A CRITICAL STUDY OF TRAUMA IN SELECTED MIZO NOVELS

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Dated Aizawl (LALRAMMUANA SAILO)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "A CRITICAL STUDY OF TRAUMA IN SELECTED MIZO NOVELS" is the bona fide research conducted by Mr Lalrammuana Sailo under my supervision. The scholar worked methodically for his thesis being submitted for the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Mizo, Mizoram University. He has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the PhD regulations of Mizoram University.

Also certified that the research conducted by Mr Lalrammuana Sailo is an original work and neither the thesis as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted to any other University for any research degree. It is recommended that this thesis shall be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date : 30th October 2019

Place : Aizawl

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERARY TRAUMA THEORY

The traditional Mizo society was a patriarchal society where the father or the eldest male is head of the family and descent is traced through the male line. Every Mizo village was an independent village ruled by a chief or a chief's relatives. These chiefs often waged war against each other where *pasalṭha** fought hard and brave.

Agriculture and hunting were the main occupation of the people then. Being such, a large family was considered a blessing for they had more hands that could work and hunt. The chief and the blacksmith, owing to the nature of their roles in the society, had no time for cultivation. So, every household would give them a part of their produce, and, when wild beasts were hunted down and honey gathered, they would also receive their share. Those who had a large number of beads, gongs, necklaces and ornaments, and those with a number of domestic animals were considered wealthy. For trade, barter system was used.

They believed in life after death. According to their beliefs, once death, a person's soul would go to either *Mitthi khua** or to *Pialral**. *Mitthi khua* was a place meant for common people. Here, a person still had to work hard, toil and earn his/her livelihood to survive. *Pialral* was a place meant for those who, during their lifetime, had hosted a number of public feasts; *Pialral* was also a place where decorated hunters who, during their lifetime, had killed a number of wild beasts, would go to. In *Pialral,* a person would just enjoy his/her life without the need to work.

1.1 Colonial Period in Mizoram and the Advent of Christianity

Though the exact date on which Mizos and Britishers encountered each other is not on any written record, it is known that, together with the majority of India, Mizos came under the British rule sometime between 1889 and 1890, and remained under them up till India's independence in 1947.

Before the advent of the British, Mizos followed their traditional religion, the prominent features of which were animism and worship of gods and ancestors. On 15 March 1891, a Christian missionary from Wales, William Williams (1859 – 1892), landed at Mualvum, a place not far from a present day Sairang, Mizoram, and began catechizing the Mizo people. He was followed by two other missionaries, J.H. Lorrain (1873-1944) and F.W. Savidge (1862-1935) in 1894. These learnt the Mizo language, and after having observed that it had no written form, they adapted Roman script for the same. Along with catechizing, they began teaching the Mizos how to read and write. The first written record of Mizo language was published by one civil servant named Thomas Herbert Lewin (1839 – 1916), in a book entitled *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein; With Comparative Vocabularies of the Hill Dialects* in the year 1869; this contained some vocabularies of the Mizo language already.

The efforts of the missionaries have yielded great returns, the fact substantiated by the fact that as of 2011 census, Mizoram was the second most literate state in India, with 87.16% of its population being Christians (Mizoram at a glance).

However, something worth noting here is that the British colonizers did not allow any educational institution to be set up for a very long time. That was the reason why the first High School in Mizoram was set up only in 1944 (Lalhmuaka 188), fifty long years after contact with the missionaries.

1.2 World War

In 1917, at the height of World War I, around 2,100 Mizo youths went to France as part of a labour corpse under the British government. More than hundred Mizo volunteers lost their lives during World War II (Aikima). Though the wars they fought were not of their own, their participation in the two world wars greatly broadened their outlook and mindset (Lalrimawia 108). After the wars, many Mizos considered being a soldier to be more lucrative and professionally fulfilling than being an agricultural farmer.

1.3 The Mizo Union and an Independent India

Mizo chiefs were given powers to rule over certain matters in their respective areas even after the colonization of the land. A chief, assisted by his council of elders, dealt with all cases that pertained to his village. Grave cases such as murder and rape, however, had to be reported to the Superintendent of the land (Parry 1). If a person was not satisfied with any decision of the chief and his elders, he/she could appeal his/her case to the Superintendent within two months.

The necessity for such dual administration was mentioned by Parry when he said, “Unless the authority of the chiefs is maintained, it will be practically

impossible to run the district except at a very great expense and with a very much larger staff than at present" (3).

Though an appeal could be made against the chief and his elders, most, especially the *hnamchawm** did not and would not dare to. KL Chhuanvawra explained the reason for this: "Grievances against the chief and his elders rarely reached the Superintendent because when their decisions were challenged, the chief and his elders would not care about it, and if someone dared to report the matter to the Superintendent, they would have to face the brunt of the chief and his elders, thereby, doubling the burden of the complainant" (Chhuanvawra 13).

Some intellectuals dared to challenge this system in 1927. That year, Telela, V.Z. Biaka, Zaikunga, Ṭhuama, Zuala, Liansiama, Chawnghnuaia, Lalbela and others from Kulikawn sent delegates to report their problems to authorities in Assam government. When Parry, the then Mizoram District Superintendent, came to know this, he immediately arrested them and sent them off to jail. Lalbela was banned from the Lushai District.

The reactions of Parry did practically nothing to frighten the poor villagers. On the contrary, in 1946, the first Mizo political party, later known as Mizo Union, was formed, that too with the approval of the British government. The new party gained immense popularity and support from the masses. The British eventually left Lushai Hills and India in 1947.

1.4. Independence Movement – The Mizo National Front (MNF) Uprising

Sparked by the sufferings they endured under the colonizers, the formation of Mizo Union instilled in the hearts and minds of the Mizos a desire not only to alienate themselves from the colonial rulers but also from the ambit of the Indian government. This feeling became all the more tensed when in the year 1957, around hundred Mizos were let off from the Second Battalion of the Assam Regiment with no proper cause or reason.

Then, came *Mautam** which hit Mizoram in 1959. Many went without food for days. The Assam government, under which Mizoram was those days, came under severe criticism when it could not expediate relief measures, especially the supply of the much-needed rice due to the hilly terrain of Mizoram. Goswami said, “Before *Rambuai** came about, Mizoram had only 128 kms of pucca road and 581 kms kutcha road” (Goswami 180).

A new political party, the Mizo National Front (MNF), was formed on 22 October 1961 under the leadership of Laldenga who became the President of the party. Laldenga was a good orator; he soon won over the sentiments of the Mizos, especially through his untiring and relentless effort to help the Mizos during the *Mautam.*

Besides, before the MNF movement came about, in the year 1957, around hundred Mizos were let off from the Second Battalion of the Assam Regiment without proper reason or cause. These disgruntled soldiers later joined the MNF movement, training their new recruits (Chawngsailova 50).

MNF began recruiting volunteers from October 1963 and many youths willingly joined the same. These were divided in section, with each section consisting of thirteen volunteers; three sections formed one platoon; three platoons formed one company, and three companies formed one battalion. In every battalion, there were Signal Officer, Medical Officer, Intelligent Officer and support staff (Zamawia 238). Fifty of such battalions were formed, raising the number of voluteers to around fifteen thousand (239); the population of Mizoram back then was 2,66,063 (1961 census).

On 1 March 1966, Laldenga and sixty other members of the MNF signed the declaration of Mizoram independence. Their volunteers set about trying to take over military posts and other important places of the Assam government in Mizo District. "Assam government declared Mizo District as a Disturbed Area under Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955, on 6 March 1966. On the same day, MNF was declared 'Unlawful Organisation' under Defence of India Rules, 1962. Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 was also imposed over the land" (Rochama 212).

An intense battle between the Indian government and the MNF ensued. In Aizawl, "…corpses of humans and domesticated animals lay about in the streets. People left their homes for nearby villages; their properties were ransacked by non-Mizos" (Zamawia 351). When more and more Indian army reached Mizo District, and due to *khaw khawm* or *sawi khawm* (village grouping) from 1967, MNF volunteers retreated to forests and shifted their headquarters to East Pakistan. Between 1967 and 1969, most of these volunteers arrived in East Pakistan.

The leaders from various Christian Churches tried to mitigate the tension and formed a Christian Peace Committee.

MNF leaders and delegates of the government of India signed a provisional agreement on 18 February 1976. Chawngsailova recounted that moment thus: "The Government of Mizoram celebrated the *Agreement* made by the MNF and the Government of India by declaring 7 July 1976 as *Thanksgiving Day.* All Churches in Mizoram prayed with joy and offered thanks to God. Unfortunately, the joy and jubilations were short lived because the July *Agreement* was not acceptable to a number of hardcore undergrounds" (Chawngsailova 121).

On 21 January 1972, Mizoram was upgraded from District Council to Union Territory, and on 30 June 1986, a peace accord was signed in New Delhi. On the 20th of February 1987, Mizoram became the 23rd state under the Indian Union.

During *Rambuai*, everything was in chaos. Some lost their lives, others their homes, and others sustained serious injuries. K.L. Rochama, a former Legislator of Mizoram (1972 – 1978) said thus:

> During *Rambuai,* it seemed as if every newspaper article was written with an intention to see hatred between the Indian Government and the MNF. It was, indeed, a difficult time when one was at a loss on how to react. . . . To tell the truth meant to earn beatings or be jailed. . . . An incident when the Post Commander at Thingfal was killed, which caused the CRP to beat the Mizo people, was not something that one could report and write about in a newspaper. The Indian Government and the Indian Army had all the rights to do whatever they wanted, while freedom of the press and of the Mizos were thoroughly curtailed; it was as if human rights would not exist for the Mizos even in heaven (Rochama 213).

When *Rambuai* came to an end, the pain, trauma and tribulations it caused still remained, and these found their expressions in writings.

1.5 Introduction of Mizo Literature

The oldest record available of Mizo in a written form was in a book *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein; With Comparative Vocabularies of the Hill Dialects* by Lewin, published in 1869. Lewin was then Deputy Commissioner of Hill Tracts. In this book, from pages 146 – 151, Lewin translated some English vocabularies to Mizo.

Lorrain and Savidge made use of a Roman script to put Mizo in written form and the two started teaching the same to the Mizos from 1894.

The first book written in Mizo language, *Mizo-Zir Tir Bu,* was published on 22 October 1895 (Lalthangliana 97). Lorrain and Savidge composed the first Mizo Christian hymn "Isua vanah a om a" (Saiaithanga 12). 'Puma Zai', songs composed in tune with Mizo traditional style, became quite popular from 1908. Then from around 1919, *Lengkhawm Zai* came about. These were songs that combined, in tune and in style, Mizo traditional songs with western Christian solfa hymns. Edwin Rowlands (1867 – 1939), an early missionary known among the Mizos as Zosapthara, composed "Mizo kan ni lawm ilangin," a song that could be regarded as 'Patriotic Song' in 1903 (Thanmawia 211). The first Mizo essay "Thlirtu" written by Kaphleia appeared in 1839 (Lalthangliana, *Kaphleia* 18) and the first book of Mizo drama *Sangi Inleng* written by Lalthangfala Sailo was published in 1963 (Khiangte 237).

