of clearing the jungle for cultivation was the preserve of men. Since there were no women to accompany Pari for such work, she would be in the company of men. Pari felt angry, helpless, and considered herself as unfortunate whenever some of the married men who were foolish and inconsiderate would tease her. Pari could not do anything about it, since it was embarrassing for a young woman to be in the company of men (240-241). This reveals the clear demarcation of roles between men and women in the pre-colonial traditional Mizo society in which the work of clearing the forest and cutting it down was regarded as a tough task requiring the strength of men. At the same time, it also reveals how women

who transgress that divide, such as Pari in this case, are not comfortable in functioning outside the roles set apart for women.

In DTT (2003), there appears to be a binary division between the various women in Chhuana's life in terms of being good women and evil women. In the first place, there was his mother who was in an extra-marital affair with a young man from their village, and as a child, Chhuana had been disgusted with her act of adultery and felt that he could understand his father's anger against her (7-8). In contrast to his mother, he referred to Pi Hluni of his village as a good woman even though she was a bootlegger. This was because, despite being in a similar situation to his mother, she remained faithful to her husband. She too had an alcoholic husband who often beat her up. She also struggled to make ends meet to provide for her son who was of the same age as Chhuana, yet she took good care of him even though her proud and arrogant husband depended on her earnings to fuel his alcoholism (27-28). Although Pi Hluni had the disreputable profession of being a bootlegger, her role as a caring mother and a wife who had the patience to bear with and to look after her alcoholic husband appeared to redeem her in the eyes of the narrator, that is, the protagonist Chhuana.

The binary in the portrayal of women is also seen in the novel ZTT (1977) which depicts the protagonist Remi as an exemplary young woman who was a consummate Christian. In the novel, Remi was praised by her father even on his deathbed. He said that she had never disobeyed him, that her mother guided her and taught her everything to her satisfaction, that her character had made him happy, and that he was very proud of her (7-8). Remi has been portrayed as an exemplary young woman who is friendly and industrious and a quick learner as well.

In keeping with the binary model of portrayal, in the novel NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, the female protagonist Sangtei was the daughter of the former chief of the village Khawvelthanga Sailo. The Sunday School children of Zopui village had won the first prize at the annual assembly where the Sunday school students of the various villages under the Pastorate of the area competed against in each other in areas such as singing and recitation of bible verses singly and as a group. That year the assembly was held at the neighbouring village of Sihzawl and the next Sunday at church, the pastor praised Ngurthansangi (Sangtei) for enhancing the reputation of the village because she had won

the first prize in the singles category as part of the competition. He also remarked on her beauty and said that she will grow up to be a beautiful and admirable young woman of not only their village, but the entire region around the Tuichang river (8-9).

In the same novel NKP (1989), when Chhuana returned for the first time after attending college in Shillong for nearly one and a half years, Ngurthansangi (Sangtei) was all of 15 years old and was quite the beauty, so Chhuana fell in love with her. He often described her as fair and with beautiful eyes. Even after he came across her as she was forced to work as a prostitute at a brothel in Chandigarh, he kept emphasising on her beauty. He even goes to the extent of saying, "… she was not only beautiful, but she was beauty herself" (56). In NKP (1989) Sangtei was forced into marrying Capt. Ranade because of the torture that her father was subjected to by soldiers of the Indian army till he gave in to the demands of the Captain. Moreover, the rape and the forced prostitution she was subjected to, made Sangtei consider herself as sullied and no longer pure enough for Chhuanvawra to wish to marry.

Therefore, the sense of disgust Sangtei felt at losing her purity in such a degrading manner caused her to feel resigned to her fate of being forced to marry Capt. Ranade who then pushed her into the sex trafficking trade and forced her to become a prostitute. This resignation to her fate appeared to have stemmed from the sense of having fallen in esteem based on the loss of what she regarded to be her "*thianghlimna*" (purity), a term Chhuana often used to refer to her worth. For Sangtei, her sense of self-esteem appeared to be inextricably tied to her innocence and purity, and with the loss of her innocence she no longer had any self-esteem and self-respect and was resigned to her fate. This sense of the worth of young women linked with their purity is, in feminist interpretation, considered as a patriarchal construct made to ensure that women were kept in check.

In the novel, there was an incident in which Chhuana could not control his desire for Sangtei and was tempted to force himself on her, but she told him that her virginity was the only gift she could give him and that if she lost it before marriage, she would lose her value in his eyes. She was convinced that if he slept with her before marriage, he would think that he would consider her as an easy conquest and then would despise her and then leave her (42-44). This incident took place before her marriage to Captain Ranade.

This reveals how the value of Mizo women is linked to the idea of being a virtuous Christian woman and thus acquiring a good marriage partner.

Gerda Lerner has pointed out the fact that the history of our world as we know it today, has been shaped by men. She describes it likewise,

History-making, on the other hand, is a historical creation which dates from the invention of writing in ancient Mesopotamia. From the time of the king lists of ancient Sumer on, historians, whether priests, royal servants, clerks, clerics, or a professional class of university-trained intellectuals, have selected the events to be recorded and have interpreted them so as to give them meaning and significance. Until the most recent past, these historians have been men, and what they have recorded is what men have done and experienced and found significant. They have called this History and claimed universality for it. What women have done and experienced has been left unrecorded, neglected, and ignored in interpretation. (4)

Mizo history has been written by men, and from a perspective which considers the male point of view as being all-important. Lerner has termed the tension between women's actual historical experience and the fact of their exclusion from the opportunity to interpret that experience as "the dialectic of women's history." She says, "Women have been systematically excluded from the enterprise of creating symbol systems, philosophies, science, and law" (5). Women's studies and postcolonial studies have arisen in part in response to the absence or unavailability of the perspectives of women, racial minorities, and marginalised cultures or communities in historical accounts or literary annals. This lack of representation is paralleled in the political, economic, and legal spheres. Those 'other' to the dominant discourse have no voice or say in their portrayal; they are consigned to be 'spoken for' by those who command the authority and have the means to speak.

Mizo novels have mostly been written from the male perspective, and from a Mizo Christian perspective according to which the ideal woman has been portrayed as one who has Christian values and morals, and who makes for a potentially good wife. Thus, the patriarchal assumptions of the traditional worldview and of the Christianised Mizo postcolonial worldview have placed the subjectivity of Mizo women firmly within their role in relation to domesticity as seen in Mizo novels where good women are invariably portrayed as being good wives. This is in accordance with the Mizo male perspective of

what the role and status of women is expected to be in society. Ketu H. Katrak has noted how the colonialist educational system was fundamentally gendered in maintaining traditional hierarchies intact. She states thus, "In general, female education, governed by Victorian ideology and Christian missionary zeal, was aimed at producing women as good wives and mothers" (233).

The 'male gaze' has often been seen in the context of Mizo novels. Women internalise the male gaze. John Berger has observed that women are born into a confined space in which the man is her keeper, "and so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman" (46). Berger goes on to describe the internalisation of the male gaze as such, "One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object — and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (47).

In Edward Said's study of *Orientalism* (1978), the western world gazed at the oriental world and characterised it in feminised terms by which the part of the world regarded as the 'female' Orient was exoticised and perceived of and portrayed as something to be subjugated and conquered by the 'male' imperial West. How the politics of the male gaze played out on the subjectivity of the Mizo woman and especially on young unmarried women, was in terms of the effort made towards being perceived as good prospects for marriage. According to the system by which the traditional Mizo society provided merits, acquiring a good husband was considered as the norm. In general, marriages provided young women with stability, security, and the opportunity to receive glory, respect, and wealth that would come their way if their husbands happened to achieve the *thangchhuah* status. A woman's standing in society and the status and respect accorded to her was dictated by the kind of husband she married and the kind of children she had. Women who possessed beauty were more fortunate in that they had a better chance of attracting better prospects for marriage. Therefore, in most of the Mizo novels, the lover or love interest of the male protagonists have commonly been described as beautiful or attractive.

In TNS (1981) the title of the novel means, Tumpangchal or Saithangpuii, which refers to the discussions by the men of her father's village as to whether they would prefer the honour and fame from killing the *tumpangchal* (wild mithun or gayal of mythic proportions) or that of getting to marry Saithangpuii, the beautiful daughter of the chief. She was considered as the most desirable among all the young women of Darzo village and was considered as beautiful even by older men (26). In ZTT (2003) Remi is a good Christian woman who is industrious, and her in-laws are described as admiring her because she is industrious (238-240). Her father-in-law was proud of her for being able to earn money through her work as a seamstress (246).

In NKP (1989) Sangtei is described as being beautiful, and even innocent, before she was raped and forced into prostitution. Chhuana teased her once about being beautiful and having many suitors (39). In DTT (2003) the women who fall in love with Chhuana are all attractive and innocent young women such as Mawitei whom he treats like a sister but who ends up falling in love with him, his girlfriend Dawngi, and Mami whom he impregnates but rejects in the end. All of these women continued to love him even after he was released from prison after his conviction for murder. As for the other women in his life who were not innocent, Thangkimi was decribed as being attractive and well-dressed (315), while Thanpari was described as beautiful (285). In PNH (2006) Nghalṭhianga was interested in the beautiful Chauromawii (Romawii) but she married another. He ends up marrying Chuaileni who is the attractive daughter of the chief.

In the Mizo society of the past, unmarried young woman had to be careful about maintaining a good reputation in order to be considered a *nula fel* (a good young woman) to attract good prospective husbands who would ensure a secure future. It is clear from a study of the old Mizo society that women did not have an effective voice nor were their voices or thoughts regarded as being worthy of consideration. However, that is not to say that they were absolutely repressed, marginalised and subjugated. Nevertheless, the subjugation of women was clearly seen in terms of the politics of the 'male gaze' which dictated the roles and responsibilities of women.

Bahri has observed that Edward Said's work demonstrates that it is possible to generate a largely fictitious account, without meaningful reference or compatibility with anything real, to create the idea of a place and people in the minds of readers. Moreover,

it has proven possible, historically, to formulate policies based on these representations which impact the lives of real people in tremendously significant ways. A similar history characterises the position of women within the patriarchal system. The celebrated Foucauldian nexus between knowledge and power becomes clear in the arenas of both colonial relations and gender relations. Those with the power to represent and describe others clearly control how these others will be seen. The power of representation as an ideological tool has traditionally rendered it a contested terrain (204-205).

Michel Foucault speaks about power which functions as an all-seeing eye and the operation of which is based on "the dualistic mechanisms of exclusion." Foucault says, "Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterised; how he is to be recognised; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.)" (199). Such a conception of power is seen as functioning in the representation of women in Mizo novels with the controlling power being that of the Mizo Christianity and the male gaze which have ensured that Mizo women are put in their place and fulfil the roles expected of them by society.

On the basis of the understanding that western Christianity is patriarchal, the patriarchal setup of the traditional Mizo society works in tandem with the patriarchal structure of Mizo Christianity in forming a society where the voice and representation of women have been suppressed, albeit in a subtle manner in accordance with the operation of the ideologies involved. This has created a situation in modern Mizo society in which there is a "glass-ceiling" beyond which Mizo women cannot really progress in the fields of religion and politics.

The arc of character development in Mizo novels does not usually portray a growth or transition for women characters, and women are portrayed as the romantic interests or lovers of the male characters for whom their union with their female lovers culminating in marriage is portrayed as their success or as a testament to their good Christian character or conduct. Even when female characters display growth as with Remi in ZTT (1977), such growth is actuated by the actions or will of men. This binary in terms of representation of women as good or evil in the Mizo novels reflects the social construction of gender in

patriarchal terms within the Mizo society. Such a form of thinking can be understood as a didactic form of projection of the Christian worldview which holds the world as being composed of a binary nature in which there is a constant battle between good and evil. At the same time, it appears to be a component of phallocentric discourse. Since the functioning of colonial ideology is perceptible in Mizo Christianity through the consideration of the white man (especially the missionaries) as being superior and bestowing the gift of civilisation and modernity through education, and of salvation from a heathen past through Christianity, the Christian binary worldview has cemented the role of Mizo women as being subordinate to men and has placed emphasis on the idea of the purity of women as an ideal.

In Mizo novels, the representation of women has confined them to the stereotype of good versus evil. Mizo novels have largely depicted the idealised image of the Mizo woman which has often been set in contrast to a debauched or evil woman who attempts to destroy the lives of people. They are either portrayed as exceptionally good or evil. In this manner, there is a set binary structure in terms of representation limits the scope of characterisation of Mizo women. Such a binary structure follows upon the lines of the Christian worldview by which the division between sacred and the profane or good and evil forms the overarching framework through which the world is interpreted.

It is difficult to come across a narrative voice that is woman-centric or which represents the thoughts of women or which presents the woman as the sole protagonist in Mizo novels with exceptions like ZTT (1977) which is the first novel to have been written by a woman, namely, Khawlkungi. However, the point of view or the subjectivity of the female protagonist is seen as being confined within the parameters of domesticity. This is because in Remi's life, her status is elevated once she is married to Malsawma which is portrayed as an achievement and as reward for her Christian virtues and morality. The narrative voice in Mizo novels has always brought the male-centric point of view to the forefront, presenting men as characters whose lives and actions have driven the plot and the sequence of events of the stories and relegating women to either being perfect or flawed, good or evil vis-à-vis their treatment of the men in their lives.

Zosapthara wrote a song in 1903, which was included in the Middle School text 'Bu Lai II' (1909). The song is about happiness in being a Mizo and in practising Mizo

cultural practices which help manifest *tlawmngaihna* or benevolence towards others. The song also speaks of being happy over the fact that Mizo young men were skilled while Mizo young women were beautiful (Lalthangliana 18). Here we see an instance in which the missionaries were instrumental in promoting patriarchal norms and ideals. In the pre-colonial past, the songs of the Mizo oral literature speak of the beauty of the woman as the lover. As for Mizo novels, the beauty, femininity, and purity of women characters continue to be deciding factors in their ability to advance and better their situation in life through being chosen as wives by men who display good Christian character or by the *pasalṭha* in the case of novels that portray the precolonial past. In the modern Mizo society, women have come a long way towards bettering their position in society and attaining self-realisation especially through education. Many women have now made a mark for themselves in their line of work, and women are now able to hold their own and to take care of their families in the competitive sphere of creating and maintaining businesses.

In HLP (1936) by L. Biakliana, the binary structure of representation of women in the stereotypical manner of differentiating them as opposites is revealed through the difference between Hminga's mother and his stepmother. In contrast to the evil stepmother figure is Hminga's birth mother, who is an exemplary mother. The narrator describes her as "the best mother" whom all the villagers respected. They even mourned her untimely death as though it was the death of a relative (191). This binary of good versus evil is a mode of depiction or representation of women commonly used in many Mizo novels. The narrator mentions that soon after their stepmother came to live with them, they realised that she was the exact opposite of their mother (193). Also, the vindictive stepmother is portrayed as the opposite of Hawilopari, who is patient and loving. The stepmother was the one who plotted the downfall of Pari by plotting to convince Khuala to defame Pari for having humiliated him with her rejection of his proposal for marriage (262).

In the novel TNS (1983) by James Dokhuma, Saithangpuii, daughter of the chief of Darzo village was renowned for her beauty. The *tumpangchal* (wild mithun of mythic proportions) was compared to Saithangpuii in terms of her desirability as a beautiful woman, and also to the riches and honour to be gained in being able to acquire the hand of Saithangpuii in marriage since she was the daughter of the chief. Therefore, in this story, the woman is portrayed as, a means to an end, which is that of being able to acquire the

title of chief which a common man could not hope to aspire to, since the inheritance of the title was hereditary. In this manner, the chief's daughter Saithangpuii has been objectified as a commodity capable of bringing gain in terms of the wealth and status that her husband would reap. The emphasis on the beautiful young woman being an object of desire necessarily limits the representation of real women within Mizo novels. It is an idealised version that serves as a didactic form of restricting the role of women, which is that of limiting women characters in Mizo novels to either being good or evil, beautiful or ugly, or as promiscuous women and virtuous women who are portrayed as ideal wives or those who have the potential of becoming one.

In the same novel TNS (1983), the narrator called Saithangpuii, "the best among all the young women of Darzo," and the narrator also added that she had not earned a bad reputation among all the young men of the village (26). Such statements portray her as being pure and exemplary in all walks of life. She thus appears to be the embodiment of the perfect woman and in comparing her to the *tumpangchal*, it is thus revealed that the men of the village consider her to be as unattainable and as valuable as the fame and honour that they could gain from killing the *tumpangchal*, and regard a union with her as profitable and honourable as that of earning the esteemed reputation of being the one who managed to kill the legendary animal.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define agency as, "Agency refers to the ability to act or perform an action. In contemporary theory, it hinges on the question of whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed. Agency is particularly important in post-colonial theory because it refers to the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power" ("Postcolonial Studies" 6).

Women do not have the agency to transcend the status or condition that befalls them as seen in all the novels selected for study in this research, and in Mizo novels in general. Most of the Mizo novels portray men as active agents whose actions have a direct bearing on the fate of the female characters for better or for worse. There is a pattern or set structure of representation in Mizo novels with very little deviation. This set pattern of representation of Mizo society in the novels is governed by a literary discourse that

reinforces male patriarchy through the attempt to promulgate the adherence to Christian teachings and good Christian character and through the attempt to revive the traditional Mizo culture by portraying the Mizo historical past as the age of the *pasalṭha*.

The didactic nature of most of the Mizo novels is revealed in the common pattern by which virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. In the novels, women cannot change their fate nor escape it except by means of the action and agency of the men in their lives. Therefore, one can understand that the modern-day Mizo novels are a patriarchal construct, for they have emerged from the influence of indigenous or traditional patriarchy which has been reinforced by colonial patriarchy or Christianity which is perceived as being patriarchal in nature. Mizo women occupy gendered positions within the context of Mizo novels. Representation of male and female characters appears to be wholly in favour of portraying the fictional world of the Mizo novel as one in which men are the players and active agents while women are the passive observers.

In HLP (1936) by L. Biakliana, Hminga is the reason for Pari's downfall and the cause of her salvation as well. She had no agency to act out her will, which was that of being united with her lover Hminga, who returned home after a decade of waiting on her part, to be reunited with her in the end. This lack of agency is reflective of the traditional Mizo society where the role of women was confined to domesticity and women did not have the opportunity to transcend their status or to protect themselves from all manner of danger and harm. In the modernised Mizo society women, women can now become self-sufficient and now have equality of opportunity to pursue a career of their choice.

However, in terms of the cultural imagination as represented in Mizo fiction writing, women still do not have the agency to transcend their status and their role remains confined within domesticity. They are confined to being stereotyped as either good or evil women, and can rise to a better position only through the actions of the men in their life, and through the act of being married to a good man as observed in the case of Thanpari who appears to be the beautiful and respectable wife of a man who appears to be a government officer as observed by Chhuana (Lalchhuanawma) in DTT (2003). Such a rise in status is also seen in the case of Sangtei who is rescued from sex trafficking by Chhuana (Chhuanvawra) in NKP (1989) and who ends up marrying her in the end.

In the same novel HLP (1936), when the enemies (the Pawih clan) invaded the village to which Pari and her parents had just relocated, they were kidnapped along with other villagers, and it was Zema and Hminga who eventually rescued them. Had they not rescued Pari in time, she would have been at the mercy of one of the Pawih men who had taken a fancy to her and was attempting to kidnap her and to take her away. That the agency or intervention of men decided the fate of women is clearly shown in the instance where Pari's suitor Khuala decided to defame her upon being instigated by Hminga's mother-in-law who felt that Pari stood in the way of the union between Khuala who was a good catch for being the son of one of the most respected elders in the Chief's council, and her friend Thangi. Therefore, Hminga's stepmother had devised a plan to make her brother Suaka convince Khuala to spread the lie that he had slept with Pari in order to defame her for rejecting his proposal (262). Suaka convinced Khuala that Pari's rejection of his proposal was a blow to his pride and that it was shameful to be rejected by the daughter of a man who was "*mi chhe dai kil kar*" (poor with no social standing whatsoever). Although Khuala loved Pari, Suaka convinced him to feel a great measure of indignation based on his wounded pride (264-265). This shows how men could potentially harm the reputation of those who reject their advances, just as in the case of the *khawhring* mentioned earlier.

In TNS (1981), even though Saithangpuii's beauty and worth were compared to the *tumpangchal* and her purity as a young woman could be accounted for by all the men in Darzo village, nonetheless, it required the agency of a man to rescue her from her near-helpless situation of becoming a spinster, which was a contemptible status in her community. The fact that Saithangpuii placed her implicit faith in Fehtea despite the malicious rumours which suggested that he was lazy, selfish, promiscuous, and boastful reveals that she knew him well enough to trust him. This shows how Mizo women in the traditional society were expected to trust their lovers or husbands implicitly. Saithangpuii had taken a pro-active role in terms of marrying the man she loved. She made her interest in Fehtea known to his aunt and this can be interpreted as the beginnings of the progress that Mizo women made in being able to make life and career choices on their own.

However, the attainment of her goal ultimately rested in the ability of the man Fehtea to achieve the impossible feat of hunting the *tumpangchal*. The strength of conviction with which Saithangpuii patiently waited for Fehtea to ask for her hand in marriage shows

how women were expected to wait upon the agency or action of men to accomplish a goal. Even before her father, the chief of Darpui village, had set up a reward to give away his daughter's hand in marriage to the man capable of killing the *tumpangchal*, she was already interested in Fehtea. In fact, she rejected all other suitors the likes of whom were chiefs or sons of chiefs because she wished to marry Fehtea.

In NKP (1989), it is through the effort and actions of Chhuana that Sangtei was rescued from sex trafficking and restored to the respectable position of being the wife of an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. The restoration of her honour and respectability is seen in that they were married in accordance with the "dan puitling" (marriage according to the established law of the church, as practiced among the majority of Mizo Christian denominations) at the church in Zopui village in 1977. Therefore, the change in status of Sangtei is portrayed as being enabled by Chhuana.

In ZTT (1977) Remi submits to the will of her fiancé Malsawma and her opinion is not considered when he decided to cancel their wedding to try and become an army officer. He had cancelled the wedding after enduring the shame of being falsely accused of impregnating Lali. Although he had been absolved of any wrongdoing according to the judgement of the chief of Reiek village and his council of elders, he mainly did it out of shame. When he had gone to meet the headmaster of the Boys' M. E. School at Aizawl, the headmaster had told him that he believed him, and that the delay in discussion of his suspension (as a school teacher at Reiek village) was simply because some of the authorities had gone home for the Christmas holidays. However, when he was informed that he was going to be relocated to another village since they had already put a married man in his place, he felt anger and indignation. And although he felt bad for Remi, he did not want to get married without having a job (158-161).

Therefore, in the same novel ZTT (1977) when Malsawma cancelled their wedding, the letter he sent to inform her of his decision through his manservant Mawia reached her only on the evening of the wedding, the preparations for which had not been cancelled even on the wedding day since they were waiting for the groom to arrive. Much to the shame of Remi, the wedding did not happen, and the people of the village were witness to her shame. Some of them enquired about what had happened, while some surmised that Malsawma's parents had arranged for a wife for him from their village, leaving Remi

confused and distraught. She wanted to cry but was embarrassed to do so (161-163). This shows how Remi's fate was decided by Malsawma.

The novel DTT (2003) portrays the agency of men in deciding the fate of women in the modern Mizo society. Men can either uplift the status and respectability of women or else, like Chhuana, drag down the women who have fallen in love with him. Thanpari whom he briefly dated was a beautiful young woman who had been raped by her father's driver when she was a teenager, and the fear of being shamed by revealing her rape ultimately led her to indulging in alcoholism and a life of promiscuity. Since the driver had threatened to shame her if she revealed the rape, the psychological effects of the man's crime upon Thanpari can be seen through her descent into a life of debauchery (295-298).

However, towards the end of the novel, it is a man who raises her status to that of being respectable. Chhuana sees Thanpari with her husband and a beautiful girl child. Then he says that although she was a beautiful young woman when they were in a relationship, she was even more beautiful than before. He also noticed that her husband appeared to be a government officer and although he was jealous, he was happy for her and thought about how extremely fortunate she was (340-341). Since the position of being a government officer is respectable in Mizo society, thus Chhuana's consideration of her being extremely fortunate is justified. This shows how the status and respectability of women continues to be defined by their roles within domesticity. With the novel PNH (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga, the women characters appear to be at the mercy of the male characters who could choose to either marry them or not, even if there was a baby born out of wedlock between them. Although Ainawni loved the *pasalṭha* Nghalṭhianga's and had his child, he was not really interested in her and had to wait till he and his family decided that. Thus, it appears that the sole concern, preoccupation and greatest achievement, for a young woman, was to be married to a suitable man and especially to the men they were in love with.

M. A. R. Habib succinctly sums up Simone de Beauvoir's central argument in her seminal work, *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)* (1949) as follows, "The book's central argument is that, throughout history, woman has always occupied a secondary role in relation to man, being relegated to the position of the "other," i.e., that which is adjectival

upon the substantial subjectivity and existential activity of man. Whereas man has been enabled to transcend and control his environment, always furthering the domain of his physical and intellectual conquests woman has remained imprisoned within "immanence," remaining a slave within the circle of duties imposed by her maternal and reproductive functions. In highlighting this subordination, the books explained in characteristic existentialist fashion how the so-called "essence" of woman was in fact created at many levels, economic, political, religiousby historical developments representing the interests of men" (682).

Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write that feminism is crucial for postcolonial discourse for two major reasons. Firstly, patriarchy and imperialism can be perceived to exert similar "forms of domination" over those they subjugate; the plight of women in patriarchy can mirror the experiences of those under colonisation and both feminism and post-colonial politics stand to challenge such subjugation. Secondly the question as to whether gender oppression or colonial subjugation has had a more significant political impact in the lives of women has resulted in vigorous debates in several "colonised societies" (93).