The year between 1966 – 1986 barely saw any literary texts due to *Rambuai*. Capt. C. Khuma's novel *Chhingkhual Lungdi* written in 1952, for instance, was destroyed before it could be published (Lalthangliana 317). B. Lalthangliana iterated the impacts *Rambuai* had on Mizo literature thus: "The period hindered the development of Mizo literature. The years between 1966 and 1974 were harder; only those magazines owned by church denominations were published. Daily newspapers were rarely published. Old books, newspapers and other materials including Mizo clans' treasures that would have shed light on our history were all lost (388).

1.6 Introduction of Mizo Novel

Etymologically, the word 'novel' comes from an Italian word 'novella' which means 'a little new thing' (Novel). According to M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham,

> The term 'novel' is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of fiction written in prose. As an extended narrative, the novel is distinguished from the short story and from the work of middle length called the novelette; its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes (Abrams 196).

Although the title of this thesis is novel, it studies short story and novella as well.

Thanmawia says,

> No writer can escape the influence of his environment. Even Mizo novelist is also a product of the society he belongs [to] and of the age he lives in. Mizo novels deal with all the facts of

> contemporary life. Sufferings of the poor, their miseries, their feelings and sympathies are vividly and realistically presented. . . . Lalzuithanga, Zikpuii-pa and Dr. H. Lallungmuana also utilize novel as an instrument of social reflection (Thanmawia, *Mizo Values* 113, 114).

The first Mizo novel published in a press was *Maymyo Sanapui* by Capt. C. Khuma (1914 – 1990); it was published in 1950. The first Mizo novel *Hawilopari* was written by L. Biakliana (1918 – 1941) in 1936, but published only in 1983. The same author wrote the first Mizo short story *Lali* in 1937 and was published in 1963. *Hawilopari* and *Lali* brought to fore the traumatic status of orphans and women in the then Mizo society.

In *Hawilopari,* Hminga and Liana, the two protagonists, ran away from their stepmother because of the latter's ill-treament meted out on them. Their stories revealed the low status of orphans in the then Mizo society and the terror wrought upon by war. *Lali* vividly portrayed the numerous abuse suffered by women of those days.

Biakliana was followed by Kaphleia (1910 – 1940) who wrote "Chhingpuii" in 1938; it was published in 1963. Here, the protagonist Kaptluanga, though being a prominent *pasalṭha*, took his own life because he was unable to bear a disease that was, during those days, thought to be uncurable. In a way, the author revealed his own life through his protagonist. Kaphleia had a promising future ahead of him but for the tuberculosis that eventually shortened his lifespan.

1.7 Lalzuithanga (1916 – 1950)

Lalzuithanga was one of the stalwarts in Mizo novel. He was the first born child of Chawnghnuaia and Zachhungi. He would write his name as L. Zuithanga in most of his writings, but his full name attained more popularity. In terms of education, he passed Middle English, the highest level of education in Mizoram during those days. Then he worked as a Salesman in Welsh Mission Book Room, and as a Drawing Master in Boys' Middle English School. During the Second World War, he joined Labour Corps, Lushai Hills* as an Assistant Commander. Later on, he joined A.C.I (Armourer) Royal Indian Air Force and served in it from 1944 – 1947. After the war, he worked as a Map Drawer and an Agricultural Demonstrator in Superintendent's Office, Lushai Hills till 1948.

Lalzuithanga had three brothers and three sisters, namely, Lallianzova, Pachhunga, Lallianthangi, Lianthangpuii, Lalṭanpuii and Laldinga. Among the siblings, Lalzuithanga, Lallianzova and Pachhunga joined Royal Indian Airforce and Royal Indian Navy during the Second World War. The British government was quite pleased with their services that it awarded Chawnghnuaia, the father of the siblings and the then leader of Kulikawn Presbyterian Church, with a medal, called *Tangkapui* in Mizo.

Through the efforts of the early Christian missionaries, Mizos accepted Christian faith and belief system. However, the belief system being new to them, many among them considered love songs, love stories and certain aspects and traditions of Mizo culture to be against Christianity. The use of poetical language, for instance, was shunned upon in Mizo Christian hymns. Chawnghnuaia even went to

the extreme of destroying many of his own son Lalzuithang's works such as poems, stories and paintings. According to C.Vanlallawma, "The ones that survive today of Lalzuithang's are those left undestroyed by his father" (Vanlallawma).

Lalzuithanga had a farm at Bairabi but he was at loggerheads with the village head. As a graphical representation of this, Lalzuithanga drew a picture of a farmer who was much disturbed by mosquitoes, and he published it. The village head was enraged by it and he went to a court (Thangvunga, *Approach*).

There is another version of this as told to Laltluangliana Khiangte by C. Rokhuma:

> Lalzuithanga was a master painter of the time. Once he worked at Suarhliap, Mizoram, where the weather was sultry and mosquitoes were aplenty. To depict this, he drew a farmer at work in a field, disturbed by mosquitoes and the itches that ensued. This painting angered Pu Vaia, a forester, because, according to him, it portrayed the place as unpleasant and unwelcoming. Lalzuithanga was given punishment for it (Khiangte, *Thang-zui* 14).

Lalzuithanga was an actor himself and was quite adept at it as well. Once, when they were about to stage one of his plays, "Horrible", in order to catch the attention of his audience, he announced, "Those who are unhealthy and too young can leave the theatre" (Khiangte 234). The announcement sure caught the attention of his audience, though none left! J. Malsawma noted in his book *Zo-Zia* the talent that Lalzuithanga had:

> Once Lalzuithanga was to play the role of a dancer, and his friend, Lalthlamuana, was to play a guitar for the same. When the time came, Lalthlamuana could not tune the guitar correctly

> and communicated the same to his friend. To this, Lalzuithanga replied, “It doesn’t matter. Just play. I can dance with an out-of-tuned guitar as well” (144).

The published works of Lalzuithanga are as follows:

(1) *Aukhawk Lasi* (1983) – This is a collection of four short stories: “Aukhawk Lasi”, “Khawfing Chat’, “Eng Dan Nge Ni?”, “Enge Pawi?”

(2) *Thlahrang* (1992)

(3) *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* (1992)

(4) *Thangzui* (2016) - This is a collection of eight short stories: “Aukhawk Lasi”, “Khawmu Chawi”, “Sual Man”, “Rina Loha Ui Buk Sa”, “Thuruk”, “Kohna Hmasa Ber”, “Bui Chhia Thubuai Criminal”, “Min Hriatreng Nan”.

The unpublished short stories of Lalzuithanga are as follows:

(1) Khawfing Chat

(2) Babulon Khawpui Nawhchizuar

(3) Khawmu Chawi

(4) Tu Thiam Loh Nge?

(5) Tu Mah In A Hriat loh Tur

(6) Kawla Tlan Zel Rawh

(7) Chawngi

(8) Ka Dam Chhung Leilawn Chanve

The following are five stories of his, the texts of which are still missing to this day:

(1) Char Huai I hlau Lo'm Ni?

(2) Nun Hlui leh Thar

(3) The Pem Cry

(4) Hrangkhupa Khua

(5) Hai Chhelchhawl Rualzaa Kan Lenna

Lalzuithanga lived during World War II, and in many of his novels, it can be seen reflections of the horrors of war. His protagonists and their lovers rarely got married to each other.

In his *Phira leh Ngurthanpari*, a novel probably set between 1800 – 1890 AD, the protagonist Phira and his girlfriend Ngurthanpari met only three times (twice at night and once at daytime); the conversations they had had were brief and their time limited. When they talked about their relationship, Phira suggested that they forget each other because he felt that he would not live long. He said, "I cannot imagine myself to have a long life. But, I do not like to tell my mother. If she asks me to marry, I will marry, but the premonition of my early death makes me reluctant to marry" (Lalzuithanga 138).

Perhaps Lalzuithanga was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychiatric disorder as mentioned by Renee Fabian in 'The History of PTSD':

> Soldiers may have tried to bury their wartime experiences and difficulties, but traumatic war neurosis didn't go away.
>
> One such study, published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* in 1951, examined two hundred World War II veterans and found that 10 percent of them still suffered from 'combat neurosis', Morris wrote. Evidence indicates that many World War II veterans were unable to put the war behind them (Fabian).

The thought that he would soon die got reflected in his short stories as well. For example, in one of his short stories, Lalhmingliana, an army, died during his service. On his tombstone was inscribed: "In loving memory of our only son and hope — Lalhmingliana; Born on 17-6-1914; Died on 18-10-1944. For the fearful world to regain peace, he dedicated his life . . ." (Lalzuithanga, Unknown). In another story of his, "Min Hriat Reng Nan", the protagonist Sanga, an army, passed away leaving behind his girlfriend Hmingi, who was carrying his baby.

It was as if Lalzuithanga foresaw his end when, in his book "Kawla Tlan Zel Rawh", he let the protagonist spoke thus: "Many bachelors died and no one knows the whereabouts of their mortal remains. Memorial stones for these are erected not on their place of rest but elsewhere" (Lalzuithanga, Kawla). Lalzuithanga died a bachelor at the age of 35, at Kunchunpore, Monachera Tea Estate, Cachar. No one knows till date where his mortal remain was buried. A memorial stone was, later, erected at Kulikawn cemetery.

Lalzuithanga's *Thlahrang* narrated a story that most people would classify it as a ghost story. The settings was based in Aizawl and in some parts of Sairang village and the Tlawng River. After a close look on how the chief and the elders in

the story cared very little about the commoners and their plight, it could be surmised that the story had a colonial hangover and imperialism, and probably depicting the era not too far from World War II.

In *Eng Dan Nge Ni?*, Lalzuithanga vividly brought to fore the pathetic condition and low status of women in a society during his time. The protagonist, Mani, lost her parents and did not have any known relatives. She had a great talent in trade though, and earned enough to build a house for herself and buy properties. Then came along Lalthanga, a person who claimed himself to be Mani's relatives. After having lived together for a short while, Lalthanga wanted to sell off the house and properties of Mani, and move to rural area. Enraged, Mani went to court but lost her case since, due to the then Mizo customary law, women held no right to own or inherit properties.

1.8 Zikpuii-pa (1929 – 1994)

Zikpuiia-pa was the pen name of K.C. Lalvunga (1929 – 1994).

K.C. Lalvunga was born on 27 December 1929. He was one of the eleven children of the then Aizawl Chief, Hrawva and Lalluaii. He finished High School in 1948, and got married the same year to Darhmingthangi. Together they had four sons and four daughters. He finished his Bachelor of Arts in 1953, and worked in various capacities following after that: Editor, Zoram Thupuan (1954 – 1956); President, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (1954 – 1955); Sub Inspector of Schools (1955 – 1956); Headmaster, Champhai High School (1956 – 1958); Member, District Council (1957 – 1962); Headmaster, Saitual High School (1969 – 1962) (Khuma 26,27). In 1962, he

joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and retired from it in 1990.

Lalvunga's father Hrawva was appointed by the British to inherit the chieftainship of Makthanga at Aizawl Venghlui in 1942. Though from a high class family, Lalvunga married Darhmingthangi, a commoner (hnamchawm). The parents and relatives of Lalvunga objected their relationship right from the start. "Lalvunga is the son of a chief, while she, Darhmingthangi, is a hnamchawm. It's an impossible mix" (12). Knowing their status, the relatives of Darhmingthangi, too, arranged for her to marry Tawnvela.