In the traditional Mizo society, men could achieve glory and fame for they were geared to strive to become a *pasalṭha* and had the option of attaining the coveted *thangchhuah* status which would enable them to reach *pialral* (Mizo version of heaven or paradise) in the afterlife. They could attain this respected status or position in society through the *in lama thangchhuah* method by which they had to perform certain ceremonies and present a series of feasts to the village community. Otherwise, they could attain the *thangchhuah* status through the *ram lama thangchhuah* method by which a man had to kill a certain number of wild animals in accordance with the rules laid down for the achievement of such a feat. As for women, their achievement of a place in *pialral* was possible only if they happened to be the wives of men who achieved the *thangchhuah* status. Meanwhile, the pinnacle of achievement for women appeared to be that of ensuring that they married suitably and well. Thus, men had the agency to pursue the path to their glory and achievement, but for women, it was not considered suitable to approach men first whether for marriage or for starting a relationship. So, they had no agency in deciding their fate since it was up to a man to take the initiative in kindling a romance or for asking for the hand of a young woman in marriage.

Even though there is binarity in the construction of Mizo novels in terms of the good versus evil debate which is in accordance with the Christian worldview in a postcolonial context, one has to understand that this binarity in the conceptual realm of fiction writing is inherently masculine in nature. Therefore, in tracing the transition from the traditional Mizo worldview wherein men and women imbibed the patriarchal norms and ideals, to the modern Christian Mizo society with inherently patriarchal norms, we see that this has been reinforced due to the admiration for Western culture and the Christian religion. One can observe how the status and treatment of Mizo women have changed and improved but continue to be ensconced within terms set by a patriarchal society. The most significant change is perhaps in terms of equality of opportunity in education and access to job opportunities, especially in government jobs and in running businesses. However, the socio-economic freedom of Mizo women is inhibited by the gendered demarcation of roles in Mizo society as well as certain prevailing assumptions about women by which the role and status of women continue to be determined in relation to domesticity. The trope of the evil or wicked stepmother as seen in the Mizo folktales has become a part of the Mizo cultural imaginary and is seen in novels such as HLP (1936).

According to Habib, in Simone de Beauvoir's examination of the literary presentation of the feminine by writers such as Montherlant, D. H. Lawrence, Claudel, Breton, and Stendhal who had a "typical" attitude towards women and portrayed woman to "forget self and to love." For each of these authors the ideal woman is "she who incarnates most exactly the other capable of revealing him to himself." She observed that, irrespective of the depiction of woman in the works of these writers as exalted or debased, she is always portrayed as having no true autonomy and fulfilling the role of otherness, of being an integral part of the self-definition of man" (690). In the Mizo society of the past and the present, the Mizo woman has been the 'other' by which the self-definition of Mizo men has come about. Therefore, the binary conception by which women have been represented as being exalted or debased serves the function of shaping the self-definition of men. It has also governed the formation of a literary discourse in Mizo literature, which has limited the scope of characterisation, especially for women in Mizo novels.

With the valorisation and reclamation of the traditional Mizo culture in the form of male prowess in warfare and the hunt by which the Mizo identity has been asserted in

Mizo novels, the same process has subjected Mizo women to the consideration of their role as being emblematic or representative of Mizo culture vis-à-vis Mizo identity. The idea of cultural purity and respectability of women is considered and projected as a source of cultural pride, that is, as the focal point of family honour or honour of the village of the Mizo tribe taken as a whole. Notions of cultural purity and the sense of cultural indignation towards an attack on cultural purity is portrayed in usually portrayed in Mizo novels that can be categorised under *Rambuai* literature which depict life during the *Rambuai* years (1966-86).

Such novels commonly depict and place emphasis on the rape of woman at the hands of the Indian army as a source of cultural trauma experienced during the *Rambuai* years. In terms of honour being imputed to the purity of women, an instance of rape as means of showcasing power over women and the sense of cultural honour placed on the purity of their women is seen in the novel NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa. In the novel, the protagonist Chhuana rescues his lover Sangtei who had been raped by soldiers of the Indian Army and then forced into prostitution by an Indian Army officer.

The sentiment of pride in one's culture and the notion of protectionism towards it is also manifested through the manner of dress expected of women in the modern Mizo society. The Mizo traditional dress called the *puan* (woven traditional cloth worn like a sarong) is worn at church services and formal events and is considered as decent and respectable. It is also considered as a form of upholding of Mizo culture by women and ironically, the male version of *puan* (which is knee-length in contrast to the floor-length *puan* for women) by men is considered outdated and only worn on occasions to represent Mizo culture of the past, such as during the annual celebrations of the *Chapchar kut* festival and other events and occasions that provide the opportunity to showcase Mizo traditional culture. Western formal wear is the respectable form of dressing for men, and the irony lies in the fact that much emphasis is placed on respectability being accorded to women wearing the *puan*, rather than on western clothes. Meanwhile, western formal wear is considered as the respectable form of dressing for men, and this can be attributed to the influence of the missionaries who were admired and respected.

Recently, the MHIP (*Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl*) which is a pan non-governmental organisation representing the interests and welfare of Mizo women, issued

a directive in which they asked Mizo women to wear *puan* to work. Young women are expected to wear a *puan* (typically a black one) to a wake for the deceased which is part of the Mizo cultural practice taken up by the local level YMA (Young Mizo Association) branch in the event of the death of a member of the local community or village, although there is no such obligation for young men who usually wear casual clothes for the wake. This use of the *puan* as being emblematic of upholding Mizo culture and tradition of the past reveals the postcolonial attempt at forming a common Mizo culture and identity and reveals how the traditional aspect of the emergent Mizo identity continues to be inscribed within the identity of Mizo women.

The emergence of a strong connection to one's geographical, territorial boundaries in the context of the postcolonial attempt to define a cultural essence of a unified Mizo identity having certain unique characteristics, cultural attributes or traits is a patriarchal construct that glorifies the acts and roles of men. It does not include the acts of women, which have been confined to domesticity within this concept of a cultural essence except through the display of cultural essence or purity in the traditional dress of the woman. The Mizo *puan* has given Mizo women a distinctive identity and pride in their cultural heritage. Hmingthanzuali has made the observation that the attempt to carry out "ṙam leh hnam humhalh" (which means, protecting the land and the tribe/race/nation) and possession of a sense of connection with, and dedication towards the Mizo tribe involves the attempt to consider control over Mizo women as being a part of this identity. Women are considered as the gatekeepers and representatives of the Mizo identity and appear to have more of a responsibility in safeguarding the Mizo identity. The issue of women's manner of dressing and interracial marriages are two of the most widely discussed issues in connection to women and the Mizo identity. In some offices and some academic institutions, the implementation of rules requiring the wearing of *puan* for one day of the week has taken place (207-208).

This sense of connection which is linked to the willingness to defend or protect one's land and identity even to the extent of using violence as seen in the secessionist movement of the MNF (Mizo National Front) is patriarchal. This is because it involves the defence of male honour and pride in one's land to the exclusion of the role of women in the act of defence. Therefore, the modern Mizo identity and cultural ethos have been

linked to the notion of the *pasalṭha* (warriors or braves) as a cultural icon and an embodiment of *tlawmngaihna* and bravery, and with this, subjectivity of Mizo women has not really been considered in relation to the Mizo identity beyond the role inscribed for them within domesticity as in the past. Also, since the concept of the *pasalṭha* has been imbibed within the modern Mizo identity, the portrayal of women in Mizo novels vis-à-vis the assertion of Mizo identity in the past and in the modern society has been in terms of their relation to the men in their lives. Therefore, in general, Mizo novels can be seen as having denied subjectivity and agency to women.

The consolidation of male authority in the Mizo society is compounded and furthered by the popular biblical teaching in Christianity that wives must be subject to the rule of their husbands. This teaching is widespread and has often been used to justify male hegemony. Such a concept of male pride and prowess is inclusive of the xenophobia or cultural distancing and tension in connection with the Vai or outsider, an instance of which is seen in the open criticism directed towards interracial marriages between Mizo women and Vai men. The mistrust and xenophobia directed towards the Vai was compounded by the atrocities of rape suffered at the hands of the Indian army coupled with the feeling of having been disregarded and neglected at large by the Indian government since independence, culminating in the *Rambuai* years (1966-86). The collective Mizo psyche regarding this ingrained sense of alienation has unfortunately not been resolved so far.

One of the most popular non-governmental organizations such as the MZP (*Mizo Zirlai Pawl* which is the apex students' union body in Mizoram) has vehemently criticised interracial marriage with the Vai. It is to be noted that marriages between Mizo men and non-Mizo women are rare. For some time now, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) has undertaken campaigns in schools urging children not to marry non-Mizos or outsiders and conducting pledges in this regard. In the previous year, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) demanded the enactment of a law by which Mizo women married to a non-tribal would lose their Scheduled Tribe (ST) status ("Mizo students take a pledge not to marry 'Outsiders'" Saha).

One of the foremost concerns in Mizo discussions about Mizo women involves the issue of their being in a relationship with non-Mizo men or being married to non-Mizos (Hmingthanzuali 207). As evidence of the fact that Mizo men exercise a protective control over Mizo women, she mentioned how on March 1, 1966, as the MNF (Mizo

National Front) party was about to declare independence, they distributed flyers in which they had listed their grievances against the Indian government. The fifth point in the list mentions how Vai army officers take advantage of their status to make attempts to entice Mizo women to sleep with them (210). Criticism of interracial marriage with the Vai is premised on the claim that the Mizo tribe is less in number and interracial marriages could potentially damage the racial pool or the 'purity' of the race of the Mizo. It is a form of control by which Mizo women have been subjugated and continue to be so under a patriarchal system wherein control is exercised over women in the limitations imposed on them.

Any perceived transgression of the Mizo cultural purity by women through interracial marriage is perceived as an affront to the idea of Mizo-ness or a Mizo cultural essence which is a patriarchal construct and in which the subject is the Mizo man, or the *pasalṭha*, the embodiment of all the positive Mizo cultural traits. This has been clearly represented in Mizo novels that depict the pre-colonial Mizo past and can be considered as the postcolonial construction of racial purity linked to the idea of a golden age of the past which is considered as the age of the *pasalṭha*. On the other hand, there is hardly any criticism regarding interracial marriages to white men from the Euro-American West. This can be perceived as the continued effect of colonial ideology by which Mizos have continued to reserve a certain measure of admiration for the white man and his culture which are considered as superior.

The Vai or non-Mizo have always been perceived of as villains even in traditional Mizo literature such as folktales through their portrayal as outsiders, and as a source of threat in the form of their attempt to marry Mizo women which suggests a sense of loss of honour for Mizo men. This includes old folktales where Vai Rajas or chiefs married Mizo women as seen in the folktales *Mauruangi* and *Tualvungi and Zawlpala* or tried to kidnap Mizo women by force as seen in the folktale *Rimenhawihi*. As for Mizo novels, negative portrayals of the Vai have mainly been reflected in novels that depict life during the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986). Such novels mention the rape of Mizo women by soldiers of the Indian Army as a source of anger and indignation.

In the novel DTT (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente, the Vai, whom the protagonist Chhuana murders, have been depicted as being loud and cruel, and who robbed him, beat

him up, and left him for dead on the side of the road all for the sake of stealing his money. Inversely, the same does not seem to apply for Mizo men, for Mizo novelists have often depicted the relationship between Mizo men and their non-Mizo lovers as failing to culminate in marriage. This is also observed by Vannghaka who has noted that the first Mizo novel to depict such a relationship (between a Mizo man and a Burmese woman) is *Maymyo Sanapui* (1950) by Capt. C. Khuma which does not depict marriage between the lovers in a similar manner to other Mizo novels depicting inter-racial relationships between Mizo men and women of other races (30-31). Among the selected novelists, James Dokhuma has depicted inter-racial romance in four of his novels.

The general sentiment of disapproval shown towards Mizo-Vai interracial marriages and the lack of such in Mizo woman-Sap (Euro-American white) marriages reveals the workings of colonial ideology by which superiority is still accorded to the white male. The Vai (person from the plains) is considered as the 'other' or the outsider, which sentiment has been compounded by the lack of cultural affinity, inter-cultural exchange, and especially the trauma of the *Rambuai* years. Above all, it reveals the workings of patriarchal control over Mizo women and the consideration of their role within domesticity as being all-important to the exclusion of all other roles. Thereby, the perceived threat of Mizo women being married to Vai men is perceived as a loss of control over Mizo women.

Thus, even though the modern Mizo woman is granted similar opportunities to Mizo men in most fields, and even though Mizo women now have the right to inherit property (upon the enactment of the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014) in contrast to the old Mizo society, there is still perceptible control over women by patriarchy. This control is seen in politics and religion (Christianity), in the idea of motherhood and fulfilment of domestic responsibility being perceived as ideals and as a priority for women irrespective of other achievements, and in imputing respectability to women whose husbands (Mizo men) happen to acquire a respectable status in society, just like in the past. Therefore, herein lies the reinforcement of traditionalism and Mizo Christianity concerning patriarchy which continues to be a defining feature of what it means to be a Mizo within the Mizo postcolonial worldview.

END NOTES

[1] *khawhring* - The *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) defines *khawhring* as, "n. the name of a malignant spirit which so closely approximates to what in English is known as the 'evil-eye' that it may well be called by that name. Certain people¯especially women¯are said to 'have' or 'possess' a *khawhring*. Such a person is quite unaware of this herself and only comes to know of it when she finds herself accused of being the 'possesor' or 'owner' of a *khawhring* which has been 'eating' somebody else, and causing intense colic-like pains in the abdomen of its victim" (Lorrain 253).

WORKS CITED

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin 2007. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2007.

Bahri, Deepika. "Feminism in/and postcolonialism." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary studies*. Edited by Neil Lazarus. Cambridge UP, 2004. pp. 20-35.

Berger, John, and Michael Dibb. Ways of Seeing. BBC Enterprises, 1972.

Boehmer, Elleke. "Postcolonialism." *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. Edited by Patricia Waugh. Oxford UP, 2006. pp. 340-361.

Challiana. *Pi Pu Nun*. The Trio Book-House, Aizawl, 1978.

Dokhuma, James. *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*. J.D. Press, 1992.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage Books, 1995.

Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Blackwell Pub., 2008.

Hmingthanzuali. "Ram leh Hnam Humhalh leh Mizo Hmeichhiate." *Mizo Identity Bihchianna*. Edited by B. Lalnunzira. SCMI ATC Unit, 2019. pp. 206-213.

Katrak, Ketu H. "Post-colonial Women Writers and Feminisms." *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction*, edited by Bruce King, Clarendon Press, 1998. pp. 230-244.

Lalthangliana, B. "Mizo Identity-III." *Seminar & Important Papers*. Compiled by Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2008. pp. 15-23.

Lawmsanga. *Theology of Mission: Postcolonial Perspective*. Lalmuanpuii, 2016.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford UP, 1986.

Lianthanga, C. *Hmanlai Mizo Nun*. 1998. 2nd ed., Mizoram Publication Board, 2000.

Lorrain, J. H. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. 4th Reprint, The Asiatic Society, 2008.

McCall, A. G. *Lushai Chrysalis; with a Foreword by Sir Keith Cantlie*. 2nd Reprint., Government of Mizoram, Tribal Research Institute, 1949.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Working Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana UP, 1989.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke UP, 2003.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary 2*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1984, pp. 333-358., doi:10.2307/302821.

Nunthara, C. "Mizo Pasalṭha (Socio-Cultural Perspective)." *Seminar & Important Papers*. Compiled by Govt. of Mizoram, Tribal Research Institute, 2008.

Parry, N. E. *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*. 1928. Reprint, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1928.

Saha, Abhishek. "Mizo Students Take Pledge Not to Marry 'Outsiders. " *The Indian Express*, 3 Sept. 2019, indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/mizoram/mizoram-students-take-pledge-not-to-marry-outsiders-5961871/

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1978. Reprint, Penguin Books, 2003.

Sangkhuma, Z. T. *Mizo Hnam Inneihna*. Rev. Z. T. Sangkhuma, 2002.

Thanga, Selet. *Pi Pu Len Lai*. Lianchhungi Book Store, 1990.

Vanlalngheta, J. T. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo*. 2010. 3rd ed., Lalchungnungi, 2015.

Vanlaltlani, T. *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh*. Mizoram Publication Board, 2005.

Vannghaka, Dr. K. C. *Literature Zungzam*. Aizawl: Vanhlupuii, 2014.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Postcolonialism is the institutionalised academic discipline that is concerned with an exploration into the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism. The colonialist agenda sought to perpetrate economic exploitation, political and administrative control, cultural influence, and to instil notions of the superiority of the colonising culture, upon the peoples in the colonies. Postcolonialism or postcolonial studies is based on the study of the impact of colonialism on the coloniser and the colonised and encompasses a wide range of cultural, geographical, racial, and cultural contexts and histories. It studies the impact of the control of colonised cultures by a metropolitan centre and traces the manner in which colonial ideology and colonial discourse have helped in instilling the doctrine of the cultural superiority of the coloniser (the West). It also involves the postcolonial attempt by formerly colonised peoples or nations to come to comes to terms with the postcolonial situation by attempting to negate the ongoing effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse mainly through the process of cultural revival or valorisation of one's culture and traditions.

The cultural worldview of a people is the fundamental cognitive orientation of a cultural group which is influenced by their knowledge, ideas, thoughts, beliefs and values. All of these culminate in creating their perception of the world, their opinions and direct the way they interact with the world. The individual worldview is a conceptual system and a mental framework based on which reality and surrounding circumstances tended to be assessed. Certain aspects of the worldview of a people may be shared while other aspects may differ. However, a commonality in the shared worldview can be traced by means of its manifestation in common practices, beliefs and through various forms of cultural practices including literary expression and representation.

Colonialism has served to create significant shifts in the worldview of the colonised, especially through the creation of a sense of inferiority among colonised cultures in comparison to the coloniser culture. Since there was a significant shift from the traditional Mizo worldview to the postcolonial worldview with colonialism, this signalled the end of a way of life which necessitated the rule of chiefs. It led to the emergence of a modern Mizo society shaped by colonialism, and the introduction of Christianity and formal education by the missionaries. In the case of the Mizo, since the missionaries took charge of the administration of the schools and the Mizo church, their influence among the Mizo

has been considerable. The wholesale conversion to Christianity and the rise of the educated class with the introduction of formal education by the missionaries brought about significant changes in Mizo culture and society.

With the transition from a tribal economy in which the barter system of exchange was practiced, to a money economy that was introduced with colonialism, access to goods and services from mainland India brought about a significant shift in the worldview of the Mizo. In the precolonial past, the cultivation and storage of rice was necessitated for sustenance and survival. However, in the modern society, the availability of markets and the creation of salaried jobs under the Mizo Church (the governing body of missionaries in Mizoram) and government for the educated Mizo, coupled with the ready availability of cultivated rice from the plains would have significantly weakened the authority and standing of the Mizo chiefs under colonial rule.

The Mizo postcolonial identity and worldview is essentially a hybridised formation where one can locate the lasting influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, as well as the emergence of a postcolonial mindset. The continuation of the effects of colonial ideology in the modern Mizo society is mainly through Mizo Christianity as an institution. At the same time, with the emerging postcolonial awareness, Mizos have begun to recognise the effects of this ingrained nature of colonial ideology and have sought to challenge it. Attempts at cultural reclamation and assertion of the Mizo identity have taken place among Mizo writers and especially novelists, who have taken on the role of restoring, reviving, and reclaiming pride in their culture and cultural heritage. This is observed in the cultural self-expression seen in the novels about the Mizo society of the past which has been portrayed as the age of the *pasalṭha*. This includes novels such as *Hawilopari* (1936) by L. Biakliana, *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii* (1981) by James Dokhuma, and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006) which is the seminal work of postcolonial fiction by C. Lalnunchanga.

This research has sought to portray how the emergence of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and resultant modern Mizo identity critically informs the writing of Mizo novels. The implications of the conceptual aspects of Mizoness or the Mizo identity upon Mizo fiction writing have been critically analysed by means of locating the ideological effects of cultural imperialism, the postcolonial quest for authenticity, and the resulting emergence of a hybrid Mizo identity. Although Mizo novel writing in English is beginning to emerge,

it is at a nascent stage. This study has noted how the writing of Mizo novels for a Mizo readership and the popularity of historical novels has revealed the engagement of Mizo novelists with a Christian readership who have come to expect verisimilitude value from the novels based on the popularity of historical novels. This is because the Christian worldview has influenced Mizo storytelling to the extent that a didactic tone of Christian morality can be noted in many of the novels.

The worldview of the Mizo in the traditional Mizo society was one driven by fear of the unknown, that is, of the spirit world and especially that of malicious spirits who were believed to wield a certain influence over humans. Sacrifices were offered in appeasement to the evil spirits to whom all their illnesses were attributed. They also lived in fear of Pu Pawla's pellets on their way to *Mitthi Khua* (the land of the dead) in the afterlife. In existing discourses of the old way Mizo way of life, only infants, the *thangchhuah pa* (men who attained the *thangchhuah* status), young women who died while being virgins, and young men who were able to sleep with virgins were believed to be able to avoid being pelted. They lived in constant fear of raids by enemies and of not having enough means of sustenance, that is, the required amount of harvested rice to last them for a year till the next cycle of cultivation. According to Margaret Ch. Zama, taboos and other traditional practices by the Mizo were practised because of potential risks for their health and safety, they were needed for the maintenance of social order, and were intended to keep a certain kind of power structure in place. Thus, a sense of fear contributed towards the formation of the tribal knowledge systems, values, and ethics which have ensured the survival of the people (155).

Such a society necessitated the upholding of the institution of the chiefs and their warriors (*pasalṭha*) who ensured the safety and protection of the village from all dangers. Even from a cursory glance at the influences behind the production of Mizo literature, it may be deduced that they have primarily been reflections of historical events and their personal experiences. In Mizo novels in general, one can observe the didactic tone as seen in the good versus evil morality of the Mizo folktales and the bravery and sacrifices of the *pasalṭha* as seen in Mizo legends. In Mizo folklore, we come across myths and tales that can be understood to be a testament to their interaction with the world around them.

Mizo oral literature such as folktales, myths, and legends deal with themes ranging from relationships between lovers including unions with supernatural beings, to family relationships, and interactions with the 'other' or the outsider in the form of the Vai (or Raja), that is, a man from the plains. These stories are, therefore, reflections of their experiences and the projections of their values and beliefs. This element of interaction with or response to one's immediate environment is seen in the writing of Mizo novels that are predominantly historical or realist novels. The retaining of many of the proverbs and wise sayings from Mizo oral literature especially pertaining to derogatory opinions about women or suggestive of patriarchal control over women is a testament to the collusion of traditional patriarchal thought with Mizo Christianity.

Mizos are known for being fond of singing and songs have long been the primary form of cultural self-expression among them. During the process of their migration towards Mizoram, while they settled in the *Thantlang* range near the *Run* river before entering present-day Mizoram around 1700 AD, folksongs were the only form of oral literature which could be found at the time (Lalthangliana 3). This shows that Mizo songs are the oldest form of Mizo oral literature. From this, the importance of traditional songs as an element of cultural expression can be understood. Therefore, the rejection of all elements of traditional culture and literature by the early Mizo Christians during the early days of Mizo Christianity had far-reaching implications for the way Mizos have come to view the culture of the past.

Mizo Christianity has since developed a wary approach towards the indigenisation or reclamation of aspects of traditional culture. Only those components of the traditional Mizo culture or Mizo cultural traits and practices which were considered as being aligned with Christian values and teachings, have been accepted into the modern Mizo identity and worldview. In the case of Mizo literary expression in particular, aspects of Mizo culture or cultural traits such as *tlawmngaihna*, *lunglenna*, and sayings like *sem sem dam dam eibil thi thi* (The generous will live and prosper, the miser will languish and perish) have been promoted as cultural markers being representative and emblematic of the modern Mizo culture and that foster a sense of belonging.

Moreover, the *pasalṭha*, considered as possessing the qualities of *tlawmngaihna*, bravery, and prowess in hunting and warfare, has figured prominently in the popular

imagination of the modern Mizo society as a cultural icon of the past and Christianised present. Mizo novels generally tend to focus on the life of male characters or specifically, the male protagonist. As for female characters, their typical depiction as the love interest of the male characters serves to represent them as idealised characters who embody Christian ideals of the ideal of *tlawmngaihna* of the past in being industrious as seen in HLP (1936) in which Pari is portrayed as being industrious. Otherwise, female characters are portrayed as being at the opposite end of the spectrum, that is, as evil or wicked stepmothers or promiscuous women who do not embody the Mizo Christian ideals including *tlawmngaihna* which has been retained within Mizo Christianity. In Mizo novels, women do not possess the agency for self-realisation and usually have to rely on men (their lovers) to save them for a situation or to help elevate their position.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview has influenced the writing of Mizo novels through the assertion of the Mizo Christianised identity and the attempt to represent a singular or shared Mizo identity through the depiction of the precolonial past as the age of the *pasalṭha* under the rule of the chiefs. In accordance with this worldview, there is prevailing discourse that has been influenced by the Mizo postcolonial worldview and by which a set or established pattern of representation or storytelling is commonly practiced and preferred over others. The pattern is manifested in the form of the appearance of stock characters or stereotypical fictional characters, the importance placed on the love story of the main characters, and the commonality of storylines or themes that portray a good versus evil morality or a virtue rewarded, vice punished mode as portrayed through the characters.

Therefore, in accordance with the prevailing discourse, stories depicting the age of the *pasalṭha* usually portray their prowess in hunting and warfare, their love life or their relationships with women, and their encounters with the supernatural in some cases. Thus, a sanitised version of the Mizo past society is portrayed in accordance with the didactic nature of Mizo novels under the influence of Mizo Christianity. The effects of colonial ideology which can, in some ways, be equated with the affinity to the Mizo Christian identity can be observed in the Mizo novels through the acknowledgement of the superiority of the culture or the military power of the British as seen in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (1989), through the absence of a critique of colonialism as observed in the novel *Hawilopari* (1936), and through the admiration for the white man as seen in *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (1977).

When it comes to Mizo literature, one can say that the literary output (the novel in particular) reflects the worldview, the thoughts and sentiments, assertion of the Mizo identity, their self-representation and expression, and the cultural values and ethos of the Mizo. Mizo novels mostly cater to the popular fiction category involving romance or love stories. Since the readership is Mizo, it is understood that Mizo novelists would consider the concerns, aspirations, prejudices and preferences of the readers. Since the Mizo postcolonial worldview is informed by Mizo Christianity, it is understandable that the bulk of Mizo novels will address the concerns of Mizo Christianity.

The influence of Christianity is seen in stories pertaining to romantic love, which is the most common theme or storyline among most of the Mizo novels as observed by Lalthangliana (2004), Zama and Vanchiau (2016), and Zoramdinthara (2013), culminating in a happy ending or tragedy in accordance with Christian morality or the lack of it. Mizo novels are in line with the Christian worldview in which good is portrayed as triumphing over evil. The romance novel or the element of the love story provides the perfect template for displaying Christian morality and the conflict between good and evil. Therefore, the virtue rewarded, vice punished model of the old traditional folktales was further reinforced in the Mizo novels albeit as a form of representation and reinforcement of the Christian binary worldview.

The cultural reclamation and the use of cultural markers to carve the modern Mizo identity can be understood in the light of the "regimes of value" as mentioned by Nayar. According to him, "When literature and the reification of cultural or national identity go together, as the postcolonial appears to do, then different regimes of value come into operation" ("Brand Postcolonial" 41). Drawing from Qun Wang's "Border Crossing, Cultural Negotiations, and the Authenticity of Asian American Voices" (1999) which noted how critics writing about Asian American literatures have observed that first generation diasporic writers tend to use materials from their cultures and traditions with greater sincerity, faithfulness and respect, while second generation diasporic writers tend to use it in more creative and symbolic ways, he has located the affective and symbolic value regimes from these. Concerning this shift in attitude towards the use of myth or folklore from tribal and cultural memories by first and second-generation writers, he refers

to the first-generation writers as belonging to the affective value regime, and the second generation to the symbolic value regime ("Brand Postcolonial" 41).

In connection to this, Nayar noticed how there is a massive shift in African writing across generations from Chinua Achebe to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in the value regimes within their work and its production and reception. In comparing first generation writers such as Achebe to second generation writers such as Adichie, he writes, "If Achebe is, in a well-worn phrase, writing back to the empire as an assertion of Igbo, African identity through the use of English, Adichie, comfortably placed within the cultural tourism market, does not require any such assertion and is therefore relatively freer to critique African society or desacralize its mores and customs" (42). He then concludes "Affective value regimes intersect with symbolic value regimes to generate a brand postcolonial adhering to 'ethnic' texts" (41).

Nayar has brought up the symbolic and affective regimes of value in relation to the authenticity debate within "questions of cultural capital and cultural markets, converging self-representations (itself divided) and touristy expectations" concerning cultural reinvention or reclamation in postcolonial literature ("Brand Postcolonial" 40-41). In the light of his analysis of postcolonial texts, Mizo novels that assert the Mizo identity through cultural markers such as *tlawmngaihna*, *lunglenna*, and the *pasalṭha* as the cultural icon, can be considered as belonging to the affective value regime, for they make an attempt to faithfully reproduce the Mizo past with greater sincerity, faithfulness and respect. However, he also noted that symbols are not devoid of affect and affect often requires the symbolic (41).

Therefore, the affective value regime as seen in Mizo novels is not devoid of the symbolic. This is because, although aspects of the lives of the *pasalṭha* have been faithfully represented, the *pasalṭha* has been retained in the Christianised modern Mizo identity as a cultural icon. Since aspects of the traditional Mizo culture have been reclaimed in their sanitised or Christianised form through the mediation of Mizo Christianity or through what is considered as acceptable within Mizo Christianity, this points to the symbolic use of the *pasalṭha* as an icon of Mizo culture. As for *tlawmngaihna* and *lunglenna*, they are the hybridised components of modern Mizo culture because, like the concept of the *pasalṭha*, they have been incorporated into the modern Mizo identity in which Christianity is an

important aspect. The adaptability and mutability of these cultural markers is revealed by the fact that they are inscribed within the Christianised Mizo identity.

The modern Mizo identity can be defined as a hybrid which in postcolonial studies, is a term used to define transcultural forms that have emerged from the contact zone resulting from colonial rule. As a reflection of the Mizo postcolonial worldview, Mizo novels are a hybrid formation in which the influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse as well as the emerging Mizo postcolonial attempt at cultural revival or valorisation of Mizo culture can be traced. Even in novels depicting the traditional Mizo society of the past, one comes across biblical language or references to and comparisons with biblical characters in the narrative voice. This is a testament to the extent to which Christianity and Christian concepts frame the Mizo worldview. The hybridised cultural identity of the Mizo is represented in Mizo novels in this manner.

With the rise of a postcolonial mindset among formerly colonised nations in the postcolonial era, cultural revival, validation, and valorisation of one's culture and cultural identity has occurred through a revisionist mode that has been observed in the Mizo context through the restoration of pride in the Mizo past. In Mizo novels, this cultural revival has been depicted and portrayed by presenting the traditional Mizo society as a golden age of the *pasalṭha* (warriors), that is, as an age in which the cultural values such as *tlawmngaihna* embodied by the *pasalṭha* were displayed. As to the question of whether the process of 'decolonising the mind' (as Ngugi wa Thiong'o has aptly phrased) has occurred in the Mizo context as seen in its representation in Mizo novels, one can say that the process is beginning to happen with works like C. Lalnunchanga's PNH (2006). In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha has stated that the negating experience of being part of "a world-system whose major economic impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your country or your people" can spur one "to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery" (xi). Such a postcolonial outlook is beginning to emerge among Mizo scholars, historians, commentators, theologians, and writers in general.

When colonial administration was set up in 1890 with the defeat and subjugation of the majority of the Mizo chiefs, the British colonial government accepted the Lushai language (the Duhlian dialect of the Lusei or Sailo clan) as the official language which has

now evolved into the lingua franca which has helped unify the various clans and sub-tribes. A common Christian religion and the promotion of the account of the history of the Sailo chiefs as the common history of the Mizo coupled with its general acceptance has led to the formation of common Mizo identity. Colonial rule and the postcolonial tendency towards cultural valorisation brought helped to establish a common Mizo identity.

The portrayal of the Mizo past as the age of the *pasalṭha* reflects the emergence of a Mizo cultural essence and refers to a specific period of Mizo history which began with the rule of the Sailo chiefs. The introduction of chieftainship came about after the Mizo had migrated to the Chin Hills around 1200 AD, although historians differ on this score. The pre-colonial ascendancy of the Sailo chiefs whose rule over the various Mizo clans or sub-tribes, and their control of most of the region of the Lushai Hills which came by the end of the nineteenth century, paved the way for the formation of the common Mizo identity.

The newly formed Mizo identity is rooted in a specific geographical location (Mizoram) and is hybrid in character for it has retained the cultural elements of the past and imbibed the culture of Christianity and the West. The manifestation of this unified and singular Mizo identity is seen in the novels in the form of stories about the 'golden age' of the traditional Mizo society or the age of the *pasalṭha*, and through the depiction of Mizo cultural traits in Mizo novels. It also involves the use of biblical allusions, metaphors and references, and the promotion of the Christian worldview and morality in the novels. Since the reclamation and reviving of Mizo culture of the past is through the lens of Mizo Christianity, the cultural traits and practices which have been portrayed by Mizo writers are usually in a sanitised or Christianised form to correspond with Christian morality and values, to display their ideals, or to serve as moral lessons.

Although the form of the novel has been borrowed from the West, the influence of the traditional Mizo literature is seen in the didactic nature of the Mizo folktales and legends, and in the element of romance and *lunglenna* or the sense of nostalgia or longing for a connection which they contain. The description and appreciation of the beauty of nature and *lunglenna* as expressed in traditional Mizo songs is also often incorporated within Mizo novels to express the heightened emotional states of the characters. The expression of *lunglenna* in Mizo novels is a display of the affective value held by the Mizo

identity and the concept of that identity being tethered to a geographical location, that is, the state of Mizoram as a common point of identification for the Mizos.

The conceptualisation of a link to a territory as a contributing factor to cultural identity generates a sense of affiliation and belonging to that territory. In connection to this, *lunglenna* is an aesthetic device in Mizo literature and a cultural component which is experienced in the act of singing, community singing, listening to songs, in nostalgia for the past, in longing for a loved one, and as induced by the visualisation or admiration of the features of the natural landscape of Mizoram such as the hills, flowers, trees, and the various cloud formations. It helps to foster a sense of connection to the Mizo identity. Such an aesthetic device functions more as a reflection and expression of the heightened level of feelings and emotion of the characters rather than depicting the individual and complex interiority of the characters. *Lunglenna* suggests the existence of a shared cultural attribute and form of expression. It is a form by which the bereaved are consoled through community singing at funerals and is a form of communion in worship. It perfectly depicts the reclamation of the culture of the past.

Since the reclamation of the culture of the past is through the medium of Christianity, only those cultural practices that could fit into the Christian worldview, and which did not interfere with the worship of the Christian God as the monotheistic God, have been reclaimed. Only those aspects or practices of traditional culture or cultural practices which could fit into Mizo Christianity held meaning in the new context of a hybridized Mizo identity. These include community singing (*zaikhawm* or *lengkhawm*) which the Mizos are very fond of, funeral proceedings hybridised to blend with Christian proceedings, and Mizo weddings which are a blend of the Christian ceremony and adherence to the laws regarding marriage in accordance with the Mizo Customary Law. In fact, any form of celebration which is linked to their faith is not considered as complete without community singing and a feast. Christmas and New Year celebrations which mark the most anticipated events in the Mizo Christian calendar involve community singing and feasts as some of the major highlights of the celebrations.

The Mizo *pasalṭha* as the subject, is located within the traditional Mizo village as emblematic of the Mizo past or Mizo history, or the golden age of Mizo history which is considered with a measure of pride among the Mizo as being an age wherein bravery and

tlawmngaihna were cherished cultural traits. With Mizo novels which are mainly historical novels, Mizo history is seen through the lens of the time of rule of the Mizo chiefs, and as the age of the *pasalṭha* (who were their warriors), with a primary focus on the *pasalṭha*. A certain view of the Mizo past came to be established within the modern Mizo society with the representation of the past in Mizo novels through a somewhat static, homogeneous notion of a common Mizo history and identity that is represented by the Mizo *pasalṭha*. Such a notion of valorisation and idealisation of one's cultural identity can be linked to the postcolonial attempt at reclamation of pride in one's culture and history and assertion of one's cultural or ethnic identity. At the same time, it projects Mizo history or the past as having begun at this period, which is in some ways, a reflection of the teleological process of Mizo history as having begun with colonialism.

The portrayal of the pre-colonial past as the age of the *pasalṭha* is a selective representation or reclamation of the past by which other cultural components are not depicted in the Mizo novels. In this connection, various components of the culture, indigenous faith practices, and traditions of the Mizo have not really been represented in Mizo novels beyond the depiction of the life of the *pasalṭha* in the village. In addition, Mizo women have been represented as inadequate subjects functioning to project the heroic qualities of the Mizo men in Mizo novels in which it is usually the men who possess the agency to transcend their status or their positions in life. The status or condition of women depended upon the actions, heroic or otherwise, of men as seen in the novels.

The postcolonial impulse or mindset among peoples of colonised nations typically involves the attempt to come to terms with a hybrid identity as the ambivalent space of negotiation between the attempt to retain, preserve, and glorify or validate one's indigenous culture while simultaneously accepting aspects of western culture and practices. However, it is understood that the past or history for that matter, can never be value-free. Consequently, in the case of the Mizo, reference to Mizo history as the golden age of the past has sought to define it as the age of the *pasalṭha* in which Mizo men have been depicted as being courageous and skilled at warfare and in hunting.

This portrayal is patriarchal in nature, for it presents a picture of the golden age of Mizo history as one that is defined by the achievements of men that projects their prowess and bravery. To be a *pasalṭha* is to be brave and manly, and such a portrayal has resulted

in silencing Mizo women whose role is confined to domesticity in Mizo novels. The worth of Mizo women is defined in relation to the achievements of their husbands as seen when the wife of a man who has achieved the *thangchhuah* status is believed to be able to join her husband in *pialral* (paradise).

The projection of the hard work, achievements, and efforts of Mizo men is considered as deserving of honour and praise. In contrast, the input and hard work of women in taking care of their household and cultivation of crops has been taken for granted. The work of women does not merit praise nor recognition in this patriarchal construct. At the same time, since concern for the threat to the safety of the Mizo village in the form of wild animals and enemy attacks or warfare was of paramount importance and essential for survival, it is understandable that those who ensured protection such as the *pasalṭha*, would be well-respected and admired in such a societal setup. Concerning the representation of the traditional Mizo society in Mizo novels, this idealised portrayal of the main character or characters as *pasalṭha* appears to have been accepted as the norm. Narratives about the *pasalṭha* have been popularised in modern Mizo culture.

Accounts of Mizo history by Mizo historians typically include accounts of the *pasalṭha* or legends about them. Depictions of the lives of the *pasalṭha* have been popularised in cultural plays written to showcase the lives of the Mizo ancestors and have been written from the perspective of the postcolonial attempt towards cultural valorisation. This cultural valorisation or renewed appreciation of the culture of the past has been represented in Mizo novels through the depiction of the traditional Mizo society of the past as the age of the *pasalṭha*. The plays enacted as part of the annual celebration of the *Chapchar Kut* (*Chapchar* Festival) which today, serves for the display of Mizo history and culture, can be cited as an example. Thus, the *pasalṭha* and their admirable qualities have become a defining trait of Mizo culture and identity in the modern period.

Furthermore, the concept of *pasalṭha* continues to be used to define bravery in the modern context. An example is seen when the Mizo National Front (MNF) army gave up arms and returned peacefully to Mizoram after the signing of the Mizo Peace Accord. They were given a warm welcome by the Mizo general public who respectfully referred to them as *hnam pasalṭha* (*pasalṭha* of the tribe). In terms of the representation of the Mizo admiration for the *pasalṭha* in Mizo novels, the depiction of the traditional Mizo society

has typically included the portrayal of the main characters and especially the male protagonist as a *pasalṭha* or as one having those qualities possessed by a *pasalṭha*.

Concerning cultural icons like the *pasalṭha* and cultural concepts or traits such as *tlawmngaihna* and *lunglenna*, one can observe how cultural markers can serve current needs in new contexts. Nayar says that such a use of cultural markers in new contexts bypass "the thorny issue of authenticity" and enable people to claim a cultural icon as a "centrepiece of belonging as authentic to their present needs irrespective of its 'original' cultural relevance" ("Brand Postcolonial" 42). Since all reclamation of the culture of the past is through its incorporation within Mizo Christianity to a significant extent, the cultural markers that have been reclaimed have been made to suit the needs of the people regarding the formation of a new modernised and Christianised identity.

Nayar says, "The insistence on migratability and transposability of the icon, idea and imaginary presupposes not authenticity but adaptability for the sake of continuing relevance" by which cultural markers can serve the needs of writers in new contexts such as the diaspora or hybrid identities, such as African-American or African-Canadian for example, irrespective of the 'original' cultural relevance of such markers. Some postcolonials resist the authenticity debate entirely and opt for the generic and cultural mutation of postcolonial cosmopolitanism ("Brand Postcolonial" 41-42). As seen in the transposability of the *pasalṭha* as a cultural icon that can serve the needs of the emergent Christian Mizo cultural identity, the *pasalṭha* has come to symbolise the link between Mizo culture of the past and present.

Therefore, there is a common pattern of portraying the Christian worldview in Mizo novels through the representation of characters who possess or display these cultural traits as heroic or as good Christians. For example, a character who is a *pasalṭha* or who possesses *tlawmngaihna* is seen as a good person, and if a character enjoys attending *zaikhawm* or *lengkhawm* (community singing) at church then that is portrayed as one of is qualities of being a good Christian. Since Mizos are fond of singing and community singing in an important part of their culture in the past and present, *lunglenna* becomes an importance literary device for displaying the emotions of the characters. *Lunglenna* is depicted through songs incorporated within the text and through the appreciation of the natural beauty of

the land of Mizoram by the characters or their cognisance of it. This helps to portray such characters as being sensitive and connected to their Mizo identity or their Mizoness.

The *pasalṭha* has been reclaimed as a being applicable for defining heroes, accomplished person, and persons who have made sacrifices for the Mizo community or contributed their services for the betterment of Mizo society. Among Mizo theologians, there are those who are beginning to study and analyse the traditional Mizo society from a postcolonial perspective. This has allowed for the reading of Jesus Christ as the consummate *pasalṭha*, and faithful Christians have been referred to as the *pasalṭha* of Jesus in the Christian context. Mizo theologians and scholars such as Rev. Zairema (2009), Rev. Vanlalchhuanawma (2006), Rev. Dr. Lalsawma (1994), Rev. Z. T. Sangkhuma (2007), Lawmsanga (2016), and L. H. Lalpekhlua (2007) have begun to negate the effects of colonial ideology and colonial discourse by analysing how the traditional faith practice of the past is more nuanced than its mere consideration as devil worshipping.

Mizo Christians have lain emphasis on the introduction of Christianity as a blessing and as having transformed them from being headhunting savages as they have been portrayed in colonial discourse. This imputed a sense of shame about the past which was projected as heathenish and involving the worship of evil spirits while portraying the missionaries as saviours who ushered in modernity through the introduction of Christianity and formal education. By the end of the twentieth century, almost the entire population of the Mizo had become Christians and thereby, the importance and influence of Christianity in the modern Mizo society can be gauged. Commentators have observed that the process of indigenisation enabled by the religious revivals that have continued to happen throughout the twentieth century and beyond from 1906 till 2014-2015 so far, have served to make Christianity in Mizoram a distinctly Mizo one and has been a significant factor in enabling the easy acceptance of Christianity among them.

The complete separation between Mizo traditional culture and Christianity enforced during the early days of Mizo Christianity has deeply ingrained notions of the binary between Mizo culture and western culture, between the heathenish past and the Christianised present, and between the sacred and the profane. To become a Christian, one had to let go of all connection with the past, including cultural practices and even traditional songs. Strict measures were implemented to separate the sacred and the profane through

excommunication as a practice of Mizo Christianity. This has continued to influence the manner in which the Christian worldview and Christian morality have been promoted in Mizo novels through the good versus evil binary or the virtue rewarded, vice punished mode that decided the fate of characters, thus lending a didactic tone to most of the Mizo novels. Christian morality is revealed in the novels through the portrayal of the success and fulfilment of the protagonists being denoted through their romantic relationships culminating in a respectable Christian marriage in accordance with the established law of the church pertaining to marriage (as practiced by the main Christian denominations in Mizoram).

Colonial rule has resulted in the creation of binaries that reinforce the cultural hierarchy between the coloniser and the colonised, or the West and the East where the West is glorified while the colonised East is portrayed as uncivilised. The Manichean allegory or binary that is deeply rooted within the Mizo identity in which the Mizo past has been denigrated. The clear separation between Christianity and Mizo culture that was enforced in the early days of Christianity can be attributed as being at the heart of this binary. Consequently, there has always been deep-seated conflict between Christianity accepted as western, and the consideration of the traditional Mizo culture as outdated, primitive, and uncivilised. This portrayal was instrumental in internalising a deep sense of inferiority among the Mizo Christians who came to regard their traditional faith practice as heathenish and was, therefore, a cause of shame. In contrast, the white men (the missionaries in particular) came to be perceived as saviour figures who rescued them from a state of ignorance, backwardness, and from being subjected to the possibility of incurring the wrath of the evil spirits.

The effects of this deep sense of the inferiority of Mizo culture was strongly felt especially among the Mizo youth especially with the rise of the educated class. The Mizo youth began to accept westernisation of the Mizo culture as advanced and desirable, and this was reflected in the composition of secular songs modelled after western songs, while the emergence of Mizo novels could be seen as being modelled after the English novels as a literary form. Stories about the Mizo traditional society often contain the depiction of demons or evil spirits. This can be attributed as having been influenced in part, by this narrative.

Since the missionaries equated civilisation with modernity and westernisation, Mizo Christians were deeply influenced to consider their ancestors as foolish and backward. The work of the missionaries in imparting education including vocational skills, guidance in matters of faith, and providing healthcare helped to usher in modernity and westernisation. Therefore, they have been highly respected in the Mizo society and Mizo Christians have attempted to emulate them. Consequently, westernisation has been considered as the natural mode of progression towards civilisation, but such the embracing of westernisation has had its many pitfalls.

Societal values have undergone changes, and today the ones who achieve respect in society are usually those who manage to attain wealth, position, influence, and power by honest means, and who at the same time, actively participate in church activities. Since Mizo Christianity had become an indispensable part of the Mizo identity, good Christian conduct has become the yardstick or the lens by which a person's respectability and position of honour in society is adjudged. No matter what a person's wealth, status, power, or accomplishments are, he or she is adjudged as or considered as respectable only to the extent to which he or she is perceived to be a good Christian by means of being an upstanding member of his or her church community or congregation.

In the process of Mizo identity formation in the modern period, the Mizo Christians have had to contend with the idea of acceptance of Christianity as a religion which is western in form, along with having to contend with the postcolonial acceptance and incorporation of aspects or elements of traditional Mizo culture, resulting in an identity or culture that is hybridised. In the modern Mizo worldview, this conflicting pull between traditionalism and Christianity and the resulting attempt to negotiate a balance between the two can be regarded as being one of the main reasons behind problems in Mizo identification with traditional Mizo cultural practice and traditions. This has been generally considered as a factor in the prevention of a strong sense of rootedness to the Mizo past and to the Mizo traditional culture among the younger generations of the Mizos.

Today, despite the deep-seated influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, Mizo writers and critics have begun to articulate the negative effects of colonialism openly. Non-fiction works such as *Zoram Khawvel (The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*) (1991) by L. Keivom, *Christianity and Mizo Culture: the Encounter between Christianity*

and Zo Culture in Mizoram (1996) by Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Savun Kawrfual (*2017) by Lalhmingchhuanga Zongte, *Pipute Rammutna (A Socio-Political Innovation of the Mizo)* (2017) by C. Vanlal Ruaia, and *Mingo Phurrit* (*Zofate Ṭobul Chhuina leh Thusep Dangte*) (2019) by Rema Chhakchhuak are writings that contain attempts at decolonizing the Mizo mind. Such writings have spoken about the wholesale rejection of all elements of culture in the traditional Mizo life at the outset of Christianity as having left a vacuum in the psyche of the Mizo people.

The failure to achieve the ideals of Mizo Christianity which is a hybrid formation of Christian values and traditional Mizo values can in part, be attributed to the lack of a well-defined and binding process of enculturation as was present in the traditional Mizo society. Mizo novelists have articulated their concerns through novels that function as social critiques of the sins or wrongdoings prevalent in the modern Mizo society. Vices such as alcoholism, drug usage, immorality, corruption, and misuse of power are commonly depicted in Mizo novels. Mizo novels tend to differentiate characters that are good Christians from characters that are not, thus displaying the Christian worldview of the binary between good and evil. With the disillusionment that came with the wholehearted embracing of modernisation and westernisation came the corruption of Mizo ideals and the perceived failure of the Mizo community to handle this situation. Thought leaders such as concerned citizens, thinkers, commentators and writers noticed a need for changes in the Mizo society owing to the failure of many in living up to the Christian ideal. The absence of a structured and well-defined mechanism or institution for reclamation of aspects of the traditional Mizo culture has problematised the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview.

R. N. Prasad has observed that among the Mizos, the gulf between an emerging land-owning middle class (or well-off natives) and the landless poor is widening due to modernisation based on capitalist lines. The progressive concentration of landed property has resulted in rural poverty because of which small and marginal farmers have become landless peasants, landless agricultural labourers, and sharecroppers. The emergence of this land-owning middle class has led to inequality and this social and economic stratification has been guided by economic and political factors (166-167).

Among the younger generation of Mizos, there has emerged the tendency to consider the westernisation or western culture as ‘cool’ and advanced, and as something to be

emulated. Euro-American or Western culture and cultural products such as films, popular literature, and music have greatly influenced modern Mizo culture especially in the era after Mizoram was granted statehood. One factor that may be considered as giving influenced this change is the introduction of satellite channels in the 1980s, which opened a new era of western culture displayed across television screens in Mizo households. Earlier, only the Indian channel 'doordarshan kendra' was available. However, owing to the proximity of Bangladesh which lies adjacent to Mizoram, western channels that were re-telecast in Bangladesh could be located by Mizo television antennas. This provided exposure to western channels broadcasting a wide variety of western films, serials, music, and sports like football which greatly influenced the younger generations towards westernisation.

The ideals of the Mizo society in the pre-colonial past were deeply rooted in the idea of belonging to a village community, the sense of protectiveness and protection of the village, and the egalitarian notion of assistance offered through community work or generosity towards those in need. Such ideals were crystallised in the concept of *tlawmngaihna* as a code of ethics or a moral code that was inscribed within the cultural fabric, and the practice of which imparted respectability to individuals. The system of enculturation that was in place in the traditional Mizo society ensured that boys and girls were enculturated into the cultural practices of the village community from a young age. Boys were made to participate in activities practised in the *zawlbuk* and sent on errands such as *thingnawi fàwm* which was the task of collecting firewood and water for the hearth in the *zawlbuk*.

Meanwhile, girls were taught to help out their mothers in domestic work from a young age and this manner, there was a well-defined demarcation of roles for men and women and the process of enculturation or that of fulfilling the roles expected of them by the society were ingrained from a young age. The granting of accolades and respect to achievers in the traditional Mizo society was commendable and served the function of encouraging further action in this regard. There was also the encouragement of bravery, courageousness, and skills in hunting and warfare on account of the respect accorded to those young men and men who were termed as *pasalṭha*. There were also certain occasions when young men, considered as having shown qualities deserving of praise such as would merit the conferring of the title of *pasalṭha* to them, were handed the *zu* (Mizo rice beer)

contained in a large cup known as the *nopui* in the presence of all the young men and women of the village.