> Though Lalvunga had won over the heart of Dari, in the eyes of Dari's parents and the community, Dari was not suitable to be the wife of a chief's son, Lalvunga. Besides, Dari had often heard that she was a contemptible woman to be part of a chief's family. Lalluaii, the wife of chief Hrawva, too, expressed that she would like to have other chief's daughter for his son's wife (ibid).

And so Dari and Tawnvela got married: a clear depiction of the huge gap that existed between the rich and the poor of the time.

Zikpuii-pa published his first novella *C.C. Coy No. 27* in 1986, followed by *Kraws Bulah Chuan* in the same year. In 1989, his best novel, which he himself named it his masterpiece, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* was published. A collection of his poems *Zozam Par* was published in the year 1993; this contained seventeen of his poems along with a brief background of them. In 1994, four of Zikpuii-pa's stories were compiled in a book with the title *Lungrualna Tlang*; it contained "C.C Coy No. 27", "Silvarthangi", "Hostel Awmtu" and "Kraws Bulah Chuan". In 2000, his fiction *Lalramliana* was published incompletely; the complete text has not been found. In the same year, Zikpuii-pa's essays were compiled in a book *Zikpuii-pa Hnuhma* (*A*

collection of Zikpuii-pa Essays); it contained 51 essays divided into five chapters.

On 13 December 1995, Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL) awarded him an 'Academy Award'. He was the first to receive that award posthumously. On the citation was written:

> K.C. Lalvunga gave Mizo a chance to appear in the world's stage through his work. His philosophies and intrinsic values evident in his prose and poems will always be treasured. His literary works will always be perennial treasures for the Mizos. Because of his contribution, Academy Award 1993 – 1995 is given to the late K.C. Lalvunga.

Zikpuii-pa died on 10 October 1994. MAL dedicated their monthly magazine *Thu leh Hla* December 1994 issue to his memory. Thanmawia said, "The tradition of *Thu Leh Hla* magazine was changed for the December issue in honour of Zikpuii-pa. Its cover carried a portrait of him, and all its contents were on Zikpuii-pa's life story. The long-standing tradition of the magazine's 32 pages was increased to 58 pages" (Thanmawia, *Lung* 278, 279). Besides, MAL's rule regarding its triennial Academy Award to be awarded only to a living person was changed so that any person, living or dead, could be the recipient of the award so long as he/she had made remarkable contribution to Mizo Literature. This shows the tremendous influence Zikpuii-pa has on Mizo Literature. "His works and contribution to Mizo Literature will be perpetual treasures for Mizos, and we thank God for the gift of him," said Thanmawia (280).

During Rambuai in Mizoram, Lalvunga's relatives moved to nearby state in hope of security. During that period, Lalvunga's contributions to rehabilitation of Mizo refugees were told by his son, Andrew Lalherliana as follows:

> The way my father assisted our relatives who left their homes showed that he was a caring person. He welcomed them all to his house and fed them. And when he ran out of money, he

sold all valuable properties he had brought from foreign countries (Lalherliana 50).

Zikpuii-pa wanted Mizos to remain united, no matter the circumstances, and he toiled hard to achieve the same. When Mizo Union was formed in 1946 with an objective to oppose the then chiefs and their counsellors, he wrote: “We may think that we are wise, but I fear, as we go along, we may lose the unity and the feeling of brotherhood that once were ours. We are the sons and daughters of mother Mizoram; as such, we should all strive to live in harmony with one another” (Quoted in *Tun Kum Za* 161,162).

This conviction of his found an expression in his novel *C.C. Coy. No. 27* too. Written in an autobiographical form, it depicted the abhorrence the protagonist, Ralkapzauva, felt for his homeland and his subsequent emigration to a foreign land that he fantasised. “When I wrote about my efforts to escape a land of idiocy and ignorance, it became a story,” he said (Zikpuii-pa 15). However, nothing was mentioned at the end of the novel as to whether the protagonist found fulfilment in his land of dreams.

His *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* analysed the pre and post Rambuai era in Mizoram. The story had its settings in Zopui Village, one of the most peaceful and advanced villages in *Tuichang ral** area. Its chief, Khawvelthanga, was loved by all; whereas in other areas, citizens protested against their chiefs, Khawvelthanga was respected by all and he enjoyed the strong support of his people. The story of *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* began in October 1962 depicting this peace and calm that the people of Zopui village enjoyed before Rambuai.

However, everything turned upside down when Mizo National Front (MNF) started fighting for the independence of Mizoram. People were divided: some supported the movement, while others regretted the same. The whole of Mizoram became a Rambuai. After the outburst of the movement in March 1966, many lost their lives, women and girls were raped, and the social fabrics of Mizoram fell apart. Zopui village, a place where *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* had its settings, suffered the same fate, too. The novel traced the atrocities suffered by the protagonist Chhuanvawra and his girlfriend Ngurthansangi.

This research paper studies the trauma of Rambuai as depicted in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah.*

1.9 James Dokhuma (1932 – 2007)

James Dokhuma was a Mizo poet, playwright, novelist, biographer, lexicographer, historian and essayist. He was born on 15 June 1932. His parents were Hrangchina and Kapkungi. James Dokhuma had twelve brothers and sisters; of these, Romani and Lalṭanpuia are well known. For instance, Laltanpuia composed a song entitled "Kan Ram Hi Kan Ram A Ni" (Our Land is Our Land). MNF substituted 'Kan Ram' with 'Zoram' and the song became hugely popular, motivating many Mizos to join the independent movement.

Of James Dokhuma, R. Lalrawna wrote a brief history of him in the introduction of a novel *Silaimu Ngaihawm*: "James Dokhuma studied till fifth standard. At the age of 15, he joined the army; he served in it from 1947 – 1952. From his years of service, he became very fluent in Hindi. After he resigned from the

army, he worked as a teacher teaching Hindi and vernacular subjects in St Paul's High School, Tlangnuam, Aizawl. Later, he became a Sanitary Inspector in Aijal* Community Development Block. During this time, he was deeply immersed in the teachings of Christ and preached his gospel traveling the length and breath of Mizoram, reaching as far as Burma region. This made him a well-known figure during those days. In 1960, he worked as a teacher in Middle School, Hualtu.

He joined MNF in 1961 and served as a Block President of Tlungvel Block till 1965. He was one among the signatories of the declaration of independence of Mizoram in 1966. In the MNF self-styled government, he was elected as a Member of Parliament and its Deputy Speaker.

On 14 March 1968, in an encounter with the Indian Army, Dokhuma was shot at and he sustained serious injuries. After two nights and one day, he was eventually captured by the Indian Army and was sent to jail. By then, since it was left untreated, the gun wound he suffered was already swarming with maggots. Later, he was sent to Nowgong Special Jail and Guwahati District Jail. Three laters later, on 21 June 1971, he was released from jail.

While in prison, he wrote three books: *Rinawmin*, *Khawhar In* and *Thla Hleinga Zan*. He never gave up writing.

He was awarded an Academy Award 1979 – 1984 by the Mizo Academy of Letters in 1983. Two years later, in 1985, he was honoured with Padma Shri, and in 1997, he was awarded Sahitya Akademy's Bhasa Samman 1997 Award.

Of him Margaret Ch. Zama declared that he was ‘an icon not only for his people, but for Northeast India, too” (Zama 67).

Following are his works with their years of publishing:

1. Rinawmin (1970)

2. *Khawhar In* (1970)

3. *Thla Hleinga Zan* (1970)

4. *Zoram Kohhran Ṭualṭo Chanchin* (1975)

5. *Tumna Chu A Hlawhtling Ṭhin* (1976)

6. *Khawtlang Inzirtirna* (1976)

7. *Ni leh Thla Kara Leng* (1978)

8. *Hmasawnna* (1978)

9. *Arsi Thawnthu* (1979)

10. *Hausak Aiin Hrisel A Hlu Zawk* (1979)

11. *Finna Hmahruai* (1980)

12. *Ṭawng Un Hrilhfiahna* (1981)

13. *Tumpang Chal Nge Saithangpuii* (1981)

14. *Chawngkhum Dan Tlang Huat Loh* (1981)

15. *Ka Inpuanna* (1982)

16. *Chawngkhum Dan Tlang Huat Loh Bu 2-na*

17. *Hmangaihna Thuchah* (1982)

18. *Irrawady Luikamah* (1982)

19. *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* (1983)

20. *Notes on Mizo Idioms & Phrases* (1983)

21. *Kimoto Syonara* (1984)

22. *Nunna Bua Hming Chuangte* (1986)

23. *Gabbatha* (1989)

24. *Chhungkua (Sipai Inkhawm Thupui)* (1990)

25. *Lonesome Cowboy* (1990)

26. *Hmeichhia leh Mipa Indona* (1992)

27. *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* (1992)

28. *Netaji Shubhas Chandra Bose* (1993)

29. *Mak Lek Lak* (1995)

30. *An Va Hlu Em* (1995)

31. *Enthlatute (Sex Spy & War Spy)* (1995)

32. *Silaimu Ngaihawm* (1995)

33. *Ka Thinlung Luang Liam* (1996)

34. *Rilru Far Chhuak* (1996)

35. *Zokhaw Nun* (1998)

36. *Thla Hleinga Zan Part II* (1999)

37. *Ch. Chhunga Chanchin* (1999)

38. *Thisen leh Mei (Self Denial Thupui),* (2001)

39. *Lamsuaka* (2001)

40. *Singapore-a Mizo Saltangte* (2002)

41. *Kham Kar Senhri (True story)* (2005)

42. *Mizo Ṭawng Kalphung* (2005)

Of these, *Kham Kar Senhri* narrated the story of a poor orphan, Remthanga, who was born in North Hlimen, Mizoram, in 1960. Remthanga lost his father while young, and his mother lived with her relatives; he lived with his uncle. Through him, James Dokhuma vividly portrayed the mental trauma suffered by an orphan during those days in Mizo society.

Goodbye Lushai Brigade traced a love story between a British Army Officer, Mark Martin, and Lallawmi, a local girl from Mizoram. The setting was the World War II. Japan forces were making a great advance and the British government sent its army to stop them. In between were the Mizos, who had to make do with strangers they had never encountered before. Mark Martin loved Lallawmi very much and was even willing to give up his army career so as to marry her. However, his relatives had plans for him otherwise. So, he got transferred and Lallawmi had to bear with the pain throughout her whole life. This novel clearly showed the attitude of a colonizer regarding the colonized.

Silaimu Ngaihawm was another of James Dokhuma's novel that was based on Rambuai period. The protagonist was a self styled Lieutenant Colonel in Mizo National Army, Sanglura. Sanglura died in an encounter with the Indian Army; his friends erected a tombstone in his memory, they inscribed: L.T. SANGLURA 'CH' Bn. MIZO ARMY. Later, their village, Hualtu, had to be abandoned due to village grouping enforced by the Indian Army. So, all those in Hualtu moved to Baktawng in 1967. Lalramliani died in 1976. This novel depicted the harsh lives people had to endure during Rambuai.

1.10 Meaning of Trauma

'Trauma' in Greek means 'a wound' or 'an injury'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines it as "any wound or external bodily injury, or a psychological or emotional injury, caused by some outside force or stress" (101).