In the modern Mizo society, the church (at the local level) and the Young Mizo Association (YMA) which is the largest social organisation in Mizoram have become the social institutions that hold considerable responsibility and influence concerning the practice of Mizo culture and the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview. The church exerts a moral influence on its members while the YMA is responsible for upholding the cultural values and maintaining the cultural practices. The YMA has taken on the role of preserving, promoting, and retaining those aspects of the traditional Mizo culture which are acceptable within the ambit of Mizo Christianity. It seeks to uphold traditional Mizo culture and values with its main objectives being - the productive use of one's free time, striving to promote the advancement of the Mizo society and to uphold good Christian conduct.

Mizo intellectuals and thinkers have begun to try and understand the moral degradation and the rising of individualism as against the communitarian spirit represented by *tlawmngaihna* which is beginning to fall short of its ideals as seen in the past. In the traditional Mizo society *tlawmngaihna* was the act of doing good in a spirit of self-denial and the sacrificing of one's comfort for the sake of the community without any expectation of praise. It helped to foster a deep sense of connection and identification with one's village and its administrator, the chief. The deeply rooted ideal of *tlawmngaihna* which defines the Mizo cultural identity of the past has evolved with the ending of the institution of the *zawlbuk* in 1938 and of the rule of the chiefs in 1954, thus spelling the end of a former way of life.

The ideal of *tlawmngaihna* has been retained under Mizo Christianity which has come to define the modern Mizo identity. But unlike in the past, it has been diluted for there is rampant corruption and disregard for the poor, and the rise of individualism and the drive for profit has resulted in the placing of one's interests before others. *Tlawmngaihna* has been misused by some as means for gaining a good reputation and the elevating of one's status in society. There is the drive to succeed in a modern society owing to the tendency towards materialism and the gaining of access to material wealth and goods which modernisation has enabled. Consequently, corruption, drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, and the rise in divorce rates has alarmed the Mizo Church (all

denominations) and Mizo society in general who have noted that there is a need for moral reform.

Noticing this need for reform, the 'Mizo Moral Reformation Network International' was created in 2009 with the objective of working with the various Christian denominations in Mizoram, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), para-churches, social organisations, and other groups who are interested in promoting moral reform. This is a moral reform rooted in the bible and the Holy Spirit, and seeks to change the Mizo value system, and to promote *tlawmngaihna*, industriousness, faithfulness, integrity, goodness, and respect towards parents and elders (Lungmuana 7-9). It is ironic that the Mizo values mentioned here were values that were cherished and practiced in the Mizo society of past. This reveals the failure to maintain Mizo cultural values of the past in the transition of worldview owing to colonialism and its effects.

It is generally believed among the Mizos that the *Rambuai* period also contributed to the moral degradation of Mizo values. The grouping centres created by the Indian government to counter insurgency affected the lives and morals of the Mizo people. Since the people could not practice their traditional mode of cultivation under the circumstances, they had to rely on government handouts of rice and essential commodities to supplement their harvest. This destroyed the hard-working nature of the Mizos. Also, people resorted to telling petty lies and excuses in order to gain passage during curfew hours out of fear of being confronted by either the Indian army or the MNF army led people to lie. This corrupted the Mizo people who have traditionally cherished honesty (Manzuala 116-117). This Moreover, the trauma of extreme poverty led some to commit acts such as stealing which had never been a part of the cultural ethos of the Mizos (Manzuala 116; Zama, "Zoram" 356).

Therefore, in portraying the modern Mizo society, Mizo novelists have often projected a critique of the vices in the modern Mizo society which have impeded the adherence to the ideals of Mizo Christianity. Taking on the role of representing the Mizo culture and identity, they have attempted to portray all that is good and aspirational about living the life of a good Christian, or else, to reflect the evils that have corrupted this established ideal. Lalrammawia Ngente's DTT (2003) can be cited as an example. The common form of expression of Christian morality that influences the didactic tone in

Mizo novels is through the depiction of Christian morality, Christian marriages and the practice of Christian virtues as aspirational ideals embodied by characters. Characters who fail to embody this ideal are typically shown as meeting with an unwanted fate in the end.

The influence and reach of Mizo Christianity within the modern Mizo identity continues to be observed in Mizo literature until today. In Mizo fiction writing, writers take care not to offend the sentiment of their readership and most often refrain from describing sex in detail, since sexual promiscuity, premarital sex, and extramarital sex are strongly frowned upon. Excommunication from church membership has been an important component of the regulation of the conduct and character of Mizo Christians since the introduction of Christianity, so this has influenced literary writings as well.

The modern Mizo culture includes old Mizo cultural practices and customs capable of being retained under Christianity and including the application of Mizo customary laws (based on the practices of the traditional Mizo society) particularly concerning marriage and inheritance since Mizo customary laws are legally applicable. As for Mizo women, they continue to be defined in terms of their role within the household or domesticity, and their status and position in society continue to be defined in relation to the male authority in their lives.

The hybrid state of the modern Mizo identity has resulted from the interaction between western culture and Mizo culture. It is the authoritative institution that has taken on the role of deciding the inclusion or exclusion of aspects or elements of the traditional Mizo society into the modern Mizo culture and identity. Zama and Vanchiau have noted that among the Mizo writers who write popular fiction especially, the use of English titles (even if partially) for Mizo novels in order to catch the attention of the Mizo readership has often been practised. They see this preoccupation as reflecting the influence of Western culture on account of the introduction of Christianity and the accompanying birth of print culture. This reflects the Mizo mindset in general in which there is the assumption that the white man's language is superior to the Mizo language (48).

In connection to the continued influence of colonial ideology and discourse, there has hardly been any criticism of colonial rule, let alone criticism of the legacy of the missionaries. However, there is a perceptible turn in the representation of the Mizo

postcolonial worldview in Mizo novels with the emergence of what is possibly the first Mizo postcolonial novel in the true sense of the term that is, as a novel offering a direct criticism about colonialism. This is the novel *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2016) which fictionalises the cruel, manipulative, and un-Christian process by which the Mizo chiefs were subjugated, and colonial takeover of the Lushai Hills happened. With this novel, he has produced the first work of Mizo fiction that actively seeks to decolonise the Mizo mind, by portraying the bravery and integrity of the Mizo chiefs embodied in the figure of the fictitious main character, chief Puilura. He has imagined the formation of colonial discourse as involving the covering up of the subterfuge, underhand and unfair means employed by the British officers to subjugate the Mizo chiefs, by which the true account of the bravery and ingenuity of the Mizo tribe and their chiefs have been erased from history.

The cultural politics that come into play in the formation of the modern Mizo subjectivity or identity can be traced to the emergence of the educated class in the twentieth century, as well as the formation of a singular Mizo identity and Mizo ethnicity as a result of colonialism and Christianisation of the Mizo people. The crystallisation of the Mizo identity as infused with Mizo ethnicity was further reinforced with the quasi-colonial encounter of the struggle for independence or secession from India during the *Rambuai* period (1966-1986). Owing to factors such as relative cultural, geographical, and political isolation from the rest of mainland India, the Mizo did not participate in the anti-colonial independence movement. With the emergence of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and the process of change and restructuring that it continues to undergo, there has developed an us-them dichotomy in which the position of the Other has been inferred on the Vai (mainland Indians). The conceptualisation of the Vai as the Other is a differentiation in which the rise of the Mizo nationalist movement is perceived as the attempt to release oneself from the unfair treatment meted out by a quasi-colonial power.

In Mizo history, one can see that the cultural contact between the Mizo and the outsider has always been under hostile circumstances. To further compound this state of hostility, the traumatic experience of the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986), during which the Indian government declared Mizoram as a disturbed area and recognized the MNF movement for independence as an insurrectionist movement for secession from India, had

a deep-seated effect of furthering the experience of hostility and tension between the Mizo and mainland India. Parallels can be drawn with the independence movements of the colonial era in that this secessionist movement was spearheaded by the educated Mizo youth. Similar demands for decolonisation and self-determining rights have been observed among the Naga people of Nagaland and currently, among the Gorkha people of India who have demanded that a separate Gorkhaland be carved from within the state of West Bengal. The sense of alienation, mistrust, and antagonism felt towards the Vai as the other, that is, the tyrannical other is expressed in Mizo novels through their portrayal as villainous characters especially in Mizo fiction of the modern period. In the novels selected for research, the *Rambuai* fiction NKP (1989) by Zikpuii Pa and the modern Mizo fiction DTT (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente portray the Vai man as the villain.

The period of the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986) brought about a period of stagnation in terms of the development and progress of Mizo literature. Mizo writers stopped producing works and even resorted to burning their works for fear of being penalized and incarcerated for the slightest reasons or on false grounds by the Indian army. During this period common people were caught in fear of displeasing members of the MNF army and the Indian army. C. Zama has written about how the Indian soldiers would punish and torture those they suspected of helping the MNF army. Similarly, the MNF army dealt harshly with those they suspected of helping the Indian army, which led to a situation where the common people suffered and lived as though they were "placed between the hammer and the anvil" (226-227). This is a phrase commonly used in Mizo writings and discussions about the *Rambuai* period to define the experience of the common man who was caught in the crossfires between the MNF and the Indian Army.

However, after the signing of the Peace Accord in 1986 and the bestowing of full statehood to Mizoram in 1987, there was a notable increase in the number of Mizo novels which profoundly increased in number especially during the last decade of the twentieth century. Since the emergence of nationalism or cultural nationalism within the context of anti-colonial movements has been premised on the existence of an originary, pure, pristine, and glorious past. This notion has paved the way for the creation of a particularised notion or version of one's identity and culture that entails a process of creation which in turn, engenders the propagation and consolidation of the "us-them" dichotomy. One of the

pitfalls of nationalism is the replication of the hegemonic power which can sometimes translate into a xenophobic view of identity, and a coercive view that foregrounds men as the primary subjects.

According to Bhabha's notion of culture and hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994), culture is in a constant state of change or flux, which counters the idea of static cultural essences or notion of cultural purity as promoted by nationalism movements under colonialism which have led to the formation of nation-states in the modern postcolonial era. Bhabha believes that the idea of cultural purity or the distinctive cultural identities of nations, that is, of the colonised East and the Western colonial powers, is undermined by the cultural hybridity that has emerged due to colonialism. However, Bhabha's notion of cultural hybridity is premised on the idea of cosmopolitanism as a solution to the issue of cultural hybridity with the view that it can provide agency or a way of escape from the straitjacket of national identity. He opines that cosmopolitanism could enable people to create their own cultural identities with the option to choose from all cultures of the world which could enable a dynamic process of transformation of one's cultural identity as a cosmopolitan.

Meanwhile, Nayar has opined that cultural nationalism has not entirely lost its import or relevance in the era of cultural globalisation in contrast to Sandra Ponzanesi (2014), who said it has lost its cache. He says, "It is more accurate, I think, to argue that cultural nationalism recast in creative ways through adaptation and revisions, enables a simulated authenticity that serves the postcolonial well in the era of cultural globalization by sidestepping the either/or (either the local, national or the world) conundrum" ("Brand Postcolonial" 25).

The Mizo postcolonial worldview has created a prevailing discourse in Mizo literature by which the storytelling process has been influenced, leading to the selective portrayal of certain aspects of their lives, culture, and history. Such factors include the love story of the protagonist as the main theme in novels, the didactic tone in the novels, and stock characters that fall into the good-versus evil binary. This worldview is revealed in Mizo novels through observable traces of the influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, and through the emergence of the postcolonial reclamation and valorisation of cultural identity and the reversal of the notion of cultural inferiority. The Mizos have

come to view their identity as being coextensive with Christianity. This tracing of the articulation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview through the medium of Mizo novels vis-à-vis the Mizo novelists can be linked to the Mizo Christian readership who comprise the market for such novels.

In Mizo novels, the influence of Christianity and the attempt to express what is unique about Mizo culture and identity can be observed. Mizo novelists have incorporated elements derived from Mizo folktales and legends, folksong and modern songs, and traditional cultural practices. The incorporation of elements from traditional Mizo literature, the use of biblical allusions, metaphors and references, and of modern songs in Mizo novels is characteristic of the modern Mizo postcolonial condition. This hybrid incorporation of literary elements from the past and the present reveals the hybrid nature of Mizo novels as being the site where the Mizo postcolonial worldview or hybrid identity is reflected.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview is thus reflected in Mizo novels through a display of the effects of colonial ideology and discourse, and through efforts towards negation of such effects as seen in *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga, or through the assertion of the Mizo identity in the figure of the *pasalṭha* as revealed in Mizo novels. The importance of Mizo Christianity in the formation of the modern Mizo postcolonial worldview and identity is reflected in its influence in the formation of an overarching pattern that characterises Mizo novels. In this connection, the Christian worldview and Christian moral didacticism have influenced the Mizo literary imagination vis-à-vis Mizo novels.

Postcolonialism or postcolonial studies is a vital tool for understanding modern identity and cultural formations. A cursory glance at many Mizo novels might compel one to notice the absence of complexity in construction and characterisation as a kind of limitation fuelled by a deep-seated consideration of the Mizo readership that is predominantly Christian. There is potential and scope for enriching Mizo novels through use of other narrative and novelistic techniques beyond the common usage of romance as a theme, and of the prevalence of the common usage of the historical novel form.

The postcolonial analysis of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its impact on the writing of Mizo novels has been based on studies of aspects of these texts for traces of

the ideological influence of colonialism and its continuing effects, and for evidence of an emerging postcolonial assertion of the Mizo identity, as well as the reclamation and valorisation of Mizo culture of the past. The attempt has been made to provide a cultural, historical, and literary grounding for the ways through which the shift in the worldview from the pre-colonial past to the present has happened. This has necessitated the historical grounding of the operation of colonial ideology and the formation of colonial discourse within the Mizo society in order to gain a thorough understanding of the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its impact on Mizo novels.

To conclude, the thrust of this thesis - Mizo Postcolonial Worldview and its Impact on the Literary Discourse of Mizo novels – and its findings, bring to light the dynamics and continual flux inherent in the formation of the modern Mizo culture and identity. The Mizo postcolonial worldview continues to grapple with the interplay and at times, the tension between traditional Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity. The role of Christianity in regulating the development, and reconstitution of the modern Mizo identity continues to remain prominent. The relevance of this research is premised on the grounds that it contains a new approach and explores a new area of study that contributes to the literary discourse not only of Mizo novels but to literary discourse of the region as well. The study is multidisciplinary in approach, encompassing history and the social sciences, which is in keeping with literary cultural studies. With the findings of this research, it is anticipated that scope for further study and research will open up in areas of identity and religion, socio-politics, transitional change, conflict studies, and gender studies to name a few, vis-à-vis the growing literary discourse that is being generated from the Northeast region of India as a whole.

WORKS CITED

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Reprint, Routledge, 2012.

Chhakchhuak, Rema. *Mingo Phurrit* (*Zofate Ṭobul Chhuina leh Thusep Dangte*). Rema Chhakchhuak, 2019.

Keivom, L. *Zoram Khawvel* (*The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*). 2nd ed., M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1994.

Lalthangliana, B. *History of Mizo Literature: Mizo Thu leh Hla*. 1993. M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

Lungmuana, K. *Hei le Mizo Moral Reform Chu*. K. Lungmuana, 2019.

Manzuala, M. "Mizoram at the Crossroads." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.115-136.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Brand Postcolonial: 'Third World' Texts and the Global*. De Gruyter, 2018.

Prasad, R. N. "Modernisation of the Mizo Society—Strategic Problems and Futuristic Introspection." *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*, edited by R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. Mittal Publications, 2003, pp.151-176.

Zama, C. *Zoram A Tap*. C. Zama, 2008.

Zama, Margaret Ch. and C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau. *After Decades of Silence Voices From Mizoram: A Brief Review of Mizo Literature*. Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, 2016.

Zama, Margaret Ch. "Taboos and Superstitions of the Mizo as Manifestations of the Dark Forces." *Construction of Evil in North East India: Myth, Narrative and Discourse*. Edited by Prasenjit Biswas and C. Joshua Thomas, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 151-155.

Zoramdinthara. *Mizo Fiction: Emergence and Development*. Ruby Press & Co., 2013.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts

Biakliana, L. *Hawilopari. Biakliana Robawm*. Compiled by Laltluangliana Khiangte, Reprint, L. T. L. Publications, 2013. pp. 189-328.

Dokhuma, James. *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii*. 9th ed., R. Lalrawna, 2010.

Khawlkungi. *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang*. 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 1992.

Lalnunchanga, C. *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung.* Mizoram Publication Board, 2006.

Ngente, Lalrammawia. *Damlai Thlan Thim*. H. C. Lalmhasangi, 2003.

Zikpuii Pa. *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*. 3rd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

Secondary Texts

Abraham, Taisha. *Introducing Postcolonial Theories*: *Issues and Debates*. Macmillan, 2007.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Anchor, 1994.

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures*. Verso, 2008.

Aleaz, Bonita. *Emergent Women: Mizo Women's Perspectives*. Mittal, 2005.

Alessandrini, Anthony. *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*. W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2012.

Archives Committee, Govt. Hrangbana College. *Pi Pu Zun Zam (Mizo Hla Leh Culture Zirna)*. Archives Committe, Govt. Hrangbana College, 2008.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 1995.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2007.

Bal, Mieke, editor. *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. I, Routledge, 2004.

—. *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. II, Routledge, 2004.

—. *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. III, Routledge, 2004.

—. *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. IV, Routledge, 2004.

Bannerji, Himani. *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy and Colonialism*. Anthem, 2002.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literacy and Cultural Theory*. 1995. 2nd ed., Manchester UP, 2007.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated and edited by H. M. Parshley, Vintage Books, 1997.

Bennett, Judith M. *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

Berger, John, and Michael Dibb. *Ways of Seeing*. BBC Enterprises, 1972.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Reprint, Routledge, 2012.

Bignall, Simone. *Postcolonial Agency: Critique and Constructivism*. Edinburgh UP, 2011.

Biswas, Prasenjit, and C. Joshua Thomas, editors. *Construction of Evil in North East India: Myth, Narrative and Discourse*. Sage, 2012.

Bounds, May, and Gladys M. Evans. *Medical Mission to Mizoram: Personal Experiences of Two Nursing Sisters*. May Bounds, 1986.

Brydon, Diana. *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. Routledge, 2000.

Butt, Daniel 2012. "Repairing Historical Wrongs and the End of Empire," *Social and Legal Studies*, vol. 21, pp. 227-242.

Carey, Bernard, and Henry N. Tuck. *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our Dealings with Them, Their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*. 1896. Reprint, KLM Private, 1976.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Mythic Dimension: Selected Essays 1959-1987*. New World Library, 2017.

Chaldailova, R. *Mizo Pi Pute Khawvel*. Vanlalnghaki (Mrs. R. Chaldailova), 2011.

Challiana. *Pi Pu Nun*. The Trio Book-House, Aizawl, 1978.

Chambers, O. A. *Handbook of the Lushai Country: Compiled* (*Under the Order of the Quarter Master General in India*) *in The Intelligence Branch*. 1899. Reprint, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2005.

Chatterjee, Partha. *Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*. Permanent Black, 2013.

Chatterji, N. *The Earlier Mizo Society*. Tribal Research Institute, 1975.

Chawngkunga, C. *Important Documents of Mizoram*. Art & Culture Dept., 1998.

Chawngkunga, C. *Sakhua*. Dept. of Art & Culture, Govt. of Mizoram, 1997.

Chhakchhuak, Rema. *Mingo Phurrit* (*Zofate Ṭobul Chhuina leh Thusep Dangte*). Rema Chhakchhuak, 2019.

Chhawnmanga. *Mizorama Michengte*. Hnamte Press, 1985.

Chhawntluanga. *Kelkang Hlimpui 1937* (*Revised*) (*Harhna Ropui Tak Chanchin*). The Synod Literature & Publication Board, 1985.

Childs, Peter, and R. J. Patrick Williams. *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*. Routledge, 2013.

Darchungnunga. *Kohhran Leh Mizoram Politics*. Synod Literature & Publication Board, 2017.

Dirlik, Arif. *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Routledge, 2018.

Dokhuma, James. *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*. J.D. Press, 1992.

Dokhuma, James. *Thla Hleinga Zan Bu 1 & 2-na*. R. Lalrawna, 2012.

Duncan, Hugh Dalziel. *Language and Literature in Society:* A *Sociological Essay on Theory and Method in the Interpretation of Linguistic Symbols*. Impact Global Publishing Inc., 2015.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. Penguin, 1967.

Foreign and Political Dept. Report, 1874, on Eastern Boundary of Hill Tippera. Firma KLM on Behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1980.

Foreign Department Report on Chin Lushai Hills, September 1892. Firma KLM on Behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1980.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage Books, 1995.

Fricker, Miranda. *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*. Cambridge UP, 2008.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Fuery, Patrick, and Nick Mansfield. *Cultural Studies and Critical Theory*. Oxford UP, 2001.

Gamble, Sarah. *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. Routledge, 2010.

Groot, Jerome De. *The Historical Novel*. Routledge, 2013.

Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Blackwell Pub., 2008.

Hermana, C. *Zofate Zin Kawng -1* (*Culture & Traditions of Mizo*). C. Hermana, 1995.

Hermana, C. *Zoram Buai Lai Khan*. C. Hermana, 2015.

Herman, David. *Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Cambridge UP, 2007.

Hluna, J. V. *Church & Political Upheaval in Mizoram: A Study of Impact of Christianity on the Political Development in Mizoram*. Mizo History Association, 1985.

Hluna, J. V. *History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-East India*. Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 2013.

Hluna, J. V. and Rini Tochhawng. *The Mizo Uprising: Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement, 1966-1971*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

Hminga, Chhangte Lal. *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*. Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987.

Hnamte, Lalnundika. *Prohibition: A Socio-Economic Assessment in Gujarat and Mizoram*. Serials Publications, 2014.

Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. London: Pluto Press, 2000.

Hrangṭhiauva, and Lal Chungnunga. *Mizo Chanchin*. Lalrinliana, 1978.

Huggan, Graham. *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*. Oxford UP, 2016.

Indra, C. T., and Meenakshi Shivram. *Post-Coloniality: Reading Literature*. Vikas Publishing House, 1999.

Ivison, Duncan. *Postcolonial Liberalism*. Cambridge UP, 2002.

Jacob, Malsawmi. *Zorami: A Redemption Song*. Morph Books, 2015.

Jain, Jasbir, and Supriya Agarwal. *Gender and Narrative*. Rawat Publications., 2002.

Johnson, Alan, and Prafulla C. Kar. *Journal of Contemporary Thought Locating Literature: Geography, History, Ecology*. Forum on Contemporary Theory, Baroda & Frank W. and Sue Mayborn School of Journalism, 2012.

Jones, Liz, and Ian Barron. *Research and Gender*. Continuum, 2007.

Keivom, L. *Zoram Khawvel* (*The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*). 2nd ed., M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1994.

—. *Zoram Khawvel 2* (*The World of the Mizo People: Travelogue*). M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1993.

—. *Zoram Khawvel 5* (*The World of the Mizo People*). MCL Publications, 1999.

—. *Zoram Khawvel 6* (*The Spread of the Gospel in Zoland*). MCL Publications, 2000.

Khiangte, Laltluangliana. *A Study of Mizo Novel: Platinum Jubilee of Mizo Novel* (*1936-2011*): *A Souvenir, Featuring Official Addresses, Reports, and Papers Presented at the National Seminar on Mizo Novel*. Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), 2014.

King, Bruce, editor. *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction*. Clarendon Press, 1998.

King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the "Mystic East"*. Routledge, 2009.

Kipgen, Mangkhosat. *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*. Theological Conference, 1996.

Krishna, Sankaran. *Globalization and Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

Lalbiaknema, C. *Kan Chenna Mizoram*. Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1995.

Laldinpui, K. *Mizo Inneih*. Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2006.

Lalengliana. *History of Mizo Hla*. Sangthuama, 1995.

Lalfakzuali. *Changing Position of Mizo Women*. Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Dept., Mizoram, 2010.

Lalhmingthanga. *Exodus Politics*. Christina Zorinliani, 1965.

Lalhmuaka. *Zoram Kristian Hmasa Tihduhdahna:* (*Zirtirtu Vaikhawla Sawi*). The Synod Publication Board, 1985.

Lalhmuaka. *Zoram: Thim Ata Engah*. The Synod Publication Board, 1988.

Lalmanzuala, M. *Nghet Taka Ding Zelin*. Sapthlengliana, 2012.

Lalmanzuala, M. *Zoram Kalsiam - 3*. Sapthlengliana, 2003.

Lalnghinglova, Rev. *Zoram Nghahchhan: Kristian Puipate Sulhnu leh an Thukhawchang*. 1993. Saikungi, 2000.

Lalnunchanga, C. *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha*. C. Lalnunchanga, 2005.

Lalnunchanga, C. *Lunglenna Thawveng*. C. Lalnunchanga, 2008.

Lalnunzira, B. *Mizo Identity Bihchianna*. SCMI ATC Unit, 2019.

Lalpekhlua, L. H. *Contextual Christology: A Tribal Perspective*. Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), 2007.

Lalrawnliana. *Freedom Struggle in Mizoram*. Lalrawnliana, 2014.

Lalremsiama, F. *Milu Lak Leh Vai Run Chanchin*. MCL Publications, 1997.

Lalrimawia. *Mizoram: History and Cultural Identity, 1890-1947*. Spectrum Publications, 1995.

Lalrinawma, Rev. V.S. *Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges*. Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2005.

Lalruali. *Zoram Hmarchhak Harhna Chanchin*. The Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997.

Lalruanga. *Mizo Thawnthu Zirzauna*. Zomi Book Agency, 2000.

Lalsawma. *Four Decades of Revivals, the Mizo Way:* (*Forty Years of Revival Movements in Mizoram*). Lalsawma, 1994.

Lalṭansanga, Familia Fanai, and Lalsawma. *Mary Winchester Zoluti Chanchin*. Lengchhawn Press, 2016.

Lalthangliana, B. *History of Mizo in Burma*. Khampat Bungpui Humhalhtu Committee Aizawl & Khampat, 1980.

—. *History of Mizo Literature: Mizo Thu leh Hla*. 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

—. *Hranghluite Sulhnu*. The R.T.M. Press, 1996.

—. *India, Burma Leh Bangladesh-a Mizo Kohhrante*. Remkungi, 2007.

—. *Mizo Chanchin: A Short Account & Easy Reference of Mizo History*. B. Lalthangliana, 2009.

—. *Mizo Culture: Studies in Mizo Culture and Tradition*. F. Vanlalringa, 2013.

—. *Zotui (Studies in Mizo Literature, Language, Culture, History and Criticism)*. M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2006.

—. *Zopui: Studies in Mizo Identity and Literature*. Archive Committee, Govt. Hrangbana College, 2011.

Lalzuithanga, F. *Kawlawm Dawthei: Essays in Criticism*. F. Lalzuithanga, 2016.

Lane, Richard J. *The Postcolonial Novel*. Polity Press, 2008.

Lawmsanga. *Theology of Mission: Postcolonial Perspective*. Lalmuanpuii, 2016.

Lazarus, Neil. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford UP, 1986.

Lewin, T. H. A *Fly on the Wheel, or How I Helped to Govern India*. 1912. Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2005.

—. *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language with Vocabularies and Popular Tales (Notated)*. 1874. Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1984.

—. *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein: With Comparative Vocabulary of the Hill Dialects*. 1869. Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Government of Mizoram, 2004.

—. *Wild Races of the Eastern Frontier of India*. 1870. Reprint, Mittal Publications, 2010.

Liangkhaia. *Mizo Awm Dan Hlui & Mizo Mi Leh Thil Hmingthangte leh Mizo Sakhua*. 1938. Reprint, Aizawl: L.T.L. Publications, 2008.

Liangkhaia. *Mizo Chanchin, Bu I & II Hmun Khatah, Zopa Kutchhuak History Ziak Leh Chhut Chhuah Hmasak Ber*. 1938. Reprint, Mizoram Publication Board, 2002.

Liangkhaia. *Mizorama Harhna Thu*. L.T.L. Publications, 2006.

Lianthanga, C. *Hmanlai Mizo Nun*. 2nd ed., Mizoram Publication Board, 2000.

Lloyd, J. Meirion. *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills*. Synod Publication Board, 1991.

Lodge, David, and Nigel Wood. *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Routledge, 2013.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2005.

Lorrain, J. H. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. 4th Reprint, The Asiatic Society, 2008.

Lorrain, Reginald Arthur. *Five Years in Unknown Jungles for God and Empire: Being an Account of the Founding of the Lakher*. Nabu Press, 2010.

Lunghnema, Col. V. *Mizo Chronicles* (*Mizo Hun Kal Zel Thil Lo Thleng Chhinchhiahna*) *4000 BC - 1976 AD.* H. Zairema, 1993.

Lungmuana, K. *Mizo Hnam Rilru Dik*. K. Lungmuana, 2002.

Lungmuana, K. *Hei le Mizo Moral Reform Chu*. K. Lungmuana, 2019.

Malsawma, J. *Zo-Zia*. Thanpuii, 2000.

Malsawmdawngliana, and Rohmingmawii. *Mizo Narratives*: *Accounts from Mizoram* (*Revised and Enlarged*). Scientific Book Centre, 2013.

McCall, A. G. *Lushai Chrysalis*; *with a Foreword by Sir Keith Cantlie*. 1949. 2nd Reprint, Government of Mizoram, Tribal Research Institute, 2003.

McCall, A. G. *The Lushai Hills District Cover* (*1931-43*). Tribal Research Institute, 1980.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester UP, 2010.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Working Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana UP, 1989.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke UP, 2003.

Morris, John Hughes. *The Story of Our Foreign Mission: Presbyterian Church of Wales*. Synod Publication Board, 1990.

Nag, Sajal. *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgence and Subnationalism in North-East India*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2002.

Nag, Sajal. *The Uprising: Colonial State, Christian Missionaries, and Anti-Slavery Movement in North-East India* (*1908-1954*). Oxford UP, 2016.

Nasta, Susheila. *Writing across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk*. Routledge, 2004.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Brand Postcolonial: 'Third World' Texts and the Global*. De Gruyter, 2018.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Ngente, Lalrammawia. *Rintei Zunleng*. Zorin Compugraphics, 2015.

Pa, Zikpuii. *Lungrualna Tlang*. 6th ed., M.C. Lalrinthanga, 2016.

Pachuau, Joy L. K. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford UP, 2014.

Pachuau, Joy L. K. *The Camera as Witness: A Social History of Mizoram, Northeast India*. Cambridge UP, 2015.

Pachuau, Margaret L, and Thongam Dhanajit Singh, editors. *Emergent Identities in Literature*. Headword Publishing Company Private Limited, 2016.

Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. Routledge, 2005.

Parry, N. E. *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*. 1928. Reprint, Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1976.

—. *Mizo Dan*. N. E. Parry, 1927.

—. *The Lakhers: With an Introduction and Supplementary Notes by J.H. Hutton*. Firma KLM Private Ltd. on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 1932.

Patnaik, Jagadish K. *Mizoram, Dimensions and Perspectives: Society, Economy, and Polity*. Concept Pub. Co., 2008.

Phadke, Sindhu. *Women's Status in North-Eastern India*. Decent Books, 2008.

Prasad, R. N. and A. K. Agarwal, editors. *Modernisation of the Mizo Society: Imperatives and Perspectives*. Mittal Publications, 2003.

Ralte, Lalhruaitluanga. *Thangliana*. Lalhruaitluanga Ralte, 2013.

Ralte, Lalhruaitluanga. *Zoram Vartian: Chanchinṭha leh Thuziak Khawvar Tan Dan*. Synod Press, 2008.

Rao, Raja. *Kanthapura*. George Allen and Unwin, 1938.

Reid, A. S. *Chin-Lushai Land: Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country*. 1893. Reprint, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2008.

Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957. Compiled by Thanzauva, K., Synod Literature and Publication Boards, 1997.

Roberts, Gwen Rees. *Nghilh Loh Mizoram* (*Memories of MIzoram*). Synod Press, 2003.

Rongenga, F. *Zofate Lo Khawsak Chhoh Dan*. F. Rongenga, 2000.

Rosenfelt, Deborah Silverton, and Judith Lowder Newton. *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*. Routledge, 2014.

Ruaia, C. Vanlal. *Pipute Rammutna* (*A Socio-Cultural & Political Innovation*). EBH Publishers, 2017.

Saiaithanga, Rev. *Mizo Sakhua*. R. Lalsawmliana, 1994.

Said, Edward W. *Beginnings: Intention & Method*. Basic Books, 1985.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1978. Reprint, Penguin Books, 2003.

Sangi, Suzanne. *Facebook Phantom*. Duckbill Books, 2013.

Sangkhuma, Z T. *Harhna hi le: Harhna Leh a Enkawl Dan*. Z. T. Sangkhuma, 1987.

—. *Mizoram Harhna Thlir Letna*. Z.T. Sangkhuma, 2007.

—. *Missionary Te Hnuhma*. Tribal Research Institute, 1992.

—. *Mizo Hnam Inneihna*. Rev. Z. T. Sangkhuma, 2002.

Sangkima. *Essays on the History of the Mizos*. Spectrum Publications, 2004.

Satpathy, Sumanyu. *Southern Postcolonialisms: The Global South and the 'New' Literary Representations*. Routledge, 2009.

Selden, Raman, et al. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. 5th ed., Routledge, Taylor Et Francis Group, 2005.

Shakespear, J. *The Lushei Kuki Clans*. 1912. 3rd Reprint, Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram, 2008.

Sharma, Suresh. *Tribal Identity and the Modern World*. United Nations UP, 1999.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, and Sarah Harasym. *The Post-Colonial Critic Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. Routledge, 2014.

Stevi, Jackson. *Contemporary Feminist Theories*. Rawat Booksellers, 2011.

Synod Revival Committee. *Harhna: Mizoram Revival Centenary Committee (1906-2006)*. Synod Revival Committee, 2006.

Taylor, Dianna, and Karen Vintges. *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Thanga, Lal Biak. *The Mizos: A Study in Racial Personality*. United Publishers, 1978.

Thanga, Selêt. *Pi Pu Len Lai*. Lianchhungi Book Store, 1990.

Thanglura, A. *Mihring Leh Sahrang*. A. Thanglura, 1988.

Thanglura, A. *Zoram Politic Lumlet Dan* (*Belkeh Phuarkhawm Tui Pai Thei Lo*). The Author, 1983.

Thanmawia, R. L. *Chuailo: Bu Thumna*. Din Din Heaven, 2015.

—. *Chuailo: Bu 4-Na*. Samaritan Printer, 2018.

—. *Chuailo*. Vol. 1, R. L. Thanmawia, 1997.

—-. *Chuailo Volume-II*. Din Din Heaven, 2010.

—. *Lung Min Lentu*. R.L. Thanmawia, 2006.

—. *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, 1998.

—. *Thukhawchang Bu 3-Na*. R. L. Thanmawia, 1997.

Thanmawia, R. L. et al., editors. *Harhna: Mizoram Revival Centenary Souvenir* (*1906-2006*). Synod Revival Committee, 2006.

The Lushais 1878-1889. Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. 1978.

The Holy Bible. New King James Version. Thomas Nelson, 2006.

Tlau, Thara. *Diamantaire*. Partridge, 2015.

Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. *Mizote Khawsak Phung*. Tribal Research Institute, 1993.

Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. *Mizo Lalte Chanchin.* Lois Bet Print & Publication on Behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Department, 2012.

Tribal Research Institute. *Mizo Ramchhuah Dan*. Tribal Research Institute, 1993.

Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. *Mizo Sakhua: Kumpinu Rorel Hma*. Tribal Research Institute, 1983.

Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. *Seminar & Important Papers*. Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Dept., 2008.

Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Mizoram. *Zu In Mizo Society*. Senior Research Officer, Tribal Research Institute, 1983.

Vanchiau, C. Lalawmpuia. *Rambuai Literature*. Lengchhawn Press, 2014.

Vanchiau, C. Lalawmpuia. *Tapchhak Theory*. Lalrinpuia Ralte, 2011.

Vanlalchhuanawma. *Christianity and Subaltern Culture: Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Westernisation in Mizoram*. ISPCK, 2006.

Vanlalngheta, J. T. *The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo*. 2010. 3rd ed., Lalchungnungi, 2015.

Vanlaltlani, T. *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh*. Mizoram Publication Board, 2005.

Vannghaka, K. C. *Folk Literature:* (*Pi Pute Thu Leh Hla Zirchianna*). Vanhlupuii, 2015.

—. *Literature Kawngpui* (*Theory of Literature*). Vanhlupuii, 2010.

—. *Literature Zungzam*. Vanhlupuii, 2014.

Walder, Dennis. *Post-Colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory*. Atlantic, 2005.

Waugh, Patricia, editor. *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. Oxford UP, 2006.

Wilson, James G. *Journal of Contemporary Thought*. Forum on Contemporary Theory, Baroda in Collaboration with International Lincoln Center, Louisiana State University, Shreveport, 2015.

Woodthorpe, R. G. *Lushai Expedition, 1871-1872*. 1873. 1st Reprint, United Publishers, 1980.

Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Blackwell, 2001.

Zaihmingthanga. *The History of Christianity in Mizoram, 1944-1994*. Lengchhawn Press, 2016.

Zairema, Rev. *Pi Pute Biak Hi*. Zorun Community, 2009.

Zairemmawia, R. B. *Mizo leh Zoram Diary: AD 700-1998*. R. B. Zairemmawia, 1999.

Zaliana. *Mizo Sakhua* (*Kumpinu Rorel Hma*). Tribal Research Institute, 1983.

Zama, C. *Zoram A Tap*. C. Zama, 2008.

Zama, Margaret Ch., and C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau. *After Decades of Silence: Voices From Mizoram A Brief Review of MIzo Literature*. Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, 2016.

Zamawia, R. *Zofate Zinkawngah* - (*Zalenna Mei a Mit Tur a Ni Lo*). R. Zamawia, 2007.

Zatluanga. *Mizo Chanchin Bu Hnuhnung*. Zasanga, 2003.

Zawla, K. *Mizo Pi Pute leh An Thlahte Chanchin*. K. Zawla, 1964.

Zikpuii Pa Hnuhma (*A Collection of Zikpuii Pa Essays*). MCL Publications, 2000.

Zongte, Lalhmingchhuanga. *Savun Kawrfual*. Ophel, 2017.

Zoramdinthara. *Mizo Fiction: Emergence and Development*. Ruby Press & Co., 2013.

Journals, Periodicals, and Electronic Sources

Gegeo, David Welchman. “Cultural Rupture and Indigeneity: The Challenge of (Re)Visioning ‘Place’ in the Pacific.” *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2001, pp. 491–507., doi:10.1353/cp.2001.0052.

Keesing, Roger M. “Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Contemporary Pacific.” *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 1, no. 1/2, 1989, pp. 19–42. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23701891

Gangte, Mercie. “Gender and Customary Law: A Case Study of Mizo Tribe in North East India.” *Indian Anthropologist*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2016, pp. 17–30. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43899790

JanMohamed, Abdul R. “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 59-87., doi:10.1086/448321.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.” *Boundary 2*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1984, pp. 333-358., doi:10.2307/302821.

Radhakrishnan, R. “Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity.” *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1993, p. 750-771., doi:10.2307/2932208.

Saha, Abhishek. “Mizo Students Take Pledge Not to Marry ‘Outsiders. “ *The Indian Express*, 3 Sept. 2019, indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/mizoram/mizoram-students-take-pledge-not-to-marry-outsiders-5961871/.

Stewart, Charles. “Creolization, Hybridity, Syncretism, Mixture.” *Portuguese Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2011, p. 48., doi:10.5699/portstudies.27.1.0048.

Thomas, Babu. “Mizoram to Get Its First Woman Pastor in March.” *Christian Today*, 20 Feb. 2012, www.christiantoday.co.in/article/mizoram.to.get.its.first.woman.pastor.in.march/7070.htm

ANNEXURE

ANNEXURE

(*This annexure contains brief summaries of the six novels selected for study in the thesis. Since the selected novels for this research are yet to be translated into English, there are instances in the body of the thesis wherein translations in English is given within quotes with the relevant page reference of the Mizo primary texts. These translations are that of the research scholar*).

Hawilopari (1936) - L. Biakliana

Hawilopari is the female protagonist who is the titular character of this novel which depicts the separation and ultimate union of the lovers Hminga and Hawilopari.

It includes all the travails and hardships the pair of lovers faced which finally culminated in their union at the end of the story. The novel is set against the historical background of the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 carried out by the British Indian Army in retaliation for Mizo raids on the surrounding border areas, that is, the plains towards their western border and also, in which the raiders killed James Winchester and abducted his young daughter Mary Winchester. The Expedition had been planned to rescue the child and to punish the chiefs responsible for the raids. The timeline of the novel spans the course of about a decade. In the story, the protagonist Hminga along with his brother Liana and his friends Zema and Chhana decide to leave the village in secret one day. They no longer wanted to endure the miserable life under the authority of their cruel stepmother who ill-treated them and with their father being a hen-pecked husband who could not protect them, they decided to escape. However, their friend Zema and Chhana, who was the son of the Chief, offered to accompany them on their escape out of loyalty to them as friends.

They reached Hringchar (present day Silchar in the Cachar area of the state of Assam) and three of them joined the British Indian Army after being taken in by a kindly British army officer who employed Zema as a cook. They swiftly rose up the ranks of the army and exhibited prowess and bravery. While they were in the military, Hawilopari (Pari) and her two friends Ngaihi and Mawii who knew about the escape of Hminga and his friends, had continued to keep their escape a secret, perhaps out of fear of being considered as complicit in their escape and being punished as a result of it. This is understandable because Chhana was the son of the Chief of the village and the sole heir of

his father so his disappearance could be regarded as a tragedy. However, no mention is made of the reactions of the parents and the villagers except for the general suspicion that Pari and her friends had knowledge about the disappearance of the boys. Meanwhile, Pari lived a miserable life of longing for the fulfillment of her lover Hminga's promise to return to the village. Her friends Mawii and Ngaihi eagerly awaited the return of their respective lovers Liana and Chhana as well.

Ten years passed during which time, Pari had a few suitors hoping to marry her but she rejected all the proposals that came her way. One incident stood out, in which Khuala who was the son of one of the elders in the Chief's council of elders, aspired to marry her. His father approached Pari's parents with the offer of marriage but Pari flatly refused the offer much to the confusion and consternation of her parents since Khuala was considered as a good catch in their village. In retaliation for the humiliation of Pari's refusal, and after being cleverly prompted by Suaka, Khuala decided to defame Pari on false grounds. He spread the rumour that he had slept with Pari. This was one of the worst kinds of humiliation a young woman could ever face in her life and Pari was dejected for her reputation was sullied. It was Hminga's mother who had plotted to defame Pari so that her friend Thangi could get married to Khuala. Since she knew that Hminga was interested in Pari, she wanted her out of the way, and had made her brother Suaka carry out her plan. Pari's father was angry and indignant upon hearing the rumour. Then when Pari assured him of her innocence, he decided to settle the matter in a trial before the chief and his council of elders. However, since Khuala's father was one of the elders, the trial was unfair. Thereafter, having been greatly angered, wronged and humiliated, Pari's father decided to shift to another village. This was the village where Pari's maternal Rala uncle lived.

Meanwhile, Hminga and his friends were becoming restless and longed to return home. A decade had passed since they ran away from their village and lost contact with their families and friends. They were all overjoyed when the authorities permitted them to be a part of the Lushai Expeditionary Force which was to undertake the Lushai Expedition (1871-72) since it would enable them to return to their village. Upon their return to the Lushai Hills, they came across the funeral procession of Hminga's father wherein they were reconciled with their stepmother who was full of sorrow and remorse for the way she

treated them in the past. Chhana was reunited with his lover Ngaihi and Liana with Mawii. And as soon as Hminga realised that Pari's family had relocated to another village he immediately went to that village. But upon reaching it, he found that the village had been raided and gutted for it had been subject to a raid by the Pawih enemies and burned down, with all its inhabitants carried away as captives. He proceeded to try and rescue Pari and her family. However, it was Zema who reached the captives first. He had known of Hminga's intention and followed him afterwards but had overtaken him by chance. He too proceeded to try and rescue Pari for his friend Hminga's sake. Zema devised a plan of rescue in order to save Pari and the people of her village.

Since he too was of the Pawih clan, he was able to fool the enemies with a disguise and devised a strategy for the men of Pari's village to overpower the Pawih enemies by surprise at night. His plan was a success and as they were escaping, they ran into Hminga. Unfortunately for Zema, he was injured by the enemy and just before he died, he made Pari's father promise to allow Hminga to marry his daughter Pari. Thus, the story ended with the sacrifice made by Zema for his beloved friend Hminga. Zema embodied the value of *tlawmngaihna* and had the qualities befitting a *pasalṭha* (Mizo warrior). He laid down his life for his friends Hminga and Pari.

Zawlpala Thlan Tlang (1977) - Khawlkungi

The title of the novel means, the hill on which Zawlpala's grave lies. Zawlpala is the male protagonist of the popular Mizo folktale Tualvungi and Zawlpala which portrays the tragic separation of the lovers after a Vai lal (Chief or Raja from the plains) expresses his interest in marrying Tualvungi, and Zawlpala barters the hand of his Tualvungi in jest by stating that she was his sister since he relied on the mistaken assumption that the Vai lal would not have enough wealth including mithans, beaded necklaces, puans (traditional woven cloth), and Mizo knives or daos to meet the exhorbitant demand he had made for a bride price. As promised, Tualvungi was married to the Vai Lalpa who brings the agreed upon amount of wealth. The story ends in tragedy with the death of the lovers Zawlpala and Tualvungi. However, this folktale appears to have no direct connection to the novel beyond its reference to a popular folktale depicting the love between Zawlpala and Tualvungi, since the author Khawlkungi has mentioned in the preface to the novel that this is a Christian love story.

Zawlpala Thlan Tlang (1977) is the first Mizo novel written by a Mizo woman, Khawlkungi. It is a Christian love story and as the author has mentioned in the preface to the novel, it is intended to serve a didactic purpose of teaching the value of living a life in keeping with the Christian morality, for which a person is richly rewarded. The story begins in 1940 around the time of the Second World War with the female protagonist Vanlalremi (Remi) whose father had just died. Her father, the widower Pu Liana was a Church elder in Phulpui village and was a God-fearing man who instilled good Christian morality and faith in his daughter. Since Remi was now an orphan, she had no other choice but to turn to her paternal aunt Ṭhuami for help. Her aunt took her in but her husband Pu Rochhinga (Rova) was a drunkard who ended up mistreating Remi by making her toil and work hard. One day, his ill-treatment of Remi got to a stage where he attempted to force Remi to marry a young man called Lalmuana who was his friend and who was a drunkard as well. He tried to marry Remi off in exchange for the offer of a *Laiphir* (double-barrelled musket gun).

Remi decided to run away to her uncle Pu Kawla (her mother's brother) who lived in Reiek village. As soon as she left the village, she ascended Zâwlpala *Thlan Tlang* (the Hill on which Zawlpala's Grave lies) beyond which lay her father's grave and she felt a wave of despair. On his death bed, it had been the dying wish of her father for her to go and live with her uncle Pu Kawla who was a Church elder. On the way there, she reached Sialsuk village where she went to the Pastor's house and befriended his daughter Biakkungi who informed her of the opportunity to stay with Pi Zaii (the missionary) and to study in the school which she ran. After staying with Pi Zaii for one year, the school holidays were approaching and one night, the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides prepared a Camp fire on the hill where the Girls' school stood. The teachers of the Boys M. E. School also came to attend and there she met Malsawma who began to develop an interest in her.

Since it was around the time of the Second World war, food was hard to come by and people lived in fear of an invasion from the Japan army and the schools had to be closed. Remi decided to finally go to her uncle's house at Reiek village. On the way, she came across a woman and her child who were from Reiek. They decided to rest for food in a hut along the way but found Malsawma in the hut, injured by a snake bite. He was going to be the headmaster of Reiek village and was on his way there. Remi administered first

aid with the medicines she had for emergencies and stayed the night with him for she took pity on him since he could not be moved. Meanwhile the woman and her child went to call for help. Once Remi began to settle down in Reiek village, she began earning money as a seamstress with her sewing skills and helped her uncle with the family finances, while Malsawma was a schoolteacher in the village. In Reiek, Remi and Malsawma fell in love, however, there was a young woman called Lalkhawthangi (Lali) who was also in love with Malsawma and was utterly jealous of Remi. Lali lied to Remi by saying that Malsawma had expressed his intention of marrying her, thus making Remi believe that Malsawma liked her instead. Soon, Malsawma confessed his love to Remi and they became lovers. In contrast to Remi, Lali was a brash young woman who shamelessly kept visiting Malsawma at his house, after befriending him.

Since Lali was beautiful, her brother Lalngura and his wife Lianthangi had hopes that she would marry a *kamding* (a government employee, since being in the employment of the government and having a salaried job was a prestigious status in Mizo society). Therefore, they let her stay at home while all the other young women of the village did back-breaking work at the jhoom. Since she had no work to do, she would even go to visit Malsawma's often and even washed his clothes for him out of her own volition. When Lali realised that Malsawma was not interested in her and that he paid no heed to her advances, out of anger and a sense of indignation, she slept with Vanthanga out of spite and became pregnant by him. Vanthanga was a soldier in the army who had come home on leave. Meanwhile, Remi and Malsawma became engaged to be married.

When Lali became pregnant, she did not protest when her brother suggested that it must have been Malsawma who impregnated her, and so, much to Malsawma's embarrassment and indignation, the matter was brought before the village chief and his council of elders to be decided on. Meanwhile, Vanthanga's parents received a letter in which he told them about his affair with Lali and warned them that if Lali became pregnant, they should pay the *sawn man* (price for the illegitimate child). Soon after, Lali and her brother's family decided to shift to Kanghmun village out of shame. Meanwhile, Remi and Malsawma began their wedding preparations. But before they got married, Malsawma suddenly received a letter of summons from the Mission (the board of missionaries who were his employers). Out of anger and indignation at having lost the case before the chief,

Lalngura had decided to exact revenge by giving false information to the Mission regarding Malsawma's case in the form of a letter. The Headmaster of Boys' M. E. School told him that the authorities had decided to suspend him for some time and that, even if he were reinstated, they would post him elsewhere. Then Malsawma felt a wave of anger and indignation and was no longer interested in being a teacher owing to the shame he had to endure. He decided that he could not get married without a proper job. Since he had always been interested in joining the army, he wanted to work towards becoming an army officer immediately and so, he left for Shillong (in the state of Meghalaya) abruptly, and did so even before he could tell Remi about having called off the wedding. He sent his help Mawia to tell Remi about the new change of plans and meanwhile, Remi was still busy preparing for the wedding.

On the day of the wedding, after all preparations were in place and Malsawma was expected to arrive at any moment, Malsawma's messenger Mawia arrived to tell them of the change in plans. Remi was disappointed and embarrassed but learned to accept the change in circumstances. As for Vanthanga, who was the father of Lali's illegitimate child, he decided to take revenge on Lali by courting and then marrying Lalchhungi who was the next-door neighbour of Lali in the village she had relocated to. His revenge was fulfilled for Lali was filled with jealousy and regret by the end of the story. Malsawma had become an army officer by then and so his job provided them the financial stability to lead a comfortable life in the end. When Christmas time approached Remi and her friend Biakkungi travelled to Phulpui village and they decided to stay at Pu Huaia's house. Pu Huaia was a friend of her father's and a church elder of Phulpui village. While they stayed there, they visited Remi's uncle Rova from whom Remi had escaped at the beginning.