Trauma is best understood as a suffering caused by past experience(s). Not all bad experiences of the past, however, caused trauma. Trauma, therefore, varies from person to person.

The leading pioneer of trauma studies, Cathy Caruth's defines trauma thus:

> The event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. And thus, the traumatic symptom cannot be interpreted, simply, as a distortion of reality, nor as the lending of unconscious meaning to a reality it wishes to ignore, nor as the repression of what once was wished (Caruth, *Trauma* 4,5).

In *Unclaimed Experience,* she continues saying, ". . . trauma is not locatable

in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it is precisely *not known* in the first instance – return to haunt the survivor later on" (4). It is "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur; but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (94).

LaCapra defines trauma as, "A disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered. The study of traumatic events poses especially and for any dialogic exchange with the past which acknowledges the claims it makes on people and relates it to the present and future" (LaCapra 41).

Judith Herman says, "The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep" (Herman 37).

The causes of trauma can be classified into two: trauma caused by nature and trauma that is man-made.

Trauma caused by nature includes flood, earthquake, tsunami, landslide, nuclear reactor breakdown or other incidents that are hard to be foreseen and are equally hard to prevent them from happening. Man-made traumas include war, rape, torture, physical and verbal abuse, accident, and so on.

American Psychiatric Association highlights potentially traumatic events that are noteworthy for research:

…military combat, violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, natural or man-made disasters, severe automobile accidents, or being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. For children, sexually traumatic events may include developmentally inappropriate sexual experienced events without threatened or actual violence or injury. Witnessed events include, but are not limited to, observing the serious injury or unnatural death of another person due to violent assault, accident, war, or disaster, or unexpectedly witnessing a dead body or body parts. Events experienced by others that are learned about include, but are not limited to, violent personal assault, serious accident, or serious injury experienced by a family member or a close friend; learning about the sudden unexpected death of a family member or a close friend; or learning that one's child has a life-threatening disease. The disorder may be especially severe or long lasting when the stressor is of human design (e.g., torture, rape). The likelihood of developing this order may increase as the intensity of any physical proximity to the stressor increase (Quoted in Smelser 57).

And the common symptoms are:

recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event,... recurrent distressing dreams during which the event is replayed...dissociative states...intense psychological distress,...physiological reactivity which occurs when the person is exposed to triggering events that resemble or symbolize an aspect of the traumatic event (e.g., anniversaries of the traumatic event; cold, snowy weather or uniformed guards for survivors of death camps in cold climates; hot, humid weather for combat veterans of the South Pacific; entering any elevator for a woman who was raped in an elevator)...avoiding thoughts, feelings, or conversations about the traumatic event...avoiding activities, situations, or people who arouse recollections of it...amnesia for an important aspect of the traumatic event... dimishied responsiveness to the external world ("psychic numbing" or "emotional anesthesia")...diminished participation in previously enjoyed activities... feeling detached or estranged from other people...markedly reduced ability to feel emotions...a sense of a foreshortened future...persistent symptoms of

> increased anxiety...difficulty falling or staying asleep...exaggerated startle response...outbursts of anger...difficulty concentrating or completing tasks (58).

Trauma is transmissible. It can spread from one person to another, or from one generation to the next. It can be transmitted through literature, painting, and other records. For example, to experience the trauma of Rambuai, one need not necessarily live during those times; one can experience and inherit them by reading literature of those times and/or listening to people who had experienced it. For instance, a Rambuai novel *Nghilh Har Kan Tuar* was written by Mafeli, but she herself was born after a peace accord had been signed.

According to Allison Landsberg, a memory acquired from 'seeing a film, visiting a museum, watching a television show, using a CD-ROM' is 'Prosthetic memory.' Marianne Hirsch, a Professor from Columbia University, is famous in trauma studies for her claim of 'Postmemory' in her book *The Generation of Postmemory – Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. She explains, "Postmemory is a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove" (Hirsch 6). Balaev also explain how trauma can be transferred through generation to generation:

> The transhistorical trauma theory indicates that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender due to everlasting and universal characteristics of traumatic experience and memory. Conversely, individual trauma can be passed to others of a shared ethnic, racial, or gender group who did not experience the actual event, but because they share social or biological

> similarities, the traumatic experience of the individual and group becomes one. This supports the claim that narratives can re-create and abreact the traumatic experience for those who were not there-the reader, listener or witness can experience the historical trauma firsthand, (Balaev, *The Nature* 12,13).

Besides classifying trauma as those caused by nature and those that are man-made, trauma can also be looked into as 'individual trauma' and 'collective trauma'.

Individual Trauma:

Individual trauma may be caused by a person's experience of violence, war, rape, torture, exploitation, physical or verbal abuse, violation of human rights, financial problem, mugging, physical injury or automobile accident, downfall of a person, discrimination based on gender, class, or race, and so on. Individual trauma is transmittable: a psychiatrist, a therapist, and a researcher, for instance, have high chance of getting trauma from their client.

Charcot calls traumatic memories 'parasites of the mind' (Smelser 41), while Sigmund Freud calls it 'indelible imprint' (ibid). The common symptoms of individual traumas are flashback, nightmare, hopelessness, confusion, mood swing, low concentration, low self-esteem and low self-confidence, anhedonia, an inability to feel love or joy, avoidance, isolation, insomnia, change in lifestyle, silence, intense fear, a feeling of insecurity, and so on. Kai Erikson said, "Traumatized people calculate life's chances differently. They look out at the world through a different lens. And in that sense, they can be said to have experienced not only a *changed sense of self* and a *changed way of relating to others* but a changed *worldview*" (Erikson 194).

Collective Trauma:

Lisa Gale Garriques says, “Collective trauma” happens to large groups of people – attempted genocide, war, disease, a terrorist attack. Its effects are specific: fear, rage, depression, survivor guilt, and physical responses in the brain and body that can lead to illness and a sense of disconnection or detachment. Collective trauma can be transmitted down generations and throughout communities” (Garriques).

According to Kai Erikson, Collective trauma is

> A blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. . .. It is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. . .. “I” continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. “You” continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (Erikson 187).

Development in communications and advancement in weapons and other defense systems including invention of chemical gasses and nuclear weapons, wars become more and more traumatic for human beings. The World War I (28th July 1914 – 11th November 1918), the World War II (1st September – 2nd September 1945), Vietnam War (1st November 1955 – 30th April 1975) and other man-made tragedies were reviewed by scholars and victims, and the traumatic effects of the wars were easy to access and recognize by the world.

Nazi’s mass killings of the Jews during World War II were terrifying and traumatic for the Jews and for the world. But behind the holocaust, the reason Adolf Hitler hated the Jews is believed to be that Hitler had an opinion that Jews were

responsible for Germany's losses in World War I (Alexander 13,14). As Hitler borne the trauma of World War I, he took it out on the Jews during World War II.

The government of Israel and its people, including their former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, were also trauma bearers of the Holocaust, the Six-Day War of 1967, and the Munich Massacre of 1972. These collective traumas were the reasons why Begin argued,

> No one came to save us – neither from the East nor from the West. For this reason, we have sworn a vow, we, the generation of extermination and rebirth: never again will we put or nation in danger, never again will we put our women and children and those whom we have a duty to defend – in necessary at the cost of our lives – in range of the enemy's deadly fire . . . (qtd. in Alexander 109).

During World War II, Japanese Army forced many women and girls to be their sex slave; they called them "comfort women". Most of these women were from Korea, China, and Philippine. Starting from 8 January 1992, every Wednesday, people have been gathering in front of Japanese embassy, demanding Japanese government to redress the "comfort women" problem. The trauma these suffered remains till today though decades have gone by.

Cambodian Genocide happened between 1957 and 1975. The genocide was carried out by Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Pol Pot. It led to the death of around 1.671 to 1.871 million people, which was around 21 to 24 percent of the Cambodian population (Cambodian Genocide). This traumatic genocide led to the dedication of May 20 as 'The National Day of Remembrance', formerly called the National Day of Hatred, in Cambodia.

On how trauma can damage a society, Laurie Vickroy says, “Traumatic experience can inspire not only a loss of self-confidence, but also a loss of confidence in the social and cultural structures that are supposed to create order and safety . . ..” (Vickroy 13).

Many trauma victims want to forget their traumatic experiences and try not to recollect them or even speak about them. However, at times, their attempts seem futile. Take one Israeli Army Officer, for instance. He was a Holocaust survivor. He was requested to share his testimony for Archive at Yale. He said, “My initial reaction was, ‘No.’ My wife said, ‘Why don’t you think it over? What are you afraid of?’ I said, ‘I’m scared that everything will come back: my nightmares, and so on . . .’ (Laub 72).

> None find peace in silence, even when it is their choice to remain silent. Moreover, survivors who do not tell their story become victims of a distorted memory . . . which causes an endless struggle with and over a dulusion.[2] The “not telling” of the story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny. The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor’s daily life. The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor’s conception of it, so much so that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events (64).

Laub also iterates that person other than the victim often takes the lead in bringing to light the traumatic experiences suffered.

To support her argument, Laub took an example from Hans Christian Andersen’s story ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’. In this story, the emperor spent lavishly on clothes, that too, at the expense of all else. Two swindlers who posed themselves as weavers came to the emperor and offered to stich for him clothes that

could be seen only by the wise but invisible to the fools. The emperor agreed. A day came when the swindlers proclaimed they had finished a magnificent suit for the emperor. They pretended to dress him up with it, and, when they had finished it, the emperor took to the streets to show off his supposedly new suit. So as not to be thought of as a fool, everyone pretended that they could see the new suit when, in reality, the emperor was walking down the streets naked. One child shouted out saying that the emperor was indeed naked. Then, everyone realized that they had been fooled by the swindlers.

In the selfsame way, research and investigation on traumatic experiences are mostly done by 'new generation'.

Thangvunga considered traumatic experiences as something beneficial for literature: "The sting of tragedy then, is something to be valued, cherished, and the pain considered virtue! It is the stuff of great literature!" (Thangvunga xiii). However, even he himself declared thus: "The horrors of the day and the traumatic incidents experienced thereof so haunt their victims that none dared to record them in writings until recently; and even those were done orally" (Thangvunga xi). The 'collective agents' for transferring traumas are known as 'Carrier Groups' by Alexander (Alexander 16).

At times, trauma victims seek for a platform when to narrate their experiences. One woman survivor of the Holocaust said, "We wanted to survive so as to live one day after Hitler, in order to be able to tell our story" (Laub 63). Vickroy asserted as well, saying that, "Literature has often functioned as a carrier of public memory, its language and symbols used to sustain public memory and express social

context, indicates Hartman" (Vickroy 170).

In studying trauma, Kali Tal suggests that the critic of trauma literature must look at the followings for better understanding: "The composition of the community of trauma survivors; the nature of the trauma inflicted upon members of the community; the composition of the community of perpetrators; the relationship between the communities of victims and perpetrators; and the contemporary social, political, and cultural location of the community of survivors" (Tal 17).

Balaev opines that the protagonists in many trauma novels were beyond the reach of pain and trauma; they were untouchable and superhuman beings, and for this reason, they did not endure the pain and suffering experienced by normal human being.