He told her that after she had left, he had let Lalmuana marry his daughter Rosangi because he wanted his gun. Since Lalmuana was a bad person and a drunkard just like him, he ended up making Rosangi's life miserable so much so that she decided to file for a divorce. But she became unhealthy and he guessed that it was because of the torture she endured and so she soon passed away, leaving behind her child whom her parents took care of. He himself was ill in health and had realised how wrong he was in having ill-treated his wife as well as Remi and expressed remorse at it. Remi and Biakkungi proceeded to tell him about the word of God after which, he finally began believing in God. At the

end of the story Remi and Malsawma were happily married and had a son, and Malsawma's parents were very happy about having a daughter in law who was patient, kind, industrious, and who was self-sufficient because of her skills in sewing. They felt that her character and qualities were that of a true Christian.

Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii (1981) - James Dokhuma

The title can be translated as Tumpangchal or Saithangpuii and it refers to the popular topic of conversation among the villagers of Darzo village in which they discuss as to whether it would be more worthwhile for a man to attain the thangchhuah status and thereby achieve glory and respect in the society, or to marry the beautiful Saithangpuii, the daughter of the chief of the village by which a man could then become the chief of the village since she was an only child.

This is the story of a young man Hrangkûnga (Fehtea) who was a young man in the village of Darzo village of three hundred houses. He came from a poor family but showed potential to become a great *pasalṭha* and had all the qualities required to become one. Fehtea's full name was Hrangkûnga and he was named after his grandfather who was a reputed *pasalṭha*. Fehtea was *tlawmngai*, industrious, brave and courageous, and showed great prowess at hunting. He earned a good reputation for himself in the village and Saithangpuii, the only child of the chief of the village appeared to be enamoured by him. She expressed her interest in him with respectable restraint through her actions but in such a manner that Fehtea could not understand whether she liked him or not. Sangtuala who was the son of one of the elders in the Chief's council was a *Val Upa* (translatable as Youth Leader) who was in charge of teaching and guiding the young men in the *Zawlbuk* and his was a well-respected and influential position in the village. However, he was spitefully jealous of Fehtea since he managed to defeat Tlungirha of Thingsai village immediately after Tlungirha had subjected Sangtuala to a humiliating defeat. Tlungirha was renowned for being skilled at wrestling and since Fehtea defeated him, he emerged as a better fighter than Sangtuala.

In keeping with the Mizo practice of inviting visitors and travellers to a friendly wrestling match of strength at the *zawlbuk* to see if they were stronger than the men of the village, Tlungirha and Aithangvunga of Thingsai village were invited to wrestle and had initially declined. Before the wrestling began, Sangtuala had spoken about Fehtea in a

disparaging tone in which he implied that Fehtea was weak and in turn, suggested that the guests were weak by stating that Fehtea might have the courage to defeat them the next time they visited. It was then that Tlungirha decided to wrestle Sangtuala. Initially, Tlungirha had no intention of wrestling since he was tired, but after hearing the *Val Upa* (elder in charge of young men in the *zawlbuk*) Sangtuala's boastful tone which did not befit the important position of a *Val Upa*, he decided to wrestle Sangtuala and defeated him easily. Despite being a *Val Upa,* which required one to be mature and responsible, Sangtuala was irresponsible and full of jealousy and hatred for Fehtea. He was also unspeakably jealous of Fehtea since he wanted to marry Saithangpuii whom he noticed was interested in Fehtea. He wanted to marry Saithangpuii with the motive of becoming the son-in-law of the chief which would ensure that he became the chief someday.

Over the course of the story consisting, Sangtuala spread false rumours on three occasions to defame Fehtea. He misused his power and influence over the young men and women of the village as a Val Upa to make them hate and revile Fehtea and to falsely consider him as a promiscuous philanderer who sought to defame the young women of the village. As a result, nearly all the young men and women of the village began hating and ostracising Fehtea for no fault of his own. Before this happened, he had been quite popular among the youth and especially among the young women for he was a brave *pasalṭha* and was considered as a good catch for a husband. Only Saithangpuii, the chief's daughter and his siblings, cousins and his friend Thatkima were convinced of his innocence. However, Fehtea was the embodiment of *tlawmngaihna* in his village and showed qualities that would have enabled him to become a *pasalṭha*.

He was industrious and skilled at hunting and presumably, at warfare as well since he displayed courage and resilience. In the second chapter, the chief put the young men of the *zawlbuk* to the test one rainy night during a thunderstorm, by asking if anyone was willing to run an errand for the chief to the neighbouring village. Most of the young men pretended to sleep and as for the two other young men Thanuka and Dohleia who made an attempt to obey the chief's call, Sangtuala had prevented from going, saying that the Chief was simply trying to flaunt his power and authority and that the matter was probably not of serious import, thus betraying his own responsibility as a *Val Upa*.

Meanwhile, Fehtea obeyed the orders of the chief and found out that it was a test by the chief to see who among the young men of his village were faithful to him and whom he could rely on. From this, and from the prowess displayed by Fehtea in the hunt such as when he killed a tiger with the help of his friend Thatkima, the chief recognised that he was an admirable and *tlawmngai* young man and so, he did not really believe the rumours about him. But the situation about the rumours escalated to such a state that Fehtea's own family and especially his blind father who was a widower was entirely disappointed in him and Fehtea no longer felt comfortable staying in the village. And so, he took up trading and selling wares and often travelled which afforded him the chance to stay away from the village where he was much reviled on false grounds. Saithangpuii was the village beauty with the added quality of being the sole child of the chief which would ensure that her husband would eventually become the chief.

The *tumpangchal* (a wild gayal or mithun of mythic proportions) is something of a mythical figure in the literary imagination of the Mizos as portrayed in stories. When the animal was spotted within proximity of the village one day, the villagers soon began comparing Saithangpuii to the *tumpangchal*. in terms of worth. There were heated discussions and arguments as to whether marriage to Saithangpuii or the fame that came with being able to hunt down the *tumpangchal* was of more value and worth. Towards the end of the story, Fehtea turned out to be one who killed the *tumpangchal* and ended up marrying Saithangpuii since the chief had promised her hand in marriage to the young man capable of killing the famed animal. On the night that the entire village celebrated the killing of the beast and feasted on its meat, Sangtuala became drunk and confessed to the wrongs he had committed against Fehtea following which, the chief stood up and said that Fehtea would forgive him but that such a thing should not happen in their village again. He reminded them that, just as one man can bring fame and glory to their village, one man can bring shame upon the village as well.

The story ends with Fehtea's uncle (the husband of his paternal aunt) giving a speech in which he expressed anger at the ordeal which Fehtea had been subjected to and called for peace and love among the villagers of Darzo village. He said that the young men and women of Darzo village were the ones having the capability of bringing fame and glory to their village and that greatness is not something which a person can bestow on

himself or herself but that it was something conferred on a person by others. The story thus concludes on a strong moralistic note.

Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah (1989) - Zikpuii Pa

Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah can be translated as, the major crossroads of life, and is indicative of the major changes including the turmoil and ultimate happiness that the protagonists Chhuana and Sangtei had to go through because of the consequences of adverse effects of the Rambuai years (lasting from 1966-1986) as a result of the secessionist movement for independence taken up upon the initiative of the Mizo National Front (MNF) political party in an act of uprising against the Indian government.

Chhuanvawra Renthlei (Chhuana) was a good young man who was a Sunday School teacher in his village. The female protagonist Ngurthansangi (Sangtei) was even as a child, an over-achiever who excelled in her studies and was an exemplary figure concerning the Sunday School activities at Church. Chhuana's father used to be a doctor working as a Captain in the Army, stationed in Burma. When the war was over, he came down to Assam where he worked as an Assistant Surgeon and as the British were about to leave India, they made him Honorary Civil Surgeon just as he was about to retire. However, he was a true Mizo man who wanted to live in the village, and he wanted to have a farm of his own. Therefore, he returned to Zopui village. Chhuana had an elder brother Chhuankima and two older sisters who studied in Shillong. His sisters had to return before completing their studies owing to lack of funds and they eventually married and settled in Aizawl. Chhuana too returned from Shillong to complete his schooling at Zopui village because he was homesick and understood that the family finances were strained. Chhuana's father was well-respected since he chose to render his service to the village when he could have lived a comfortable life in the city of Aizawl. Chhuana decided to go to college in Shillong where his brother had a government job.

Around the same time, a sense of growing dissatisfaction was felt against the Indian government in relation to the negligence meted out to the Mizo District Council region especially in relation to lack of aid provided for relief from the devastating effects of the *Mautam* famine of 1958-59. He wished to be successful in his studies, so he studied hard despite being aware of the trouble in Mizoram. When he returned in the winter of 1964, he realised that Ngurthansangi was now 15 years old and was fast becoming a beautiful

young woman. When the New Year arrived, the Mizo National Front 'Volunteers' who were more than 400 in number began to practice army parade routines in the village field. They were trained by Mizos who were retired members of the army from the Assam regiment of the Indian army. In 1965 Chhuana returned to Shillong to continue his studies. Even in Shillong, he was appointed as a Sunday School teacher. He kept in touch with Ngurthansangi through letters and they soon fell in love. Meanwhile, across the villages of Mizoram, young men and women joined the Mizo National Front (MNF) which began to spearhead the movement calling for the independence of Mizoram from India.

While Chhuanvawra was still in Shillong the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986) began. The Mizo National Front Army declared independence from India and Mizoram was thrown into turmoil. The Indian government reacted immediately by sending soldiers via Silchar. They soon took back Aizawl city and completely burned down the entire Bara Bazar area in the heart of the city. Even the wealthy and powerful shopkeepers of Aizawl had no place to call their home. The Indian army asked the people of Aizawl to return to their homes and indeed, many of them went back home. When the army entered Mizoram, they raped young women, children, and even old women. Chhuana tried to get news about Zopui village but there was no way for him to know. He soon received a letter from his sister Lianzuali in which she said that the entire village of Zopui had been burned to the ground and that her father, mother and their sister Thanpuii had reached Aizawl. She then asked him to look for a place in Shillong so that his father, mother and sister could come to stay. He finally found a place for his family and he was relieved for once. He lived in constant fear of hearing bad news about Ngurthansangi. Soon enough, he received a telegram informing him that his family was coming to Shillong. Once his family had come down, he asked his sister Thanpuii about Ngurthansangi but she told him to forget about her in a serious tone.

His father finally told him that Sangtei was a beautiful girl and so she had been taken to the jail. His father thus implied that she had been raped. Chhuana was greatly angered and decided to go to Zopui. When he realised that he would not be able to reach Zopui village he decided to take up action from Shillong. Once he was back in Shillong, he resumed his studies and even won an Inter-College Debate at St. Anthony's Hall with the Governor of Assam in attendance. Chhuanvawra was a student of St. Edmund's college,

considered as one of the best colleges in Shillong at the time. By this we understand that the Mizos have been modernised to the extent that Mizo young men have begun to study in the highest institutions of learning available for people in the region.

A Major General of the Indian Army who had attended the debate had been impressed by him. Chhuana found the opportunity to speak to him and told him of the atrocities committed by the Indian Army and he was assured that the matter would be investigated. It was this same Major General who arranged for Chhuana to return to visit Zopui village. When he returned, Sangtei's parents told him that she was in such a pitiable condition (after having been raped) that when a Captain in the Indian Army had fallen in love with her, they had allowed him to marry her. In truth, her father had given his consent only after being tortured for it. He felt the world no longer had any beauty in it and was saddened to return to Shillong having failed in his endeavour to reunite with Sangtei whom he wanted to marry.

Chhuana continued his studies in Shillong and in 1967, he passed his B.A (Honours) exams in the first division. He was 23 years old now and his parents had gone back to Zopui village. Now he had to decide upon his future, and he felt that it was best to try and have a government job and if the need arose, he could then take over his father's business. During the winter holidays of 1968 he was called for the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) interview in Delhi. When the UPSC results came out Chhuana was chosen to become an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer and completed all necessary training thereafter. After joining the IPS, he began looking for Sangtei since he had chosen to become an IPS officer in order to be able to find her. Sharma, who was a friend and colleague of Chhuana's told him that he would let him know if he ever came across a Mizo prostitute to disprove Chhuana's claim that there were no Mizo prostitutes. After visiting many cities, they finally reached Chandigarh.

Three days had passed since they arrived and on Sunday, Chhuana's friend Sharma reminded him about the challenge regarding Mizo prostitutes and told him that he suspected that there was a Mizo prostitute in Chandigarh. Sharma said that he had never seen such a beautiful woman like her, and he also mentioned that some people said that she was a high-class prostitute and was probably a Filipino, a Mizo or a Bhotia. When Chhuana finally met the prostitute "Rita Moonlight Belle" in his disguise a Sardar, he was completely

shocked to see that it was indeed Ngurthansangi (Sangtei) and his secret fears were confirmed. When she realised his true identity, she was shocked and ashamed, and began weeping. He told her that he had been searching for her for five years. She then told him her story about how she was forced into prostitution after her husband Capt. Ranade sold her to her boss Manohar Singh Yadav. They kept her locked in a room for a year where they starved her, beat her up and raped her, after which they forced her into prostitution. Sangtei told him to stay away for she considered herself as being worthless after having lived a sinful life. But Chhuana told her that she was not at fault for she was forced to become a prostitute by evil men because of which she could not be held accountable for her sins. He then told her that he was still in love with her and that he was going to rescue her.

He told her of his plan to take her back to Zopui so that they could get married in the church so that she could become the mother of his children. Chhuana comforted her by telling her that the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of the police was his friend's elder brother and that he offered to help him. With his help, the IGP (Inspector General of Police) was contacted and a successful rescue operation was carried out. Chhuana and Sangtei immediately left for Mizoram soon after. They reached Chhuana's home in Aizawl and they told their families that Sangtei had separated from her husband a long time ago and that they had met at Sangtei's office in Chandigarh. Chhuana also learned, to his delight, that U Rema (his sister Thanpuii's husband) was the Zopui College Principal and that Thanpuii had taken over his father's drugstore. Chhuana was overjoyed to learn that Ngurthansangi's father Pu Khawvelthanga, whose shop consisting of all his savings had been burned down, had rebuilt his shop and was now more successful than before. His father suggested that they should get married in Aizawl, but they were adamant that their marriage should take place in Zopui. Therefore, after staying for just two days, they set off for Zopui where they were happily married.

In the epilogue the narrator mentions how Ngurthansangi received justice for the cruel treatment meted out to her by Capt. Ranade. In 1985 Ranade held the post of the Additional Director General of the Metropolitan Police and he had won the first prize at the Individual Golf Championship Tournament at the Bombay Wellington Club. There was a Club Dinner Dance after the tournament, which was attended by the rich, the powerful

and the famous with the governor of Bombay as the chief guest. By then, Chhuana and Sangtei had two children, a girl and a boy. During the dinner dance Sangtei was sitting next to the Governor, the South American Ambassador, and a General who was the Army Commander, Western command. The South American Ambassador kept teasing her and asked her questions about her past life as a prostitute which he had heard about, much to the discomfort of the Governor and the General. She knew that many people knew about her past and so she answered his questions in a nonchalant manner and gave him a short account about how she was raped and then forcefully sold into prostitution by a man who had professed to her parents of his willingness to marry her.

The Ambassador expressed his surprise that such human trafficking was happening in India. At this point the General lost his patience and asked her if she would be able to identify the man who sold her to prostitution. She told him that he was at the dinner dance and pointed towards Ranade (Mengranga). Then when she told him that she still kept the marriage license he had signed when they were married under the Mizo customary law, he became nervous and defensive in stating his innocence and even claimed that she must be referring to another man with the same name. At this, the General stood up, took leave of the Governor and gave orders to the Brigadier to summon a court Martial in order to investigate the case. The next day was a Monday and on the front page of the newspaper the headlines stated that an Army Officer had committed suicide, leaving his wife and two children behind. When Chhuanvawra read out the news about Ranade's suicide to his wife, he expressed pity for him while Sangtei felt that he brought down the wrath of God for his evil deeds. The narrator concludes by stating that he paid the price for his evil deeds towards the people of Mizoram and towards Ngurthansangi, which is that of death. In the last line, the narrator says that the wages of sin have to be paid through death.

Damlai Thlan Thim (2003) - Lalrammawia Ngente

Damlai thlan thim means the dark grave of life which points to the dark path of criminality, debauchery, and self-destruction into which the protagonist Lalchhuanawma (Chhuana) descended after the breakdown of his family upon the divorce of his parents due to the infidelity of his mother and his father's alcoholism.

The narrative is in the autobiographical mode or first-person narrative mode. The narrator begins by giving an account of the beginning of all his troubles. One day, as he

was preparing for his exams, his father beat up his mother and drove her out of the house for he had caught her in the act of committing adultery. He was around 10 years of age at the time. Before his father was posted to Mualnuam village where they lived, he had been an honest and good man who was admired at his workplace and who was active in Church activities and activities at the level of the locality. Once he shifted to Mualnuam, things went well for two years till one day he returned home drunk from an office picnic. He soon became an alcoholic and was abusive towards his wife. Soon enough, he was fired from his job and he stopped going to church. His wife had no choice but to start selling things she could procure from the markets in Aizawl. The young man who became her lover was in the same business of selling goods like her.

After Chhuana's mother was driven out, his grandparents came over and stayed with him for two months. After they left, his father was back at the local wine shop. In those days of misery, there were people who comforted him like the Church elder Upa Lalkhuma and two young men, Thlamuana and Hmangaiha who would try and persuade him and his family to attend church but to no avail. Since he lived a miserable life in the village because of his father's alcoholism, Chhuana decided to run away to Aizawl when he was 18 years old. He took the bus to Aizawl without having any money for a fare. However, the bus conductor seemed to understand his plight and did not ask him for it. After reaching Aizawl, when the kindly conductor Lalhmingliana or Hminga (also called Taia) realised that he had nowhere to go, he invited Chhuana to stay with him. Hminga too came from a village to live with his maternal uncle Thandanga and his wife Lianzovi, to pursue a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree. During his holiday from college, he took on the role of a conductor since the bus belonged to his uncle.

When Hminga's uncle and aunt asked Chhuana about his purpose for coming to Aizawl, he told them his story. They were moved with compassion and told him that he could stay with them and pursue his studies. Hminga's uncle told Chhuana that it was God's plan that he had come into their lives and considered him as a family member. They set up a separate room for him. Hminga's uncle was a Deputy Director in the Social Welfare Department and they had two daughters one of whom was married while the other, Mawitei was an M. A student who had gone to Guwahati to give the National Eligibility Test (NET) exam. Once Mawitei returned, Chhuana met her and found her

very beautiful. Chhuana joined the National Open school from the ninth grade to finish his studies which he had discontinued in the village. One day, Mawitei introduced Chhuana to her best friend Laldawngliani (Dawngi) who eventually fell in love with him. By the time Chhuana became 22 years of age, he had graduated from the Open school and joined the college where Mawitei (whom he called U Mawitei since she was older than him) also studied.

He befriended three young men, Muana, Zuala, and Ruata. Muana's mother was a widow who was quite well off because her husband, a retired army man had left behind a decent home and possessions before he passed away. She was a God-fearing woman who treated her son's friends as if they were her own. She often scolded the three friends for not participating in church activities. Zuala was from Sialsuk village and he was staying with his paternal aunt in order to study. Ruata's family was not wealthy and his father was a drunkard, while his mother had a small shop which was the sole source of income for the family. These three friends were very important to Chhuana. One day, an incident occurred which completely changed the course of Chhuana's life yet again. His friends had come over to his place and when they all went out from his house at night, some drunk members of the YMA (Young Mizo Association) JAC (Joint Action Committee) stopped to ask them where they were going. Chhuana was angered at the fact that these men on duty, who were drunk themselves, assumed they were drunk when they were not. Thus, he questioned whether they were drunk instead, to which they took great offence. They took Chhuana and his friends to their office and interrogated them and they spoke to Chhuana in a disparaging manner.

When the duty leader realised that Chhuana was not drunk, he decided to make him pay a fine for his impudence and the disrespect he displayed. Chhuana was greatly angered and was indignant since he was being punished for an offence he had not committed. That night Chhuana realised that the feeling of having no qualms or hesitation about committing wrongdoings was beginning to emerge because of the insult and unfair treatment that had been meted out to him by the VDP (Village Defence Party)/YMA/JAC duty (local NGOs) who guarded the streets of the localities against miscreants. He then lamented the fact that in the name of the JAC/VDP/YMA, Mizos have tried to reform the society but sometimes, the ones who are placed in charge of implementing the objectives of such

organisations end up alienating and hurting the sentiments of those they attempt to reform. He realised that although the intentions of such non-profit organisations are good, those who volunteer to implement the objectives of the organisations end up falling short of the ideals aspired to by using unlawful means, and so they end up traumatising and hurting the very people they seek to reform and make them lose hope.

This lamentation of Chhuana reveals the didactic nature of the novel which is directed against the dangers of unscrupulous and undiscerning elements misusing the institutions of cultural and societal reform such as the YMA (Young Mizo Association). At the same time, this also reveals how it is as if the character of Chhuana has been set up or predestined to be a bad person. It is as if he cannot escape the fact of his lineage. This is because the next day, members of the YMA came to apologise for the behaviour of the men who had been placed on duty. From U Mawitei's family, he learnt the value of the Christian family.

One day, Chhuana had gone with Hminga to Guwahati to get spare parts for the bus. Once they reached Silchar they found out that they might be able to get what they wanted if they waited for a few more days instead of going to Guwahati. Chhuana decided to return to Aizawl early, leaving Hminga to wait for the goods. On his way back, Hminga arranged for him to travel in a "Vai motor" (a car belonging to Vai people) which was carrying goods to Aizawl. It was during this journey that Chhuana was attacked by the Vais in the motor, who robbed him and threw him out from the side of the motor down the side of the cliff by the side of the road. He survived and was picked up and hospitalised. Chhuana was angered and wanted to take revenge on the Vais who had nearly killed him. His three friends helped him in tracing the whereabouts of the Vais and it so happened that Chhuana ended up killing the driver and the handyman of the Vai motor.

Soon after, Chhuana surrendered to the police and was imprisoned much to the shock of his new-found family. While he served his 10-year sentence in prison, his three friends served the five-year sentence that they were convicted for. While he was in prison, he even tried committing suicide, but he avoided it when he heard the voice of God and felt His presence. Once he was out of prison, he realised that his girlfriend Dawngi (Mawitei's friend) had fallen ill because of being extremely worried about him and had died.

Once he was out of prison, he tried to live a newly reformed life but kept failing at it since he was judged by society. He became a womanizer and got into several relationships. He stayed with his friend Ruata whose sister Muanpuii (Mami) fell in love with Chhuana. Hminga's family kept imploring him to return since they considered him as a family member, but he felt guilty and could not do it. And it so happened that Mawitei eventually expressed her love to him. There were times he tried to live a normal life. He even became a driver but eventually, his employers would find out about his past and then drop him. His past made it impossible to get a loan to start a business. He became disillusioned. He was in a relationship with a woman called Thangkimi who sold alcohol. She put up with Chhuana as he went about committing crimes with miscreants whom he had befriended while in prison. He and his friends Thuamkunga, Sâtliana, Thandâwla, and Siamliana terrorized the northern region of Mizoram where they robbed, threatened, and beat up people. It got to a stage where he no longer felt any remorse or uneasiness.

Meanwhile, his friend Muana had reformed his ways and was now an evangelical speaker who held crusades and camping to bring others to Christ (God). Muana tried to persuade him to repent and change his ways but Chhuana told him that he realised the devil's cunning too late, because of which he could no longer change his ways since he had committed the worst crimes and no longer had the strength to resist the lies of the devil. As for Chhuana, he ended up rejecting and disappointing all the women in his life. He was in a relationship with Thanpari (Pari) who was a rich and beautiful young woman from a decent family. But she had been raped by her father's driver in the past and had kept quiet about it for fear of being shamed by the driver. She had ended up becoming promiscuous and wanted to settle down, but he left her. He was also in a relationship with Thangkimi, who was a bootlegger, but he left her as well. His friend Ruata's sister Mami became pregnant with his child but he rejected her as well. Finally, at the end of the novel he met with an accident in which a truck ran over his legs which had to be amputated. Mami rushed to be by his side and offered to be with him, but he rejected her and told her that he has dug his own grave and was stuck in "damlai thlan thim" (the dark grave of life). He did not want to be with her because he did not want to be pitied nor did he want to sully her reputation and to keep hurting her in the future. Therefore, at the end of the novel, Chhuana is left alone, dejected, and miserable.

Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung (2006) - C. Lalnunchanga

Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung can be translated as, the last days of the pasalṭha (warriors), which suggests the defeat of the Mizo chiefs and their subsequent subjugation by the British colonisers.

This historical novel is divided into two sections, with the first part depicting the enmity between Puilura's village of Khiangzo and Sangburha's village of Tûmhnawk. The story begins with the *Ṭhingṭam* famine of 1880 which was the worst famine to have ever scourged Mizoram. In the midst of such a terrible famine, the *Chhak leh Thlang indo* (the war between the East and the West which took place around 1863-1865) of the Sailo chiefs came to a standstill on account of it. The Sailo chiefs brokered peace at Sailutár, the village of chief Lalhleia. Meanwhile the Pawih of Thlântlang and Halkha escaped the famine since they did not depend on rice as a means of sustenance and so, they looted the Mizos by taking advantage of the famine to proffer food in exchange for their material wealth. The women and children that were captured by the Pawih enemies were sold to the Burmese. Thus, the Pawih were more of a menace than the famine itself according to the author.