In line with this observation, C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau says, "Most of our novelist could not write novel without having 'superhero' and 'super heroine'. Without them, they thought their novels were insufficient. Most of Rambuai fictions were infected by this disease; none were free from it" (Vanchiau 83). For instance, Vanchiau claimed that novelist Lalhmingliana Saiawi's characters often escaped from the fate of rambuai trauma (91).

Balaev said, "In fact, many fictional representations portray the traumatized protagonist as someone who has special knowledge or unique, positive powers that can help others, such as the protagonist Tayo in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* who becomes a visionary messenger-healer" (Balaev 27).

1.11 History of Trauma Study

A study of trauma in literature has its roots in the twentieth century. In 1941, Abram Kardiner published a book *Traumatic Neuroses of War*; it was a book based on a research done on World War I and World War II consequences traumatic syndrome. In 1995, Cathy Caruth published *Trauma Explorations in Memory*; some of the articles in the book were published in 1991 in *American Imago* journal, volume 1 and 4. In 1996, Kali Tal wrote *World of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*.

Elie Wiesel claimed that testimonial literature was a new genre in literature and was the product of modern generation. Of it, he said, "If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony" (Wiesel 9).

Elissa Marder in "*Trauma and Literary Studies: Some 'Enabling Questions'"* traced the beginning of trauma in literary studies. She regarded the origin of trauma studies in literature was

> . . . due to the path breaking work by Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, two prominent members of the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory . . .. In 1995, Cathy Caruth edited and wrote a critical introduction to an interdisciplinary collection of essays titled *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* In 1996, she went on to publish a full-length study of trauma, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Since the publication of these two works, Cathy Caruth has been recognized as a leading pioneer of trauma theory, and her work has become an indispensable and invaluable point of reference for much—if not all—of the work that has come after it. Shoshana Felman's initial engagement with trauma began with her important 1992 book (written in collaboration with psychoanalyst

Dori Laub) *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, and more recently, in the 2002 book *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Marder).

In Mizoram, the Department of English, Mizoram University, organised a national seminar on the theme "Narrativizing Trauma in NE India and Beyond" in November 2012. This seminar yielded a book titled *Textualizing Trauma Narratives from North-East India and Beyond.* It was edited by Sarangadhar Baral, and was published in 2014. Significant as it was, almost all articles in the book were studies and researches from non-Mizo fictions, poems and folklores.

In a book entitled *Emerging Literatures from North East India. The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity,* edited by Margaret Ch. Zama and published in 2013, trauma during the period of Rambuai was studied. In this book, Margaret Ch. Zama looked at trauma through James Dokhuma's novella *Silaimu Ngaihawm*. Both *Emerging Literatures from North East India. The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity* and *Silaimu Ngaihawm* have become important sources in the study of trauma in Mizo literature. Besides, in 2018, a book *Tlaizawng (A Study of Selected Mizo Poetry),* published by St. Xaviers College, Lengpui, contained "Treatment of trauma in a poem 'Kan hun tawng zingah' " by Zoramdinthara. This article, too, is remarkable for literary trauma study in Mizo literature.

Keeping in mind the definitions and concepts of trauma and the way various authors have dealt with it in the past, this thesis will examine trauma further in the chapters to follow.

GLOSSARY

Aijal	The Anglicized name of Aizawl
Hnamchawm	Common people, the lower class in Mizo society
Lushai Hills	Former name of Mizoram
Mautam	To die down simultaneously as the bamboos do periodically about every fifty years after flowering and fruiting. . .. This occurrence is followed by a plague of rats which endeavour the rice crops and cause a famine (Lorrain 309).
Mitthi khua	Hades; the abode of the departed spirits; dead man's village
Pasalṭha	The word *pasalṭha* is used by the Mizos for a notable hunter and warrior.
Pialral	The Paradise of traditional Mizo religion
Rambuai	The term is used to refer to a period between 1966 – 1986 when the Mizo National Front fought for Independence from India. It was a period regarded as one of the darkest histories in Mizoram. The term *buai, Zoram buai, Mizoram buai, buai lai* are another term commonly used to refer to the period.
Tuichang ral	*Tuichang* is a river in the east side of Mizoram, and *ral* means beyond. Tuichang *ral*, therefore, signifies those living in the eastern part of Mizoram beyond the Tuichang river.

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CHAPTER 2

A CRITICAL STUDY OF CLASS STRUGGLE, ORPHAN'S TRAUMA AND WOMEN'S TRAUMA IN MIZO NOVELS

This chapter studies class struggle in Mizo society as evidenced in Lalzuithanga's novel *Phira leh Ngurthanpari.* It also studies women's trauma in Mizo society from Lalzuithang's *Eng Dan Nge Ni?* and orphans' trauma from James Dokhuma's *Kham Kar Senhri*.

Social customs, beliefs, creeds, and pre-existing notions can be traumatic for an individual or for a collection of people. Alexander said ". . . trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (Alexander 2). Mizo society in the past was a male controlled and male centric society. Male controlled the society and family. All important positions in the community such as Chief, *Upa* (village elders), *Bawlpu*, Sadawt*, Thirdeng*, Tlangau**, and so on were held by men. The Chief of a village was supported by *Upa* in administration and in maintenance of power. Generally, chieftainship was inherited and passed on from male to male. The common people known as Hnamchawm were the lowest class in Mizo society back then.

2.1 Class struggle in Mizo society — The antagonist Hrangchina's trauma in Lalzuithanga's *Phira leh Ngurthanpari*

One of the most compassionate men in Lalzuithanga's novel *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* was Hrangchina, the antagonist of the novel. He was a leader and the most influential person amongst Lalbuta's pasalṭha (village warrior). The followings are some of his character sketches:

> Hrangchina, a warrior from Lalbuta's village, was brave-hearted, aggressive, and short tempered. He would conspire if he thought he was going to benefit from it. He was a wise and skilful person. On the other hand, to his relatives, he was an extremely generous person who would spare nothing; he was kind and gentle to them all.
>
> He was a brave worrior and hunter, the one who would come back home to his village carrying either enemies' heads or wild animals that he had hunted down. He was popular among the young and the old. Wherever he went and whatever he did, people would remarked, "Hrangchina indeed." The village Chief and the elders favoured him, too, and he enjoyed life in his village (Lalzuithanga, *Phira* 64).

Hrangchina's life was one trauma-filled life. Besides all his good qualities, he had to endure numerous hardships.

In the first chapter "Zan Sarihna" of the novel, it ca be read how Hrangchina and his men killed their neighbouring warriors, Lalhuapa's men in a place called 'Lungsen Tlang', a mount that both the Chiefs — Hrangchina's Chief, Lalbuta, and Phira's chief Lalhuapa — had long been fighting each other for. They fought bravely and killed all their enemies except Phira, who, at the time of the raid, had gone to some other place. On their side, they lost Phunga, their Chief's son. At the end of the fight, Hrangchina counted their enemies corpses and their guns: five heads and seven

guns. Seven guns were not a thing of surprise because their enemies were from *Salsarih Khua*, a village that valued seven numbers.

Hrangchina felt elated with their success. He imagined that, back home, they would be given a rousing welcome, and, since he was the leader of the raid, he would be exalted by their Chief and everyone in the village. His status in the society would be higher and his voice would be reckoned with more. Since he was the worrior who led the fight and defeated their enemies, he would have a chance to enter *Pialral* after he died.

So, Hrangchina sent a messager, Bawiha, to go ahead of them and inform their Chief and the villagers of their success as well as the death of Phunga, the Chief's son.

> Hrangchina believed that, by the time they reached their village, the Chief would have been already informed of the death of his beloved son. He thought that, because of the lost of his son, the Chief's anger would escalate and would definitely want to take revenge. He would then call upon him to lead the fight against their enemies. Hrangchina also believed that the death of Phunga would open a door for him in village administration, that his status would be raised and that the Chief would henceforth consult him on important matters (14).

Little did he know, however, that one of their enemies, Phira, was still alive and spying on them. Phira ambushed Hrangchina's messenger and killed him. He then proceeded to the village stealthily and burned it down.

Saddened by their great loss, Lalbuta and his elders sent a delegate to their neighbouring Chief, Lalhuapa, with a message that they would no longer contest for 'Lungsen Tlang' and that the mount would, thenceforth, be his.

Hoping to get a rousing welcome, Hrangchina and his worriors were devastated to see their village burnt down and to hear of their Chief having surrendered 'Lungsen Tlang' to their enemy, that too, without even consulting his warriors! They would have definitely killed Phira, the one who burnt down their village, had they known that he was somewhere around when they raided the enemy's camp.

When confronted of his decision, Chief Lalbuta said that the lost they suffered was too great that he would rather make peace with their enemy, Lalhuapa, than confront him. To this Hrangchina replied saying that they just had a successful raid of Lalhuapa's camp where they slained his worriors; if they attack Lalhuapa, they stood a great chance of defeating him. As for the loss of their house, Hrangchina said that they would do the same to Lalhuapa and his village.

Chief Lalbuta stood his ground.

However, since Hrangchina was a brave and great worrior, he was very popular among the youths. So, fearing that he might lose his people's trust, Lalbuta blamed Hrangchina for the continuous war that he carried on with his neighbouring Chief. Lalhuapa, saying:

> We extend our war only because Hrangchina persistently stir up the bachelors. Because of one *Pawite** who obstinately oppose our decision, my people are suffering. I can stand it no more. So, we should make peace with our neighbour. We must surrender Lungsen tlang to our opponent. For us, we still have plenty of land. I hope our neighbour will not demand more than Lungsen tlang (13).

Everyone agreed to the king's proposal.

One of his elders, Khuangapa, went further saying: "There is a rumour that, before he came to this village, Hrangchina came west for hideous reason. It seemed he was trying and was determined to marry a certain chief's daughter. But, the lady rejected him. So, he raped her and cut her fingers off, and then he ran away" (23).

Despite his heroic warriorship, Hrangchina was then ostracized.

A thing to be noted here is that those days the greatness of a Chief depended on the number of households that that were under him and the vastness of the territory he could claim to be his. For instance, one of the largest wars in Mizo history was the *'Chhim leh Hmar Indo*'*. Many lost their lives in the war. However, the war started merely over a claim of ownership of a stretch of land called Buanhmun. Besides, those days, anyone could migrate to other villages and none needed permission to do so from their chiefs. "In Mizo history, it happened that Chief Chawngpuilala of Rivung clan, renowned for his ill nature, was made drunk and his people left him" (Lalremsiama 28).

Lalbuta, being a Chief, would be very well versed in these two. It was not surprising, therefore, that after most of the houses in his village were burnt down he decided to surrender a contested mount so as not to suffer households dwindling under his rule. That would ensure that he remained a great Chief, inspite of the misfortune he and his people suffered then.

Hrangchina, therefore, lost his credibility. He was, however, a brave worrior as described by Ernest Hemingway: “But, man is not made for defeat . . .. A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (Hemingway 71).

All in all, the motive behind the difference of opinion between Hrangchina and Lalbuta seemed to be their consideration regarding their greatness and their status in society. Lalbuta, the Chief, was afraid of losing members of his village while Hrangchina wanted to carry on the war so as to be its key player. Nagarajan said, “People are divided primarily by their differences in socio-economic conditions. There is an eternal struggle for power between the social classes. History is a class struggle. The proletariat, the working class, is always subjugated by the bourgeoisie – the rich who control the resources, and the wealth of a nation. The result of this exploitation is ‘alienation’” (Nagarajan 225).