The famine was followed by an epidemic causing the death of many, and famines and the epidemics that have followed have probably caused the greatest destruction in Mizo history in terms of loss of human life. However, the Mizos managed to import rice from the plains and were able to survive thus. In the novel, Puilura had just migrated westwards and relocated his village to Khiangzo which was on the easternmost mountain range of the three mountain ranges that made up the expanse of the *Zawlsâng* forest which was unclaimed forest land and it was Puilura's ambition to eventually claim it as his territory. However, he faced stiff competition from chief Sangburha. It was 1884 when a representative came from chief Sangburha of Tûmhnawk village who warned Puilura not to let his subjects farm the Zawlsâng range because they claimed that it belonged to them but Puilura would not relent. Soon enough both the villages became sworn enemies after Sangburha's men killed a few of Puilura's villagers on two occasions, and Puilura's men retaliated in equal measure.

Puilura's *pasalṭha* (warriors) retaliated by sending 13 men for the mission of taking revenge. In the first part of the novel there is a sub-plot which involves the *pasalṭha* (warrior)

Nghalṭhianga's love life. The prequel to this novel, *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2005), has mainly dealt with the Nghalṭhianga's life and mainly with his prowess at the hunt and at warfare where he proved himself to be a consummate and unparalleled *pasalṭha* who was respected in the village community while they had lived in Vangsen village before they relocated to Khiangzo village. At the end of that novel, he had rescued Romawii, the young woman he was in love with, from captivity in the hands of the Sukte enemies. But in *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006), as Puilura's *pasalṭha* were in the middle of their mission of revenge against Sangburha's village, we find Nghalṭhianga thinking about Romawii and regretting that he had not tried hard enough to try and marry her. Despite having rescued her from a life of bondage, he did not marry her because Romawii's family had demanded too high a bride price that was even higher than the bride price required for the daughter of a Sailo chief. Romawii's mother was a cunning woman, and she convinced her family to ask for the treasured possessions of Nghalṭhianga's family for a bride price and out of indignation and wounded pride, Nghalṭhianga and his family had refused to comply and therefore, marriage was out of the question.

Nghalṭhianga married Ainawni with whom he had a son out of wedlock at first. He married her later on, but she died along with their son in the epidemic following the *Ṭhingṭam* famine of 1880. He finally ended up marrying Chuaileni, the daughter of chief Puilura who had returned home for good, after having been mistreated by her first husband Laldara, who was one of the descendants of the Sailo chiefs in the South of Mizoram. She had miscarried and was ill-treated ever since, till her parents finally arranged for her to be divorced. But even after marriage, Chuaileni realised that her husband Nghalṭhianga was not really in love with her despite all her attempts at gaining his love. She realised that he still pined for Romawii. Even though he assured her that a union with Romawii was impossible for the indignation and loss of pride he had been subjected to, Chuaileni realised that he would always love Romawii more than he loved her, but she hoped that he would change someday. As for Romawii, her parents made her marry Saia, the son of a concubine of one of Rolura's descendants (Rolura was one of the great Sailo chiefs). However, she returned home after being falsely accused of committing adultery. Nghalṭhianga deeply regretted not having paid the bride price that was demanded of him since his family could afford it.

As for the situation between Puilura and Sangburha concerning their fight over the Zawlsang range, Puilura was advised against war by three of his elders in his Chief's council since war always caused suffering especially for women and children. But Puilura had the conviction that he should be as brave as his ancestors who had fought hard for supremacy over the land which they had conquered with their blood and sweat. Then Puilura attacked Sangburha's brother, chief Dingthanga's village of Vuakdûp which had three hundred houses. For spoils, they took away all their guns, their jewellery, and gongs as well as some of their mithans. Finally, Sangburha cunningly devised a plan to convince Puilura to risk a complete surrender in a contest, which was a fight to the death between the *pasalṭha* of the two villages in a manner similar to the practice of the Mizo ancestors during their stay in the Lentlâng range before they entered the present-day Mizoram region. When the contest commenced it was a close call for Puilura's village for just when they thought they were on the verge of losing, they managed to win. Thus, the first part of the novel ends with the capture of Sangburha and the loss of his village.

The second part of the novel is set against the background of the Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 in which the Mizo chiefs were subjugated, thus paving the way for the setting up of the British colonial administration in Mizoram (which the British colonial authorities referred to as the Lushai Hills). It was the British Army who undertook this expedition to punish the Mizo chiefs for their raids on the plains which the British regarded as part of their empire and for their killing of British subjects in such areas. The narrator depicts real historical events based on which he writes the historical fiction which comprises the second part of the novel.

The second portion of the novel begins with the year 1890 in which Puilura and his elders discussed the increasing threat to their rule posed by the "white men", that is, the British government, while drinking *zu* (Mizo rice beer). Romawii's father, the elder Chuaukunga advised that they should submit to the British since friendship with them would be advantageous, but Puilura was adamant that he would not agree to side with them if what the British expected was to submit to their rule and to have to pay a tribute (tax) as a show of submission. They soon received news that the young men and the *pasalṭha* from across the region had gathered at Aizawl to put up a fight in the event that the attempt at negotiation between the *bawrhsap* (political officer Daly) and the chiefs did

not work out. All the descendants of Manga, with the exception of the descendants of the chief Suakpuilala, had gathered there. Commandant Daly and Major Cole (whom the Mizo referred to as Kâwlsapa) had talks with the Mizo chiefs during which they blamed Lianphunga as the cause of all the troubles and made an agreement with all the chiefs. This was the point at which Puilura's village began to be involved in the fight with the British colonial government. It was 8th September 1890 when Manga's descendants and Puilura's men (Puilura was the descendant of the Sailo chief Vankalluaia) ambushed and killed Capt. H. R. Browne as he made his way to Changsil fort.

The British intensified their attacks on the Mizos and finally, it was the administrator McCabe who began subjugating the Mizo chiefs one by one. The British forces possessed better arms and ammunition and once they began using canons, the British forces were no match for the Mizos who used outdated guns which were inferior in quality compared to the guns used by the British Army. Chief Puilura was imprisoned at the Aizawl fort and he refused to comply with the British and the threats and the offers put forward by the political officer McCabe could not bring him to change his mind. He was proud of the fact that his ancestors had fought with their lives to claim the land for their own and so he saw no reason as to why he should submit to the British like vanquished men. He preferred death rather than to be like a slave, having to pay taxes and to offer the service of impressed labour to them.

McCabe soon realized that he was a brave and faithful man and respected him for it. Since he refused to take any food while he was in prison, he eventually died much to the shame of the officers who believed that it was not the practice of the British to allow such a dishonourable thing as allowing a prisoner to die in custody. In one of the conversations held amongst the British officers, Capt. Loch commented that the Lushais were a very different race and that their culture was admirable for even though it looked like theirs was a simple and primitive way of life. He stated that he had never seen a more organised and efficient system of administration of society among other hill tribes across the world. He was amazed by the fact that the Lushais did not mistreat their slaves nor did they rape the women taken captive during war. He also admired their ability to acquire the technical know-how to make gunpowder.

McCabe commented that the Mizo people were honest and faithful and that it was a remarkable fact that despite being head-hunters, there were no criminals among them. Such conversations among the officers of the British colonial administration revealed the subterfuge, deceit, and trickery they used in making the Mizos believe that they were powerful and superior to them. Such conversations also showed that they covered up those actions which were reprehensible in their attempt to defeat and subjugate the Mizo chiefs to establish colonial rule in the Lushai Hills region so to establish colonial rule as a civilising mission.

Towards the end of the novel, Puilura's son Saingura was injured in battle and was captured and succumbed to his injuries and died in prison. In the concluding chapter, the people of Puilura's village were discouraged and lost without a leader. Some of them left the village for good while the *pasalṭha* realised that their glory days were coming to an end. However, they were ready to die fighting for they did not wish to surrender and were ready to face whatever danger lay ahead of them in the future. The narrator mentioned that it was historical accounts such as the great story of the brave fight put up by Puilura's group of *pasalṭha* against the British attempt to colonise the Mizos, which the British colonisers feared the coming generations of Mizos will learn of. The story concludes with Puilura's wife Lenbuangi's lamentation about the passage of the days of glory of the brave Mizo *pasalṭha* with the emergence of the rule of the British Empire.

BIO DATA

BIO-DATA

Name : Josephine L. B. Zuali

Father's Name : Dr. Lalbiakkima

Address : A-19 Main Street, Zarkawt,
Aizawl, Mizoram. -796001.

Phone No. : (+91) 8119949390

Educational Qualifications :

CLASS	BOARD/UNIVERSITY	Year of Passing	Division/ Grade	Percentage
X	ICSE	2003	Distinction	82%
XII	MBSE	2005	I	64%
B.A.	Madras University	2008	I	69.90%
M.A.	University of Delhi	2010	I	60.80%
M. PHIL.	Mizoram University	2012	A	6.89
NET (JRF)	UGC	2016	Lectureship/ Junior Research Fellowship	

(JOSEPHINE L. B. ZUALI)

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Other Relevant Information

1) Conferences/Seminars attended:
   i) Presented a paper titled, "The Postcolonial Turn in Mizo Novels: An Overview of Postcolonialism in Mizoram" at the International Conference on Globalization, Literature & Culture organized by Higher Education & Research Society, Navi Mumbai, on 7th & 8th September 2018, Pune, India.
   ii) Presented a paper titled, "Mizo Culture and Mizo Christianity: A Postcolonial Analysis" at the National Seminar on Discourse on Identity: Community, Culture and Politics organized by St Xavier's College, Lengpui on 4th & 5th July 2019, Lengpui, Mizoram, India.
2) Published work:
   i) "Representation of Women in Mizo Folktales: A study of the Patriarchal Demarcation of Gendered Roles in Traditional Mizo Society" published in Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies Vol V. Issue II, December 2018, Pages: 111 - 124. ISSN: 2348-1188.
   ii) "Aptitude and Achievement in Science: A comparative Study of Higher Secondary School Students in Mizoram and Meghalaya" published in International Journal of Research Culture Society Vol 3. Issue 11. November 2019. (Joint paper with Lalmuanzuali, H. Malsawmi, and Estherine Lalrinmawii). ISSN: 2456-6683.
3) Translated work: "That One Time" by Vanneihtluanga and "An Account of the Courting that Never Took Place" by Zirsangkima. Published in *Contemporary Short Stories from Mizoram*, 2017. Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

1.	NAME OF CANDIDATE	:	Josephine L. B. Zuali
2.	DEGREE	:	Ph.D.
3.	DEPARTMENT	:	English
4.	TITLE OF THESIS	:	Mizo Postcolonial Worldview and its Impact on the Literary Discourse of Mizo Novels
5.	DATE OF ADMISSION	:	30th July 2013

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1.	BOARD OF STUDIES	:	30th April 2014
2.	SCHOOL BOARD	:	09th May 2014
	MZU REGISTRATION NO.	:	4914 of 2011
	Ph. D. REGISTRATION NO.	:	MZU/PhD/679 of 09.05.2014
	ACADEMIC COUNCIL EXTENSION (If any)	:	Extended for 2 (two) years Vide No.16-2/MZU (Acad)/19/29-31 Dated 18th June, 2019 upto 8th May 2021

(PROF. K. C. LALTHLAMUANI)
Head
Department of English
Mizoram University

MIZO POSTCOLONIAL WORLDVIEW AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LITERARY DISCOURSE OF MIZO NOVELS

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

JOSEPHINE L. B. ZUALI

MZU REGN. NO. 4914 OF 2011

PH. D. REGN. NO. MZU/PHD/679 OF 09.05.2014

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

NOVEMBER, 2020

Postcolonial theory emerged as an area of literary and cultural studies as part of the decentring tendency seen in the post-1960s Western thought. Postcolonial studies explore how the past (colonialism) and its attendant establishment of notions of cultural difference and inferiority impinges on the present. One of the ways in which the legacy of colonialism can be observed in the present is through the effects of colonial discourse which is premised on the existence of a racialised 'other' who is non-European and non-white, and whose stereotyping resulted in creating ingrained notions of inferiority from which formerly colonised nations and races have attempted to recover.

This thesis primarily employs postcolonial theoretical concepts such as hybridity and ambivalence to understand the Mizo postcolonial worldview, and particularly focuses on the implications of the impact of colonial discourse as well as the postcolonial assertion of identity on Mizo novels. Colonial discourse conditions the perception of the colonised through the establishment of ways of seeing the world or a worldview in which the colonisers have been regarded as the superior culture and civilisation. The values of the colonisers which have been imbibed by the colonised are rooted in a colonial ideology that sought to fulfil the material expansionist agenda of countries of the West over Asia, Africa, and the Americas since the sixteenth century. British colonialism was at its height during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and gradually coming to an end with the Second World War.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview is essentially a hybrid formation of the interaction between Mizo culture and Western culture (Christianity). This study attempts to show how this worldview continues to inform and affect the modern Mizo identity formation and how it has impacted the existing literary discourse of Mizo novels as reflected in the thorough study of the six selected novels that span the years from 1936-2006. The selected novels have been understood as being emblematic of larger trends or patterns in Mizo novel writing, and the selected authors are some of the most popular and lauded among the Mizo readership. The findings show that Mizo novels in general follow a rigid pattern of representation that limits the scope of characterisation while projecting romance, selected elements of Mizo history and culture, and the pronounced role of Christian didacticism as key themes. The key finding however is the formulation of the idea of the Mizo postcolonial

worldview defining it as an amalgam of selective features of the pre-colonial and post-colonial Mizo world.

The cultural worldview of a people is the fundamental cognitive orientation of a cultural group which is influenced by their knowledge, ideas, thoughts, beliefs and values. The Mizo postcolonial worldview is essentially a hybridised formation where one can locate the lasting influence of colonial ideology and colonial discourse, as well as the emergence of a postcolonial mindset. The continuation of the effects of colonial ideology in the modern Mizo society is mainly through Mizo Christianity as an institution. Attempts at cultural reclamation and assertion of the Mizo identity have taken place among Mizo writers and especially novelists, who have taken on the role of restoring, reviving, and reclaiming pride in their culture and cultural heritage. This is observed in the cultural self-expression seen in the novels about the Mizo society of the past. The modern Mizo identity which is hybrid in nature continues to undergo a process of redefinition, reconstitution, and restructuring on account of this negotiation, between the ideological influence of colonialism and the postcolonial attempt to reclaim the culture of the past.

Colonialism, for the Mizos, resulted in entirely uprooting a way of life in which identity was linked to one's clan, or to one's village and the chief, to that of identification with a singular Mizo identity, with a common cultural heritage, common language, and common religion with the near-complete Christianisation of the people within the twentieth century. Colonialism and the modernity that it ushered in signalled the end of the rule of the Mizo chiefs by the mandate of the Mizo people in 1954 and ushered in a new class of the educated elite, as well as the merchant class with the introduction of formal education and the transition from a barter economy to a monetary economy. This caused a significant shift in the worldview from a life under the rule of the chiefs and of the institution of the *zawlbuk*[1] as a unifying force, to its disappearance, and the formation of a postcolonial worldview that is strongly informed by a Mizo Christianity, and which has continued to undergo a process of indigenisation.

Discourses portraying the native as savage, backward, and unintelligent have helped to naturalise a stereotype which came to be accepted as authentic historical fact. In its working, colonial discourse did not allow for the presence of alternative or opposing views and opinions. Therefore, colonial discourse has had a significant role to play in "the

management of racialized imperial relations" (Nayar, "Colonial Voices" 4). In the Mizo context, colonial discourse worked to establish the Mizo ancestor and chiefs as being backward, cowardly, and unintelligent, while portraying the colonisers (colonial administrators and missionaries) as superior. Concerning the impact of colonial discourse which has resulted in the portrayal of the Mizo ancestors in a negative light, an article in the Mizo monthly magazine "*Sabereka Khuangkaih*" (2006) by one Siama Ralte criticises the knowledge which has been passed down among the Mizo, about the superiority and bravery of the white colonisers who were no match for the Mizo ancestors, while failing to consider how they died while bravely defending their land against British occupation (qtd. in Vanchiau 46).

Homi Bhabha (2004) introduced the term ambivalence into colonial discourse theory in which it represents the complex relationship of attraction and repulsion between the coloniser and the colonised. Bhabha states that, "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/ recognition of the colonial object" (126). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have noted that Bhabha's ambivalence undermines the authority of colonial domination since it disrupts the aim of colonial discourse to produce compliant subjects who will 'mimic' the coloniser and reproduce his assumptions, habits, and values. Instead, it produces ambivalent subjects alternating between mimicry and mockery which is "fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance." Therefore, ambivalence (the simultaneous attraction and repulsion) disturbs and undermines the authority of colonial discourse ("Post-Colonial Studies" 10).

The disruption of the aim of colonial discourse in the context of the Mizo colonial situation can be observed in the process of indigenisation of Mizo Christianity brought about by the various religious revivals (*Harhna*) which came as a shock to the missionaries. The incorporation of traditional cultural elements, which they had considered as heathenish, into the practice of Mizo Christianity went against their westernised sensibilities and their ideas of Christian forms of worship. These revivals ultimately led to the acceptance of aspects of traditional Mizo culture within Mizo Christianity. The process of indigenisation that began with the revivals initiated the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview

through which the culture and literature of the precolonial Mizo past began to be reclaimed and valorised.

For the early Mizo Christians, the point of reference for theologically and practically rejecting Mizo culture and traditions in its entirety at the outset was based on the understanding of the Christian God as being the only true God. The missionary Lorrain has said, "Satan had held complete sway for ages, and in seeking to appease him with sacrifices the Lushai had lost almost all knowledge of God" (qtd. in Lalpekhlua 103). The *Puma zai*[2] (Mizo cultural revival of 1908-1909 which is also known as the heathen revival among the missionaries), influenced many of the newly converted Mizo Christians to revert to their old faith practices. As a reaction and a precautionary measure, the early Mizo Christians enforced a complete separation between Mizo traditional culture and Christianity. To become a Christian, one had to let go of all connection with the past, including cultural practices and even traditional songs. Strict measures were implemented to separate the sacred and the profane through excommunication.

The rejection of all elements of traditional culture and literature by the Mizo Christians during the early days of Mizo Christianity had far-reaching implications for the way Mizos have come to view the culture of the past. Mizo Christianity has since developed a wary approach towards the valorisation or reclamation of aspects of traditional culture. Only those components of the traditional Mizo culture or Mizo cultural traits and practices which were considered as being aligned with Christian values and teachings, have been accepted into the modern Mizo identity and worldview.

R. L. Thanmawia observed that the religious revivals awakened three cultural traits of the Mizo in connection to singing such as the introduction of the *khuang* (traditional Mizo drum), dancing, and the softened tunes of songs that led to the emergence of the *lengkhawm hla*[3] (579-580). In particular, the third revival (1919) is significant for ushering in this process of indigenisation within Mizo Christianity. The religious revivals that have been occurring intermittently over the years 1906 till 2014 so far, have helped to indigenise Mizo Christianity and paved the way for the acceptance of aspects of the traditional Mizo culture in the formation of the modern Mizo identity. This has led to the postcolonial tendency, particularly among the educated Mizo, to reclaim the past and to discover what they perceive to be the admirable aspects of Mizo culture and to maintain the integrity of

their culture that had been denigrated in the past. Mizo Christianity has become the authoritative force determining the inclusion and exclusion of aspects of the old Mizo culture which have been retained in a sanitised form. Mizo Christianity informs and influences the cultural frame of reference and what is considered as Mizo culture today, is a hybrid of Mizo Christian practices and aspects of traditional Mizo culture that have been incorporated. This is observable especially in the Mizo novels depicting the modern Mizo society or Mizo society in transition from the pre-colonial to the modern one.

In postcolonial studies, hybridity refers to the creation of transcultural forms in the contact zone between cultures as produced by colonisation. The complex nature of the formation of the modern Mizo identity and culture is observed as resulting from the hybridity that has emerged at the meeting point between the traditional Mizo culture and the effects and after-effects of colonial rule. It is a point wherein the influences of Christianity, traditional Mizo culture, and western culture continue to negotiate the terms of their influence upon modern Mizo identity and culture in an ongoing process of reconstitution, renegotiation, and restructuring.

Although each of the religious revivals had a thematic emphasis concerning theology, according to Mangkhosat Kipgen, the theological emphasis that arose during the 1906 revival was the concept of sin. This fostered the understanding of the idea of sin among a people for whom such a concept was alien. The first religious revival made the Christians view things differently, and the differentiation between the idea of the sacred and the profane, as it related to Christianity, became more pronounced. The rejection of all aspects and practices of the pre-colonial non-Christian Mizo society was to safeguard the early church from the attractions posed by the old faith and to help in maintaining high moral standards within the Christian community (256). Thus, Christian morality has been the point of focus since the early days of Christianity. He noted that the strong stand taken by the church against indigenous culture after the onset of the *Puma Zai* (1908-1909), also referred to as the heathen revival, harmed the interests of the church, for harmless elements of Zo (Mizo) culture such as the *khuang* (Mizo traditional drum) and traditional songs were done away with (258).

The influence of Christian morality is through the deep-seated division or binary of the sacred versus the profane, good versus evil, and the Mizo heathen past and

Christianity, which has greatly influenced the manner in which Christianity influences the Mizo postcolonial worldview. It has resulted in instituting a cultural framework through which the inclusion and exclusion of aspects and practices of Mizo culture in the modern Mizo identity or in Mizo Christianity is always considered in the light of acceptance and prohibition or rejection. In this light, Christian moral didacticism has become the framework within which the modern Mizo society has been depicted in the novels. As observed by Joy L. K. Pachuau, "One important aspect of Mizo identity is its adoption of and complete identification with Christianity. In fact, the religion is an important tool for incorporation into and exclusion from Mizo society" (5).

In the strict demarcation of Christianity and the old Mizo culture in the early years, the consumption of *zu* (Mizo rice beer) provided grounds for excommunication, but this is no longer the case. This reveals a shift in the attitude of Mizo Christians towards the nature of what is considered as sacred and profane with the postcolonial reinterpretation of traditional Mizo culture and practices. The twentieth century has focused on sexual immorality in connection to abstinence before marriage as the primary ground for excommunication to the exclusion of *zu* as requiring excommunication. The emphasis placed on Christian morality in connection to sexual abstinence and purity before marriage can be related to the deep-seated division or binary by which Christian morality is emphasised.

It is also a convenient tool for dominance over women for marriage, as the institution of the family is an important marker of Mizo society in the past and the present. The mode of didacticism in operation in the modern Mizo novels projects good characters displaying Christian morality as ending up in happy relationships or marriages, while the inverse applies for those who are immoral. This is observed in the selected novels depicting the modern Mizo society. Mizo novels reflect the worldview, concerns and interests of the authors who are also aware that their readership comprises of Mizo Christians. Therefore, the projection of the Christian worldview on to the novels can be understood as the influence of the Mizo postcolonial worldview.

The ideals of the Mizo society in the pre-colonial past were deeply rooted in the idea of belonging to a village community, the sense of protectiveness towards and protection of the village, and the egalitarian notion of assistance offered through community work or

generosity towards those in need. Such ideals were crystallised in the concept of *tlawmngaihna*[4] as a moral code that was inscribed within the cultural fabric, and the practice of which imparted respectability to individuals. Unlike the past, the ideal of *tlawmngaihna* has been diluted for there is rampant corruption and disregard for the poor with the rise of westernisation and individualism, and the drive for profit has resulted in the placing of one's interests before others. Thus, in portraying the modern Mizo society, Mizo novelists have often projected a critique of the vices in the modern Mizo society which have impeded the adherence to the ideals of Mizo Christianity.

In the wake of decolonisation, the effects of epistemic violence on the colonised resulted in a crisis in identity among them. Taisha Abraham has observed this crisis in identity as having resulted from the effects of colonial ideology and discourse. She defines it as such, "The crisis in identity related to structural imbalance, cultural imperialism, geographic displacement, political hegemony, the privileging of official history, and the psychological impact of these systems of knowledge on constituting the colonial subject is vital to postcolonial theories" (5). Such an impact has also been felt among the Mizos as they attempt to forge a common and homogeneous Mizo identity rooted in a common history as a result of colonial rule. The implications of the conceptual aspects of Mizoness or the Mizo identity upon Mizo fiction writing have been critically analysed by means of locating the ideological effects of cultural imperialism, the postcolonial quest for authenticity, and the resulting emergence of a hybrid Mizo identity.

Today, despite the deep-seated influence of colonial ideology and discourse, Mizo writers and critics have begun to articulate the negative effects of the rejection of the traditional Mizo culture and have contributed to efforts towards decolonising the Mizo mind. They refer to the problem of cultural reclamation within the modern Christianised Mizo identity. A postcolonial outlook revealing the role of colonial discourse and ideology in instilling notions of the inferiority of Mizo culture and way of life in the past is also beginning to emerge especially among Mizo theologians and scholars.

The postcolonial analysis of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its impact on the writing of Mizo novels has been based on studies of aspects of these texts for traces of the ideological influence of colonialism and its continuing effects, and for evidence of an emerging postcolonial assertion of the Mizo identity, as well as the reclamation and

valorisation of Mizo culture of the past. The attempt has been made to provide a cultural, historical, and literary grounding for the ways through which the shift in the worldview from the pre-colonial past to the present has happened. This has necessitated the historical grounding of the operation of colonial ideology and the formation of colonial discourse within the Mizo society in order to gain a thorough understanding of the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its impact on Mizo novels.

Chapter One - Introduction

This chapter focuses on the formulation of the definition of the thesis title 'Mizo Postcolonial Worldview and its impact on the Literary Discourse of Mizo Novels', as well as on key terms such as postcolonialism, colonial discourse, postcolonial cultural valorisation and reclamation, and cultural hybridity. It contains brief biographical sketches of the novelists and presents a brief description of the selected works of Mizo novelists and their contribution to Mizo society. The selected novels are, *Hawilopari* (1936) by L. Biakliana, *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (1977) by Khawlkungi, *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii* (1981) by James Dokhuma, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, *Damlai Thlan Thim* (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente, and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga.