For instance, Thianga, an aide of Chief Lalbuta, saw Phira burnt their village, his very village. However, the thought that ran through him was: “These happened not because you (Phira) are utterly wicked; you must be admirable for your chief and those in your village. But, now, your enemy has found you. If what you did upon us was revenge, our villagers must praise me” (Lalzuithanga, *Phira* 39). Thianga knew that the rude and barbaric actions of Phira were because he fought to preserve his own status, just like everyone else.

Having been ostracized by his own Chief and his elders, Hrangchina ran away from his village. His sworn enemy, Chief Lalhuapa, however, said thus:

> The quality of pasalṭha depends on how many enemies he has slain. If he brings more and more disaster to his opponents, he will be admired by his people. He is to be honoured and promoted by the chief and elders.
>
> To subdue his enemies, pasalṭha at times has to act barbaric. His enemies will suffer a lot: many will lose their homes and families; children will become orphans; parents will lose their children. However, such are the consequences when a pasalṭha, a worrior, fights against his enemies.
>
> Pasalṭha and common people do not start war, but we chiefs and elders do. And when things go south, as they sometimes will, we exonerate ourselves and blame pasalṭha and the poor people (70, 71).

One day, Hrangchina met Phira in a forest. Hrangchina by then had become old and had lost his youthful strength. With ease, Phira subdued him and made him declare a statement, a statement that any Mizo pasalṭha would never make. But, being weak already, in soul and in body, Hrangchina declared to Phira, "I'm weak like a withered Taro. You are now my master, a master who shot ten elephants" (62).

Phira then took Hrangchina as his prisoner and tied him up in *Zawlbuk*, a village bachelors' common dormitory, in Phira's village whose Chief was the sworn enemy of Hrangchina. At night, however, Hrangchina was secretly released by a young boy named Luta, the son of Buati who was Hrangchina's relative from that village, and went back to his own village.

Throughout the way back home, Hranchina continued to be traumatized.

> He thinks that Phira will hunt him down and will defeat him. He feels that Phira is spying on him all the time. To put his mind at ease, he devices a plan to kill Phira secretly (68).

He, therefore, burnt down the village where Phira lived, that too without the consent of his own village chief, Lalhuapa. Then, he felt that his Chief no longer favoured him. So, he decided to migrate to other village where his relatives lived. Before he went, he revealed his intention to his Chief's wife thus:

> I plan to migrate to other village. I don't intend to tell our Chief about it because under our law anyone can migrate to some other villages and there is no need for the Chief's consent to do so. However, I want you to know of my plan. These are hard times for me. After I burnt down our neighbouring village, I feel everyone is against me including our Chief and his elders. Though none tell me of this, I cannot go on living pretending to not know of it (99).

There was another reason Hrangchina felt out of place in his village: he was a *Pawi* living in a *Lusei* village. Though *Pawis* are Mizos, they were often looked down upon by the Lusei tribes. Luseis would often say *'Pawite mai mai'* which means 'he/she is a mere Pawite, someone not worth taking seriously'. They would often be called *'Pawitepa',* a derogative way of addressing a Pawi.

So, when, without consulting his chief, Hrangchina burnt down a village, his Chief derogatively made a statement thus: "This is just unacceptable! While I sent delegates to make peace with our neighbours, our *pawitepa* burns them down. He is the reason why we are still in a state of war! He is the most troublesome person we have" (23).

So, off went Hrangchina to a village where his relatives were.

However, on the way, he came to know that Phira, too, had gone and settled in that village! All the past traumas he used to feel now came flooding back. So, he stayed in a forest. Unfortunately, he encountered a tiger and died.

When examine the cause of Hrangchina's death, one thing is evident: he died because of his traumatic experiences.

First, he belonged to a Pawi tribe but lived in a Lusei tribe's village. So, however much he tried, whenever there was misunderstanding, he was blamed, maligned and ostracized.

Second, he suffered because of something that was beyond his control: Phira. Hrangchina did not know and had no way of knowing that Phira had escaped unscathed when they raided their camp at Lungsen Tlang. The consequence: Phira burnt down their village but Hrangchina took the fall.

Third, the very thought of Phira made him shiver; it overshadowed and clouded all his thoughts and judgements. Having been old, he was afraid that he would come across him in a forest and would be beaten badly. To a village he wanted to go, he learnt that Phira had been there before him, so, he dared not go.

2.2 Class struggle – The Cause of Ngurthanpari's Abnormality

Ngurthanpari was the daughter of Chief Lalbuta. She was a very pretty girl and, being the daughter of a chief, many bachelors wanted to court her. Of her beauty, Lalzuithanga said thus: "Ngurthanpari is known for her beauty and attractiveness and is spoken of in a thousand village. Her locks are neither too short, nor too long but just right. She is slim, has clear and beautiful eyes. Her lips are red like a live ember of an oak. To not call her 'Pretty' would be a great mistake" (21, 22).

When their village was burnt down by Phira, her father sent her to his brother, Lalhrima's village.

Phira, too, had gone there assuming an identity of a messenger sent there to convey the death of Darlianpuii, the chief's relative. There, strangely enough, Ngurthanpari and Phira fell in love with each other.

As days passed, the true identity of Phira came to light. Chief Lalbuta was enraged. Phira was the one who burnt his village down; he was also the one who killed his son. Though both the chiefs, Lalbuta and Lalhuapa, had come to terms with each other already, Lalbuta was filled with a desire to kill Phira. Z.T. Sangkhuma said, "A chief could order someone to be killed and no one could question him. He could also give a kill order on any visitor residing, at present, in his village" (Sangkhuma 59). So, though Chief Lalbuta could give an order for Phira to be killed, things became complicated: his daughter was in love with him!

To imagine a chief's daughter falling in love with a commoner, a hnamchawm, was unthinkable.

For instance, the Sailo clans would seek life partners from within their own clans only. The daughter of a Sailo chief would be married off to other Sailo chief's son and vice versa.

Once during the 1840s, it happened that the daughter of one Sailo chief, Laltheri (Lalchawngpuii) fell in love with a hnamchawm (commoners), Chalthanga. Laltheri's relatives killed Chalthanga (Thanmawia 240, 241).

A hnamchawm man, Thangphunga, was promoted to be a chief of Chaltlang in 1895 by the British because he was their chaprasi and had won their favour. Besides, he was also the son of *Khawnbawl Upa*, an elder of a village. But, though a chief, none forgot that he was a hnamchawm. So, when he got married to Thangpuilali, the daughter of one Sailo chief, Khamliana, all the other Sailo chiefs were enraged (Ralte 249).

A certain Sailo pasalṭha, Saihnuna (famously known as Laltuchhingpa), spoke of his experience thus:

> I am a Sailo, a chief clan. I have to marry only to someone who belongs to our clan too. But, as fate would have it, I fell in love with a hnamchawm lady. Though we loved each other very much, we both knew that we would never be able to be with each other forever. Once, while we were working in a field, she gave me a sugarcane. I didn't eat it; instead, I kept it safe in a corner of our fire shelf at home. Now, whenever I miss her, I take it out, touch it and feel it (Sailo 39, 40).

Such was the tradition those days. So, it was unthinkable for Ngurthanpari and Phira to fall in love with each other. As per the tradition those days, even when a chief's daughter fell in love with a hnamchawm man, that man should turn her down and court her no more.

The love between Phira and Ngurthanpari, therefore, represented a class struggle that existed those days.

Phira, though a hnamchawm and the son of a widow, was a brave pasalṭha. He won the hearts of the chief and his elders in his village. His chief even presented

him a gun. Had he not fallen in love with a chief's daughter, his status in the society he lived would be quite high.

Knowing fully well that he would never be able to marry Ngurthanpari, Phira told her:

> Our two villages may be friendly to each other but our love still is very complicated. You are a chief's daughter but I am a hnamchawm, a common man, and a son of a widow. I do not deserve you. So, let's forget each other and go our own way. For you, there will be many suitors, far better than me. As for me, if I can't find a woman of my status, I will remain single throughout my life. From now on, do not remember me and I too will do the same. Our love is just not meant to be and is simply a cause of affliction and misery (Lalzuithanga, *Phira* 93, 94).

Phira then gave her his ear-beads from his right ear. "I give you this for remembrance. I will never wear beads again in my right ear" (94). This was quite a signifant thing because, during those days, the words of men who did not wear beads in their ears were never taken seriously. They used to say '*ṭhi beh lo thu mai mai*' which means mere words of a person without beads.

And so they parted.

Then on, Ngurthanpari would eat and drink nothing and lived almost like a mentally retarded person. After a month, her brother Lalhrima sent her back to her parents. Her father, Chief Lalbuta thought she needed special care. So, he built a hut for her in the outskirts of his village. Her parents spared no expense to bring their daughter back to life, so to speak. They sacrificed their wealth and offered their guns for *inthawina*, a religious ceremonial offertory. But, everything was of no avail.

One day, Lalpuii visited them. Lalpuii was the wife of Lalbuta's brother, Lalhrima. It was while staying at their house that Ngurthanpari fell in love with Phira. Lalpuii suggested to Ngurthanpari's mother that if Ngurthanpari met Phira, her condition would be normal again and her health would improve. And so, they made arrangement for the two to meet each other.

After they had met, Ngurthanpari showed great improvements. She told her mother of the dreams she used to dream:

> I was searching for some particular thing, I knew not what it was exactly though. It would appear for a while and would soon fade away again. My mind was occupied with that. In recent times, I would spin a cotton but it would snap many times. However much I tried, it would keep snapping and in some places, it would get burnt and turn into ashes, rendering the cotton unusable for any kind of cloth. I never knew how to resolve the problem, but I would keep at it, spending all my time near *suvel** (132).

One wonders the meaning of these dreams and the reason for the author to include it in the book.

"A **dream** is a succession of images, ideas, emotions and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep" (Dream). Dreams and nightmares can be symptoms of traumatisation. J.F. PAGEL, M.D says, "Recurrent nightmares are the most defining symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and may be associated with other psychiatric illnesses" (Pagel). Harsh times and painful experiences often come back as dreams. In 1667, after the great fire of London, Samuel Pepys wrote, "…to this very day, I cannot sleep a-night without great terrors of the fire" (ibid).

In the dreams of Ngurthanpari, the twisted and entangled cotton reel signifies the constant fight Ngurthanpari and Phira's village had over 'Lungsen Tlang'. That fight could have been easily resolved if one of the villages was willing to surrender its claim over it.

Some of the cotton reels that Ngurthanpari saw in her dreams got burnt and turned to ashes. Things that are burnt and turned to ashes cannot be reclaimed. They are gone forever. So it was with the love Phira and Ngurthanpari had for each other. And so it was too with the many things that happened because of Phira: he burnt down the houses in Lalbuta's village and slained some of them; he killed Lalbuta's son, the one who would otherwise inherit chieftainship of the village and continued his father's legacy; he took away the dreams Lalbuta had on his son when Phira killed him.

Had Ngurthanpari really become mentally retarded as rumoured by some in her village?