The chapter includes a description and analysis of the postcolonial concepts in support of the claims of this thesis that there exists a Mizo postcolonial worldview impacting writers and their works. In other words, the effects of colonial discourse, hybridity, and ambivalence in the formation of Mizo culture and identity, and the postcolonial reclamation and valorisation of culture resulting from the colonial encounter, on the Mizo. Following upon this, an attempt will be made to understand the relationship of the resulting postcolonial worldview on Mizo literature vis-à-vis Mizo novels. It will also briefly trace Mizo history and the history of colonisation of the Mizo, to reveal key events aiding in the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview.

Chapter 2 – Mizo Postcolonial Identity Formation and the Writing of Mizo Novels

As an exploration into the formation of the modern Mizo culture and cultural identity, chapter 2 traces the rise of the postcolonial attempt at cultural valorisation, reclamation, and the idealisation and assertion of one's culture to undo the effects of colonial ideology and discourse. Peter Barry has said, "If the first step towards a postcolonial

perspective is to reclaim one's own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past has been devalued" (193). Attempts at cultural reclamation and assertion of the Mizo identity by Mizo writers and especially novelists have taken place among Mizo writers and especially novelists, who have taken on the role of restoring, reviving, and reclaiming pride in their culture and cultural heritage. This is observed in the cultural self-expression and assertion of cultural identity seen in the novels about the Mizo society of the past. The need to reclaim one's cultural past has often involved a return to an originary past or towards the creation of it. In the modern post-colonial world, the Mizo identity has been essentialised to form a unified, common, and shared Mizo ethnic identity which is rooted in a common history or ancestry, language, religion, ethnicity, and geographical terrain and with which the various Mizo subtribes can identify.

R. Radhakrishnan has noted how postcolonial hybridity, which is characterised by expressions of extreme pain and agonising dislocations, is in a frustrating search for constituency and a legitimate political identity. He has thus observed "a) that heterogeneity or even hybridity is written into the postcolonial experience, and b) that there is a relationship of historical continuity, however problematic, between colonialism and nationalism, and nationalism and its significant Other, the diaspora" (753). He also states thus, "My general contention is that, although avant-garde theories of hybridity would have us believe that hybridity is "subject-less," i.e., that it represents the decapitation of the subject and the permanent retirement of identitarian forms of thinking and belonging, in reality, hidden within the figurality of hybridity is the subject of the dominant West" (753).

Therefore, the emergence of the hybridised Mizo identity as a product of colonialism and its cultural influences, has sought legitimacy through the formation of singular or shared Mizo identity with common points of identification. The crystallisation of the common Mizo identity is based on a shared historical experience beginning with the rule of the Sailo chiefs and their subjugation by the British colonisers. This also includes a shared Christian religion and hybridised cultural identity that emerged as a result, and a common language (Mizo) and political identity formed by the demarcation of a distinct geographical location, that is, the state of Mizoram.

The portrayal of the Mizo past or the idea of a distinct Mizo identity as seen in the novels is through the *pasalṭha*[5] as an authentic cultural icon, *tlawmngaihna* as a value to

be cherished, and *lunglenna*[6] as an emotional trait or form of cultural expression of the Mizos. In particular, the *pasalṭha* has acquired great symbolic and affective value in the Mizo cultural imagination and has generated a connection between Mizo oral literature, Mizo history, Mizo novels, and the modern Mizo identity. Cultural markers which create a feeling of belonging and identity such as *tlawmngaihna*, the *pasalṭha*, and *lunglenna* have been drawn from the culture of the past but continue to retain value in the practice of Mizoness or Mizo ethnicity under Mizo Christianity. They enable the establishment of links between the past and the present and aid in the creation of a sense of connection to the common Mizo identity as a distinctly Christianised identity which is itself a colonial formation and is hybrid in nature.

The Mizo postcolonial worldview and the modern Mizo identity as reflected in the Mizo novels plays a constitutive role in reinforcing notions of the Mizo novelist as a representative of Mizo culture, beliefs, and traditions. Therefore, Mizo novelists assume the authoritative position of responsibility in presenting the novel as a mirror and a lens through which Mizo society of the past and the present have been reflected because of which Mizo novels and the characters have been expected to have verisimilitude value. Thus, the emergence of the modern Mizo identity led to the formation of a discourse in Mizo novels by which the precolonial past has been portrayed in a particular manner, that is, as the golden age of the *pasalṭha* under the rule of the Sailo chiefs. This refers to a portrayal in which only certain features of the past society are prominently featured such as the bravery and prowess of the *pasalṭha* at hunting and warfare, and the trials and triumphs they face in their relationships or their love life.

In the novels, the admirable qualities of the *pasalṭha* can be seen in characters like Fehtea in the novels *Hawilopari* (1936) by L. Biakliana, *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii* (1981) by James Dokhuma, and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006) by C. Lalnunchanga. The *pasalṭha* were regarded as the ultimate embodiment of the Mizo moral code or behavioural ideal of *tlawmngaihna*, which can be regarded as the defining and distinctive Mizo cultural trait which advocates for self-discipline, self-sacrifice, selflessness, and service to one's community. The *pasalṭha* as a cultural icon has served the need of the Mizo writers in new contexts, that is, with the emergence of the new Christianised Mizo identity such as in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, where Chhuana is

portrayed as a modern day *pasalṭha*. Towards the end of the novel, after Chhuana and Sangtei get married, she praises him and tells him, "You are more than just my husband, you are a *pasalṭha* for everyone" (213).

Lunglenna is a literary device for displaying the emotions of the characters and for denoting their cognisance of and appreciation for the beauty of nature and longing for Mizoram. This creates the potential for the character to appear as being sensitive, caring, and displaying a connection to the land, which is a form of identification with the Mizo identity by extension. As an emotional aspect of Mizo culture and a form of cultural expression experienced through music and singing, it is an important component of Mizo identity and continues to commemorate all aspects of their life both in the past and in the modern Mizo society. Since the Mizos love singing and the act of singing is considered as capable of evoking feelings of *lunglenna*, the inclusion of songs in the text of novels, and the inclusion of scenes where characters take part in community singing becomes significant. For the Mizo community, songs and the *lunglenna* they evoke foster a sense of connection to their Mizo identity or Mizoness. Also, since community singing in the modern Mizo context mostly involves the singing of Christian songs. this reveals how Mizo Christianity has become the defining trait of the modern Mizo identity, as seen in the novels.

In a departure from the pattern of depiction of the traditional Mizo society by Mizo novelists in general, C. Lalnunchanga offers a critique of the formation of colonial discourse that led to the denigration of the Mizo ancestors and the Mizo chiefs in particular, through his novel *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (2006). He seeks to negate the stereotype of the Mizo ancestor as being dull in character, hunchbacked, and barely able to enunciate words while speaking. Therefore, he wrote the novel with the aim of portraying the bravery of the Mizo ancestors whose courage and resilience was, according to him, most notable (7). In this historical novel, he depicts the bravery and honourable nature of the Mizo chief Puilura and his *pasalṭha*. He has presented a fictitious account of the process or the historical circumstances by which the British military officers and political officers have aided in the creation of colonial discourse through their suppression of knowledge of the positive aspects of Mizo culture while determinedly concealing the negative aspects of their actions for posterity.

John Mcleod has stated, "Nations are often underwritten by the positing of a common historical archive that enshrines the common past of a collective 'people'… In reality, there are as many different versions of history as there are narrators; but a national history makes one particular version of the past the only version worthy of study" (70). Colonial discourses premised on the idea of racial difference continue to inform contemporary attitudes regarding race and ethnicity. The idea of a common Mizo identity rooted in a pure essential identity with a common language, culture, and ethnicity has resulted in an ethnonationalism of sorts in which the plains people (the Vai) from mainland India have been pitted as the 'other' considered as the outsider. The sense of cultural and geographical isolation of the Mizo from mainland Indians was further compounded by the violent suppression of the secessionist movement for independence from India by the MNF (Mizo National Front) during the *Rambuai* years (1966-1986). The trauma of the *Rambuai* years cemented the notion of the Vai as the 'other' and hence, their usual portrayal as villains can be observed in Mizo fiction writing, including those that do not depict the *Rambuai* years such as *Damlai Thlan Thim* (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente.

Chapter 3 – Christianity and the Mizo Postcolonial Worldview

The Mizo postcolonial worldview is one in which cultural valorisation and affinity towards western culture continues to reconstitute and restructure the modern Mizo identity which is a hybrid formed from aspects of Mizo culture of the past and of Mizo Christianity. This chapter will focus in particular on how the ingrained notions of cultural hierarchy and supremacy of the white coloniser, as established by colonial ideology and colonial discourse, continue to permeate the Mizo postcolonial worldview vis-à-vis the lens of Mizo Christianity, which in turn affects the writing of Mizo novels. In the case of the modern Mizo society, despite the emergence of a postcolonial awakening as mentioned in the previous chapter, colonial ideology and colonial discourse have produced a deeply rooted notion of the superiority of the white man or of western culture coupled with the notion of the pre-colonial society as being primitive, backward, and heathenish.

According to J. H. Lorrain's report in the Annual Reports of the Baptist Mission Society (BMS) of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, the main objective of their Christian mission in Mizoram was to evangelize the "savage Lushai" and to convert them from their tribal beliefs to Christianity (qtd. in Lalpekhlua 91). Since missionaries were placed in

charge of imparting education among the Mizo, they formed the curriculum which included accounts about the superiority of the white man over other races. For the educated Mizo, the missionaries became the authoritative figures in religion and learning, and this cemented the consideration of the missionaries as benevolent masters who civilised the Mizos.

Bhabha writes, "The stereotype can also be seen as that particular 'fixated' form of the colonial subject which *facilitates* colonial relations, and sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised" (112). Owing to the division that was established between traditional Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity during the early stages of Mizo Christianity, there is a Manichean binary or conceptual structure that has been deeply rooted in the Mizo identity. Within this binary, the Mizo cultural past has been denigrated as primitive, backward, heathenish, involving the worship of demons and including the savage practice of headhunting. This has led to a deep divide differentiating between the licit or the illicit, the religious and the blasphemous, and the sacred and the profane when it comes to questions of incorporation of aspects of traditional Mizo culture within the Christianised modern Mizo identity. Thus, colonial discourse has been entirely effective in ingraining the notion of inferiority of the Mizo.

The use of Christian frames of reference such as biblical metaphors and allusions is commonly observed in the narrative voice of Mizo novels, including the novels set in the pre-colonial Mizo society as well. This is seen in the novels *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (1977) by Khawlkungi, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, and *Damlai Thlan Thim* (2003) by Lalrammawia Ngente.

The wholesale rejection of all elements of culture in the traditional Mizo life at the outset of Christianity left a vacuum in the psyche of the Mizo people. The failure to achieve the ideals of Mizo Christianity which is a hybrid formation of Christian values and traditional Mizo values can in part, be attributed to the lack of a well-defined process of enculturation such as that of the *zawlbuk* in the traditional Mizo society, which N. Chatterji defined as, "the crucible wherein the Mizo youth, the marginal man was shaped into the responsible adult member of their society" (61). Since the *zawlbuk* helped to enforce a strict discipline and ingrained a sense of responsibility concerning the welfare of the village community.

With the disillusionment that came with the wholehearted embracing of modernisation and westernisation came the corruption of Mizo ideals and the perceived failure of the Mizo community to handle this situation. Taking on the role of representing the Mizo culture and identity, Mizo novelists have attempted to portray all that is good and aspirational about living the life of a good Christian, or else, to reflect the evils that have corrupted this established ideal. Vices such as alcoholism, drug usage, immorality, corruption, and misuse of power are commonly depicted in Mizo novels.

The effects of colonial ideology is seen in the novels through the acknowledgement of the superiority of the culture or the military power of the British as seen in *Nunna Kawngthuam Puiah* (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, through the absence of a critique of colonialism and its consideration as an unquestioned part of Mizo history as observed in the novel *Hawilopari* (1936) by L. Biakliana, through the display of admiration for the white man as seen in *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (1977) by Khawlkungi, and through the emergence of a set or overarching pattern of storytelling influenced by the Mizo Christian worldview.

The importance of Mizo Christianity in the formation of the Mizo postcolonial worldview is reflected in the emergence of a rigid, set, or formulaic pattern of representation that generally characterises Mizo novels. It involves the creation of a story arc or framework where good Christian conduct is rewarded with a happy marriage or a happy ending symbolised in union with one's lover, while evil or flawed characters who refuse to lead a good Christian life, meet with a tragic or undesired fate. This is in line with the Christian worldview demarcating between good and evil. The Mizo postcolonial worldview also impacts the writing of Mizo novels by portraying the modern Mizo identity as a Christian identity.

One of the major concerns of postcolonial theory is that the implications of the cultural, economic, and political changes brought about by colonialism have a significant impact on the process of cultural production. The emergence of modernisation, capitalism, and politics, and the role of the YMA (Young Mizo Association which is the largest and most influential social organisation comprising of all Mizos as its membership) and the Mizo Church in attempting to grapple with the reality of moral degradation and corruption in the Mizo society may be considered as factors affecting cultural production vis-à-vis Mizo novels, leading to the didactic tone commonly observed in Mizo novels. Mizo

novelists understand that they are catering to a predominantly Christian readership and therefore tend to portray stories of a didactic nature that reflect the values of the society, and what it regards as achievements, or as sacred or profane. Since most of the Mizo novels are historical or realist novels, the novelists can be perceived as carrying the burden of representation.

Chapter 4 - Situating Women in the Mizo Postcolonial Worldview

The issue of feminism or gender issues is important to postcolonial studies. This chapter works on the assumption that feminism is a constitutive part of postcolonial studies and will study the connection between the Mizo postcolonial worldview and the representation of Mizo women in Mizo novels, and how literature reinforces the notion of their subjugation. Colonised women have been considered as being doubly colonised. Characterisation of women into binary oppositions is in accordance with the concept of the male gaze and desire as propounded by John Berger (1972). Postcolonial feminism is the attempt at theorising and critically analysing the diversity of experiences of 'Third World' women or women of formerly colonised countries, against the universalist assumptions or universalized notions of gender under Western feminism as challenged by feminists such as Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989). In a critique of Western feminism Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "The relationship between 'Woman' - a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, judicial, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) - and 'women ' real, material subjects of their collective histories - is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address" (19).

A study of the Mizo postcolonial worldview will look to see the position of Mizo women wherein they enjoy a measure of freedom and opportunities affording them the agency to achieve their potential in the modern age. The condition of women in Mizoram has reasonably improved over the years especially post the legislation of the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act 2014. Traditionally daughters had limited right of inheritance but under this law the right of inheritance of daughters has been made coextensive with that of sons. Furthermore, in case of divorce a Mizo wife can now claim up to 50 percent of the husband's wealth as alimony. However, the dominance of the patriarchal narrative calling for the subjugation of, and control over women continues to persist. It is a worldview in which traditional patriarchy and the patriarchal nature of

Christianity reinforces the control over women for whom there is a 'glass-ceiling' or a limit in terms of achievement of potential. This limitation is poignantly felt in positions of leadership and authority in the field of politics and religion, two of the most culturally significant institutions structuring the formation of one's identity or the cultural identity of a people. The ways in which patriarchal or androcentric assumptions continue to regulate the role played by Mizo women will be explored and its impact on Mizo novels assessed accordingly.

The identity of a woman in the traditional society was defined by her husband, and the ideal aim of a woman was to acquire a good husband embodied in the figure of a *pasalṭha* or a *thangchhuah pa* (a man who has achieved the *thangchhuah* status[7]). In the novel T*umpangchal Nge Saithangpuii* (1981) by James Dokhuma, Saithangpuii, the daughter of a chief finally marries the *pasaltha* Fehtea despite his being a commoner (he was a *hnamchawm*, that is, a commoner who did not belong to the ruling Lusei clan). In the modern society, the idea of a *pasalṭha* has morphed from being a skilled hunter and warrior as in the past, to that of a *pasal mha* (meaning: a good husband) who is educated and a good Christian. An example of this is seen in the figure of Chhuanvawra the protagonist of the novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (1989) by Zikpuii Pa, who was an IPS officer and a Sunday school teacher in his village at one point. Nevertheless, at the end of the novel, after they were married, Sangtei tells her husband Chhuana, "You are not only my husband, you are a *pasalṭha* for everyone" (213). This shows how the *pasalṭha* has become a cultural icon. Although the *pasalṭha* embody bravery, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, as well as possessing the potential to make great achievements, the fact they also symbolise manliness shows the reinforcement of traditional patriarchy in the modern Mizo culture and identity and the denial of a subject position to women.

Traditional thinking in terms of patriarchal assumptions can be seen in the negative stereotype of the cruel or evil stepmother in Mizo folktales such as *Mauruangi* which concept has been carried over to Mizo novels like *Hawilopari* (1936) by L. Biakliana in which the step-mother of the protagonist Hminga is shown as evil. The subject position of the woman (the young woman in particular) as being inscribed within male dominion can be observed in the female characters in all the selected novels. Synonymous with the figure of the cruel stepmother is that of a hen-pecked husband (*thaibawi*) perceived as one

who has relinquished his rightful role and therefore, reveals a lack in terms of the societal norms upheld by the Mizo society in the past and present.

In the novels, there is an emphasis on the beauty, femininity, and industriousness of women as being positive traits meriting praise and admiration. Women have been deprived of a voice, subjectivity, and agency in Mizo novels in general, and this is reflected in the selected novels wherein the female waits for the man (her lover) to rescue her as seen in the *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* (1989) by Zikpuii Pa for example, or of waiting patiently for the man in her life to ask for her hand in marriage as seen in *Hawilopari* (1936) by L. Biakliana. The discourse of female subordination as seen in the novels is studied as being reflective of the reinforcement of traditional patriarchy and a patriarchal Christianity, and the continuation of the attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere which for women, is hailed as the ideal status achieved by means of marrying a good husband. The study has noted the need for the expression of the voice of Mizo women and for their representation beyond their characterisation within the binary of good and evil.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The conclusion sums up the findings of this thesis to present the Mizo postcolonial worldview as a hybridised construct that structures the formation of the modern Mizo culture and identity. The attempt made is to situate Mizo novels within the context of postcolonial studies of culture and literature. Postcolonialism or postcolonial studies is a vital tool for understanding modern identity and cultural formations. A cursory glance at many Mizo novels might compel one to notice the absence of complexity in construction and characterisation as a kind of limitation fuelled by a deep-seated consideration of the Mizo readership that is predominantly Christian. There is potential and scope for enriching Mizo novels through use of other narrative and novelistic techniques beyond the common usage of romance as a theme, and of the prevalence of the common usage of the historical novel form. In Mizo novels, the influence of Christianity and the attempt to express what is unique about Mizo culture and identity can be observed. The incorporation of elements from traditional Mizo literature, the use of biblical allusions, metaphors and references, and of modern songs in Mizo novels is characteristic of the modern Mizo postcolonial condition. This hybrid incorporation of literary elements from the past and the present

reveals the hybrid nature of Mizo novels as being the site where the Mizo postcolonial worldview or hybrid identity is reflected.

To conclude, the thrust of this thesis - Mizo Postcolonial Worldview and its Impact on the Literary Discourse of Mizo novels – and its findings, bring to light the dynamics and continual flux inherent in the formation of the modern Mizo culture and identity. The Mizo postcolonial worldview is rooted in factors such as pride in the cultural heritage of the past, the postcolonial assertion of the Mizo identity, the attempt to negotiate the Mizo cultural identity within modernity, and the ongoing process of gradual indigenisation of the modern Mizo identity. It is also synonymous with Mizo Christianity and includes the recognition that the Mizo identity is a hybrid identity. Christianity continues to be the main legitimising authority or institution through which the Mizo identity continues to undergo changes and transformations in the modern era of globalisation and connectivity. The postcolonial analysis of the Mizo postcolonial worldview and its impact on the writing of Mizo novels has thus located traces of the ideological influence of colonialism and its continuing effects as well as the emerging Mizo postcolonial self-realisation and assertion of cultural identity in the Mizo novels.

END NOTES

[1] *Zawlbuk* is a dormitory for young men of the village. The *zawlbuk* functions as a social institution wherein the inmates learn to become responsible adults and warriors to defend the village against wild animals and the threat of enemy raids. It is also an institution wherein Mizo cultural values, moral codes, and societal norms and practices such as *tlawmngaihna* are handed down to the younger generations.

[2] *Puma zai* or *tlanglam zai* - *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) describes the word *puma zai* as, "n, the name of an anti – Christian song (also known as *Tlanglam Zai*) the avowed purpose of which was to oust the Christian hymns. It became unbelievably popular throughout the Lushai country during 1908 and was sung everywhere with feasting and communal dancing such as had never been witnessed in the Hills before. It soon, however, passed into oblivion, leaving the Christian hymns more popular than ever" (Lorrain 447). The word *zai* refers to the creation of a tune, which is popularized and based on which, other composers would then compose songs. In this manner, Mizo folk songs or traditional songs contain a rich trove of *zai* (which are essentially songs of a tune in particular).

[3] The *lengkhawm hla* or *lengkhawm* songs which incorporated the Mizo cultural trait of *lunglenna* as part of Christian worship at church. Around the time of its formation, the strictures imposed on Mizo Christians by the Church leadership in terms of the clear division between the sacred (Christianity) and the profane (traditional Mizo culture) was at its height. The introduction of *lengkhawm* songs was very important especially for Mizo literature because it marked the point at which the hybridisation of Mizo culture and Mizo Christianity first came about. It is a hybrid formation for it has drawn upon elements of Mizo traditional songs as well as the translated Christian songs to form a new category of songs that are distinctly Mizo in nature.

[4] *Tlawmngaihna* - It is the moral code of conduct that calls for selfless service to one's community or to others under all circumstances with no expectation of praise or rewards, and is highly cherished as one of the defining traits of Mizo culture in the past and present. The Concise Learner's Dictionary of Mizo describes *tlawmngaihna* as, "n. a term for the Mizo code of ethics meaning selfless service for the others. A compelling moral force

which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the service of others; helpfulness, self-denial, altruism, unselfishness, sociability, bountifulness" (Vanlalngheta 441).

[5] *Pasalṭha* - The Dictionary of the Lushai Language describes the word *pasalṭha* as, "n. a person who is brave and manly; a brave, a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter" (Lorrain 352). In the traditional Mizo society, the *pasalṭha* were the group of warriors consisting of the bravest and noblest men who showed prowess in warfare and at the hunt. They protected the village and were a source of great comfort to all the villagers since they embodied the quality of *tlawmngaihna*.

[6] According to *The Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) the word *lunglen* is a modification of the word *lungleng*, having a similar meaning while *lunglenna* is the noun form of the word *lungleng*. *Lunglenna* is the noun form. The meaning of *lungleng* is, "v, to have the heart go out with thoughts or feelings of devotion, love, tenderness, sentiment, longing, emotion, etc; to have tender thoughts or feelings; to be moved to tender thoughts or feelings; to have tender thoughts come to the mind; to be in a devotional frame of mind; to experience warm devotional feelings; to have the imagination stirred or seized; to be pensive, or thoughtfully sad; to muse or ponder with tender longings; to muse or ponder over the past or future; to be homesick; to be love sick; to indulge in day-dreams; to have the heart to respond to any emotional appeal" (Lorrain 302).

[7] The achievement of the *thangchhuah* status was egalitarian in nature and essentially represented the practice of the Mizo value of *tlawmngaihna*, which was the guiding force that regulated societal rules in the traditional Mizo society. The *thangchhuah* status was attainable through two means that is, *in lama thangchhuah* (*thangchhuah* at home) and *ram lama thangchhuah* (*thangchhuah* at the forest). The former path requires the provision of a series of feasts and ceremonies involving large quantities of rice, meat, and *zu* (Mizo rice beer) for the village. The latter path requires a man to be a brave and skilled hunter since it involved the killing of a list of wild animals according to the practice laid down for the process. This was a status attainable only for men and which ensured a passage to *pialral* (Mizo version of paradise). Women could attain a passage to *pialral* only if their husbands acquired such a position.

WORKS CITED

Primary Texts

Biakliana, L. *Hawilopari. Biakliana Robawm*. Compiled by Laltluangliana Khiangte, Reprint, L. T. L. Publications, 2013. pp. 189-328.

Dokhuma, James. *Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii*. 9th ed., R. Lalrawna, 2010.

Khawlkungi. *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang*. 2nd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 1992.

Lalnunchanga, C. *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung*. Mizoram Publication Board, 2006.

Ngente, Lalrammawia. *Damlai Thlan Thim*. H. C. Lalṭhasangi, 2003.

Zikpuii Pa. *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*. 3rd ed., M. C. Lalrinthanga, 2004.

Secondary Sources

Abraham, Taisha. *Introducing Postcolonial Theories: Issues and Debates*. Macmillan, 2007.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies*: *The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2007.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literacy and Cultural Theory*. 1995. 2nd ed., Manchester University Press, 2007.

Berger, John, and Michael Dibb. *Ways of Seeing*. BBC Enterprises, 1972.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Reprint, Routledge, 2012.

Chatterji, N. *The Earlier Mizo Society*. Tribal Research Institute, 1975.

Kipgen, Mangkhosat. *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*. Theological Conference, 1996.

Lalpekhlua, L. H. *Contextual Christology: A Tribal Perspective*. Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), 2007.

Lorrain, J. H. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. 4th Reprint, The Asiatic Society, 2008.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester UP, 2010.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Working Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana UP, 1989.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Pachuau, Joy L. K. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford UP, 2014.

Radhakrishnan, R. “Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity.” *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1993, p. 750-771., doi:10.2307/2932208.

Thanmawia, R. L. “Harhnain a Hrin Hla leh a Phuahtute.” *Harhna: Mizoram Revival Centenary Souvenir* (*1906-2006*), edited by R. L. Thanmawia et al. Synod Revival Committee, 2006. pp. 578-592.

Vanchiau, C. Lalawmpuia. *Tapchhak Theory*. Lalrinpuia Ralte, 2011.

Vanlalngheta, J. T. *The Concise Learner’s Dictionary of Mizo*. 2010. 3rd ed., Lalchungnungi, 2015.