She suffered, no doubt, and was very much distraught to the point that Lalhrima wanted to call *Puithiam**. The *inthawina** they performed on her behalf yielded nothing.

> The last words of Phira 'Ngurthanpar, let's forget each other and go our own way…do not remember me and I too will do the same' broke Ngurthanpari's heart to the core; it was as if a lightning had struck her. Whenever she recalled the parting words of Phira, she would be broken all over again. She felt as if an arrow had pierced her through. She just couldn't seem to get over it however hard she tried (Lalzuithanga, *Phira* 95).

She composed a song on her way back to her village.

Phengpheah chang ila,

Thing leh maurua khumin

Ṭhadang lenna sumtualah ṭumin (97).

Oh, to be a butterfly,

Flapping myself over hills and forests,

Perching myself on the porch of my beloved.

It is unlikely that such longings expressed in words so profound could come out of a person who is mentally retarded.

2.3 Women Trauma in Mizo Society: Account from Lalzuithanga's novel – *Eng Dan Nge Ni*?

2.3.1 Highlights of the Status of Mizo Women

Lalzuithanga has contributed greatly to Mizo novel. His writings are worth studying from different perspectives. Here, the research look at the status of Mizo women before India's independence as presented in his book *Eng Dan Nge Ni?* (What kind of law is this?).

Eng Dan Nge Ni? traces the life of a woman, Mani. The author romantacized and sentimentalized the life of Mani in a compassionate manner. When challenged in a court that upheld Mizo Customary Law, Mani was denied all her inheritance and properties. Through her life story, Lalzuithanga argued that gender discrimination is a barrier for the development of Mizos. He said, "A country develops when men and women are guaranteed equal opportunities" (Lalzuithanga, KNP).

Way back in 1927, on 19 September, Mizoram region Superintendent N.E. Parry (1924 – 1928) published a pamphlet on Mizo customary laws. In it, Parry said,

> All property devolves through males and generally speaking, a man's heir is his nearest male relation, subject to certain conditions . . . if a woman is left a widow with small sons, although her sons are the direct heirs, she usually has to get one of her husband's male relations to take over the estate on behalf of her infant sons. . ..
>
> As a rule, property cannot descend to a woman except in trust for her children but if there is no male with a better claim, a woman may inherit and she would do so before people merely belonging to the same clan as the deceased, unless they had some other claim to the estate beyond mere clan relationship (Parry 83).

Commenting on it, J. Malsawma, a Padma Shri awardee, said in his book *Vanglai*, "According to Mizo customary law, women do not have the right to inherit property. If a man does not have a son, his property will be inherited by his brother or his male relatives; for a woman cannot inherit property" (Malsawma 76).

Edith Chapman and Marjorie Clark also wrote in *Mizo Miracle* about the low status of women in Mizo society.

> A woman had no rights at all. Body, mind and spirit, she belonged from her birth to her death, to her father, her brother, her husband. Her menfolk could treat her as they liked and a man who did not beat his wife was scorned by his friends as a coward. A woman possessed nothing not even the few clothes she wore. . .. A woman began her day's work before dawn and continued at it unceasingly until far into the night (Chapman 13).

Class distinction was stark those days. Zikpuii-pa vividly spoke of this in the story of Dari and Lalvunga.

> Dari and Lalvunga were good friends since childhood. As they came of age, affection and love for each other grew between them. But, Dari always remembered that Lalvunga was like a star in the sky, someone beyond her reach. He was the son of their chief, but she was just a commoner. . ..Her grandparents, too, would often remind her of the same. Lalluii (Chief Hrawva's wife) also would often say that, for her son's wife, she preferred only another Chief's daughter (Khuma 11, 12).

Parents would often force their daughter to marry someone of their likings, sometimes for want of money or wealth or to raise their status in a society. Arranged marriage was common. So it was with Dari who, though she loved Lalvunga, was forced to marry Tawnvela (13). It was traumatic for Mizo women then.

In Zamvela Ralte's novel *Lungpher Pasalṭha Thangchhunga*, a woman named Ngurvungi loved Thangchhunga, but she was forced to marry Thanhlira, the son of one of the trusted elders of their chief. The intention of Ngurvungi's parents was clear: through their bond with Thanhlira and his family, their status in the society would be raised. So, the date of the marriage was fixed. Ngurvungi opposed the marriage vehemently but was of no avail. Not knowing any way out, she jumped down a cliff to die (Zamvela, Bung 22).

Lalzuithanga also explored this tradition of arranged marriage in his book *Eng nge Pawi?*

The first Mizo short story, *Lali*, written by Biakliana in 1937, clearly depicted the torments suffered by women of those days. It showed how women never had free time, how husbands believed that wives were to be beaten, and how parents forced their daughter into marrying someone of their likings and not of their daughters'. Through the story, Biakliana strongly advocated for women's rights.

Biakliana believed the best way to uplift the status of women in Mizo society was through the teachings of Christianity. Christianity teaches to love one another. Through this love for one another, Biakliana believed, a society could be transformed and the status of women lifted. He concluded *Lali* thus: "Wherever Satan rules, the condition of women becomes worse and unbearable, but the Gospel of Christ can free them (women) from their enslavement" (Biakliana 109).

Sawmtei Chongthu advocated strongly against gender discrimination in her article in *Lengzem* magazine, July 2014: "It is the obligation of every Mizos to

uphold Mizo tradition. But, the age-old belief that men are superior to women is by no means acceptable" (Chongthu 45).

Neil J. Smelser thinks that cultural traumas are 'historically made, not born' (Smelser 37). Vickroy, too, opined that most traumas are caused by human, they are man-made.

> Trauma narratives are often concerned with human-made traumatic situations and are implicit critique of the ways social, economic, and political structure can create and perpetuate trauma. . .. Trauma can be a powerful indicator of oppressive cultural institutions and practices. . . . the text expose readers to the dilemma of facing a traumatic past, whether remembered or repressed. Collective repression and suppression may bring temporary comfort but carry their own destructive costs: further victimization, lost human connections, and unresolved anguish (Vickroy 4).

In Mizo history, there are records of *mi hur zawn:* when a woman was judged and condemned as a sexual pervert, men would carry her to the fringes of a village and they would act as if they were performing an orgy. Parry said that some women guest who did not have good relatives in a village also encountered the same (Parry 54). *Mihur zawn* is also recorded by C.Lianthanga in his Mizo history book *Hmanlai Mizo Nun* (Lianthanga 36).

The first secular Mizo song composed by Edwin Rowlands was "Ka nausenin tunge mi kawl?" (When I was an infant, who held me dearly?). The song dwelt on a topic: the importance of a mother. It can be surmised that Rowlands must have composed this song based on what he observed in the then Mizo society. Commenting on the song, H. Laldinmawia said thus:

> It can be surmised that this song was composed based on the composer's first-hand encounter of a Mizo society where the status of women was very low. The composer seemed to be saddened by it gravely. Women were called names and there were chores assigned to womenfolk alone. To bring an awareness on this, hoping that things might change, the composer could have composed this song (Laldinmawia 41).

Back then, chiefs were known to have more than one concubine. Sailo Chief Lalhleia was one such (Sanglura). Even common men had concubines. The already married man could also court women other than this wife. When a woman had sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband, it was adultery, and it was frowned upon by everyone. However, when a man had sexual intercourse outside of marriage, it was not adultery; it was just that a man courted more than one woman.

Literature becomes a perfect tool to portray horrendous taboos and advocate change. Kali said,

> Much of testimonial trauma literature deals with extremely disturbing subjects such as incest and other sexual violence, breaking the silence on previously taboo topics. As Suzette Henke's study demonstrates, these are common events in many women's twentieth-century autobiographies. . .. Narratives by and about female sexual abuse survivors have borne witness to systematic violence against women, have broken silence around incest and rape, and have challenged "laws and social conditions that protected sexually abusive men (Tal 156)

2.3.2 Women's Trauma in Lalzuithanga's *Eng Dan Nge Ni*?

Eng Dan Nge Ni? calls upon its readers to rethink the status traditionally accorded to women.

Mani and her parents lived in Kulikawn, Aizawl. Her mother passed away early and her father got paralysis. She had no brothers or sisters. Due to her skill at trade, she earned enough to look after her father, build a house and had descent enough furniture and properties. She was an active member in her church. Being a person of good cheer, she was well liked by others. "In her locality, Kulikawn, she is a popular leader in the women's welfare. For she cared and loved much, people were fond of her and she earned the respect of all" (Lalzuithanga, *Aukhawk* 29).

Mani's father passed away not long after. Since she had no relatives, she began living alone in her house.

One fine day, a certain Lalthanga came to Mani and claimed himself to be her relative. Lalthanga began living at Mani's house. Mani was joyful for she thought that she had a new brother. "Mani, so long as I am by your side, you don't need to worry at all. I am your brother, and you are my sister," said Lalthanga.

Things were fine initially. But, as time passed by, Mani began to realize that her new brother was not who he claimed himself to be (30).

Claiming that they were not rich enough to live in Aizawl, Lalthanga proposed to sell off the house they lived in and all the properties with it, and migrate to rural area. Mani just could not agree with him.

> The house is Mani's. Her father did not built it. It is she who, through her earnings, have built it. It is she who gathers all the things inside the house. Everything belongs to her and she has the right over every single one of them. Thinking thus, Mani brings forth a case against her new brother Lalthanga in a local Mizo court (31, 32).

The jury had compassion for Mani. However, they ruled as per the Mizo customary law, which the narrator of this story called '*Mizo Dan'.* According to *Mizo Dan,* a woman did not have the right to inherit any property. Mani lose the case.

> Her house, the result of her toil and labour, all those that are in it, more than a thousand rupee that she had deposited in a bank in the name of her father, everything will now be Lalthanga's; Mani will inherit none. Even she herself will, henceforth, be the property of Lalthanga. Mani just cannot understand (30, 31).

Instead of living with Lalthanga, Mani preferred to get married. She married Tluanga, who was from a poor family, and with him they had two children, a son and a daughter. She worked hard and, through her skill in trade, slowly her family's condition improved. "Mani did not remember her past burdens" (33).

But, one day, her husband passed away.

The traumatic experience she had had with Lalthanga came flooding back to her mind, and she knew that they could surface again.

> She looks at her children. She bore them in her womb. They were born of her. But, she realises they are not hers. She puts them on her lap, looks at the setting sun that lits up the horizon, and cries. She thinks she will be better off dead than alive (34, 35).

She looked at her daughter and worried for her future. Just like her, her daughter, too, would not be able to lay claim on anything. She wished her daughter had not been born in the society she now lived.

> She looks at her daughter and cries saying, "Oh! My sweetheart, I do not worry about your brother: he is a boy and he belongs to this world. But, for you, I wish you had not been born. You have nothing in this world. You are here to work for men and bear children for them. Your future is too bleak. You are going to end up just like me." Then, she carasses her (35).

Inspite of putting in her very best in her work, nothing belonged to her. She compared herself to a machine that worked just for men. She was confounded by this horrendous paradox.

> When will Mizo women have inheritance right and call things their own? We claim ourselves to be believers living in a Christian state, yet our law approves slavery! What kind of law is this? What kind of law? Is this the law of the evil one? Her heart cries out in agony desiring for the removal of that inhumane law (35, 36).

Lalzuithanga's *Eng Dan Nge Ni?* vividly portrays the low status of and atrocities against women especially before and around the period of World War II. Few others in Mizo literature, too, have done the same; these are *Hawilopari* and *Lali* by Biakliana; "Ka nausenin tu nge mi kawl" by Zosapthara; *Silvarthangi* by Zikpuii-pa; and Lalzuithanga's *Eng Nge Pawi*?

In her "Phuahtu Thuhma" (preface by the author) published in *Zoram Rose Par* in 2010, Buangi Sailo, too, portrayed the status of Mizo women back then.

> In the olden days in Mizoram, while a mother was busy pounding rice in a mortar [In Mizo tradition, the mortar was placed outside the door], a father warmed himself by a fire in a kitchen with legs spread wide open. And when a food boiled, the father, though sitting just beside, it would call the mother, "Mother, your boil is overflowing; come and check". Women hold very low position. Women who sang pleasantly were frowned upon by the society. So, there were no women composers; our ancestors mentioned none (Sailo, Buangi n.pag.).

According to legend, a certain great composer, Pi Hmuaki, was burned alive because the men folk were afraid that she would compose all the songs, and that the future generation's composer would have nothing more to compose (Thanmawia 214).

After World War II, things began to change. Today, it looks like Mizos are living in a state envisaged by Biakliana and Lalzuithanga: an egalitarian state. "The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act 2014" was passed by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2014 and is now in effect. There exists no discrimination on grounds of gender when it comes to government jobs and contesting in elections. In the 2019 Member of Parliament election, in Mizoram, the total number of voters was 7,87,777; here, women voters were five percent more than men voters. Four Mizo women have received India's civilian award, Padma Shri; these are Nuchhungi, Khawlkungi, Lalsangzuali Sailo, Buangi Sailo and B. Sangkhumi.

Literature contributes a lot in bringing about awareness. Through this awareness comes change, and through change comes liberation.

2.4 Orphan's Trauma in James Dokhuma's *Kham Kar Senhri*

In his poem "Rairahtea Hla" (The song of an orphan boy), Hrawva called himself 'Rairahtea' (orphan boy). His poem reveals what it meant to be an orphan during that time. Hrawva spent his childhood with his step-mother and his uncle. He never had anyone to attend to him.

He wrote: "Cho-ui lengkel mah pawn in hliaptiang zarah, / Rairah riang te runin hnuaiah; / Vawk leng chun ang a bel e" (line 127-129). This meant while his uncle's dog and goat were given shelter inside a house, he, on the other hand, an orphan boy had to sleep with pigs. Lalrinchhana, who studied this song, had this to say of orphans and the sufferings of Hrawva:

> During those days in Mizo society, orphans were detested in the community. Their low status is clearly manifested in Hrawva's life. His step-mother mistreats him; his uncle is no different. Hrawva has no one to care for him. He never lives in peace. His life is one filled with extreme poverty (Lalrinchhana).

Hrawva also composed "Khuanu Leng Chawi" where he portrayed the sorry life of an orphan those days.

In "Liandovate Unau", one of Mizo popular folktales, two brothers, Liandova and Tuaisiala, lost their father when they were still very young. Their mother eloped with other man to another village. So, the brothers were left to fend for themselves. None in their village cared for them. When they went for group hunting, they killed a big python. But, they were given only the python's belly as their share.

Such being the sorry state of an orphan, it is said, parents those days did not divorce as they were afraid that their children would suffer the fate of orphan's, too.

In the folktale of “Zialung Khaw Chhan Hrangkhupa”, Hrangkhupa’s son Chhuanvawra was called Palova by his community. Palova means a child without a father; it was a derogatory way to address a person who had no father. Palova was an illegitimate son as his mother bore him outside of marriage and did not want to reveal the father of her child. When Palova had come of age, he joined a hunting party. He killed wild animals but those were snatched from him so as to show how much he was despised for not having a father. It was not surprising then that he told his mother, “If I do not have a father, and I am an illegitimate child, I do not feel well to live; I will go and commit suicide” (Dahrawk 8).

In another Mizo folktale “Thailungi*”,* Thailungi lost her mother, and her father married another woman. So, Thailungi had to live under her step-mother. Her step-mother felt that Thailungi was too much of a trouble for her; she wanted to get rid of her. So, when merchants came to their village one day selling *thirhlum**, she devised a plan to exchange Thailungi with *thirhlum.* Thailungi knew about their plan but never did she raised an objection. She rather looked forward to it because she felt that no other place could be any worse than being with her step-mother.

In V. Sangkhuma’s fiction *Fahrah Vakvai Laltea te Unau,* a mother ran away from her two children, Laltea and Kungtea. The brothers then stayed with a couple, their relatives. The mother of the house there suffered from maternity-related problems. The two brothers could never feel welcomed in that house. So, despite all the risks they might have to endure, they left that village and went off, on foot, in search of their mother.

The same author writes in the preface of his novelette *Fahrah Khawngaihthlak Hmingtea* in 1998: "…even today, there still exists people who are cruel towards poor orphans. This is quite unfortunate" (Sangkhuma n.pag.).

Looking at the writings of different authors, two things stand out: orphans were looked down upon by the society at large; and, unfortunately, in many places, this still exists even today.

Now, coming to James Dokhuma's *Kham Kar Senhri*, let us examine how the author portrays the life an orphan through his protagonist, Remthanga.

The story took place at North Hlimen. The year was 1960. Remthanga was the only child of his parents. He lost his father while he was still just a little boy. His mother alone could not provide for them because there were no jobs but to toil whole day in a field. Since his mother was still very young, she went back to her relatives and Remthanga was taken by his paternal uncle. His uncle said, "We insist that Rema stays with us. He is our son. His mother is still young so she can still marry another man" (Dokhuma 16). Following the tradition of the time, Rema and his mother were separated.

Before she went back home to her relatives in another village, Rema's mother could not control her tears. She ran back to her son and said, "Sweetie, please come and see me off at least upto *kawtchhuah* (an entrance to a village)" (17). But, Rema's uncle did not allow him to do so. With tears and heavy heart, she bid his son farewell: "Sweetie, I will miss you dearly! Let me hold and kiss you one last time" (ibid). Remthanga would never forget that moment and his mother again.

His orphaned life began. He felt out of place in the society. He pitied himself and often longed for his father. He did not feel like eating. He did not have what his friends had. He became a shy boy. He not only lost his father, but his mother, too, though alive, was taken away from him. He said:

> I do not have anyone on whose shoulders I can cry on. Many nights, I cry myself silently to sleep. I pity myself, too. My friends often have something new, but I have none. When my friends have toys made for them by their parents, I have none. In spring season, my friends fly kites, but I have none to make one for me. When my friends ride a cart build for them by their parents, I have none to build one for me (18).

Remthanga's grandfather, whom Remthanga believed to be "the one who is most affectionate towards me," (ibid) would often encouraged him with words: "Darling, eat as much food as you can so that you may soon grow up to be a big boy" (ibid). Though his grandfather might have meant well, for those were the words Mizo parents would often used to encourage their children, to Remthanga they meant something else totally. He said, "The reason they anticipate my growing up is possibly because they want me to work (ibid)."

The fact that he was an orphan hurt him deeply. He comprehended everything through self-pity. He would feel hurt easily where others would hardly feel any.

When he became a teenager, he went off and rejoined his mother. He described their condition thus:

> Though we are very poor, and we know we are, we never steal from others. We are careful not to deprive others of their rights. When we speak, we are careful not to annoy others. We live by our own means. I only wear clothes made for me by my mother; I have never worn any fancy foreign clothes (19).

Looking at the way he described their conditions, it is clear that Rema perceived everything through the eyes of an orphan. This is because, looking at his description, they did not seem to be any poorer than the others of their time. However, because he was an orphan, he convinced himself to be below everyone else, a person who should never dare to harm others even unintentionally.

He did not even dare to fall in love with anyone despite the fact that he often felt lonely in his heart. He thought that his attires were not attractive enough and that his status would turn anyone away. He had a friend named Lalauva. One day, he saw Lalauva chatting happily with his girlfriend Chhungi. He said:

> Once I saw Auva and Chhungi chatting away happily. I did not dare to join them, but I felt hurt deep within. I did not envy them, rather I felt happy for them. But, what hurt me was that I was a lonely orphan with no one to call me their own. It's not that I don't want to love or be loved; I do. And it's also not that the ladies in our village, or for that matter, in other villages are all ugly; no, they aren't. But, I have locked away love deep within me and no one seemed to be able to open it because, at the end of the day, I am just a poor little boy, the son of a widow. This realisation hurt me intensely always (31).

Once, he went with his friend Lalauva to visit Chhungi. He left them inside while he himself went out, sat on the *leikapui* (a raised platform under an open sky forming part of a house) of Chhungi's house, and sang:

> *Mahriakten ar ang ka vai e Parte,*
>
> *Min hnemtu leng reng ka tawng si lo.*
>
> *Kei chu khawiah nge si ang ka lawi ang?*
>
> *Thangvan chhawrthla eng ruai hnuaiah maw ni*?" (32)

Like a lone fowl is my being at lost, my love,

None have I met to soothe and console me.

Oh, for a place that I could call my home at least!

None have I though save an open field under the hazy azure moonlight.

This song was composed by Lalzova (1924 – 1945). Remthanga did not sing it correctly. To show the loneliness he felt, he mixed up the lines from different verses: the first and second lines of his were from the first stanza of the original song, and the third and fourth lines were from the third verse.

Before he could find a girl, he was already afraid even by the mere thought of it. He said, "…the prospect of finding an enchanting lover whom I may not deserve is frightening. The reason will be nothing but me and my mother's standard of living: it will not pass a close examination of anyone and I know that I am so nothing for any woman to fall in love with" (ibid).

One Sunday, he put on what he thought was his best outfit and he went to a Church for a Sunday service. There, in the midst of others, he yet once more looked down on himself: "Though I put on my best clothes, there is no way I can rival anyone. I am fine physically, but in my soul, I am far from it" (33).

In 1967, a year since Rambuai began, a high ranking army officer visited Remthanga's village, Hmar Hlimen (North Hlimen). The officer called for a public meeting, and on that occasion, Remthanga was asked to sing. He sang a beautiful

song on the theme of love. When translated to Hindi, the officer loved it so much and Rema knew his song had made him happy.

However, though he had performed very well, when he went back to his house, he was plagued with self-incrimination again.

> Then I went back home to our dilapidated house for yet another pensive feeling. Our house was the only place I could call my own. I felt like a *riakmaw** bird that pleaded tree to tree to allow it to rest in them for the night. Only a *thingthiang** tree agreed. For the *riakmaw* bird, that tree became her only home. In the selfsame way, our house, though dilapidated, was the only house amongst all houses that could shelter me (35).

It was not that Remthanga and his mother's standard of living was way below others. It was rather just that he suffered the trauma of being an orphan boy, the son of a widow, a boy without a father.

2.4.1 No fulfilment even after falling in love

One night at a Church gathering, there was a lady guest named Ngaii from their neighbouring village. Remthanga experienced what is known as love at first sight. He was captivated by her beauty and he just could not take his eyes off of her. Once the programme got over, he gathered his courage, went and spoke to her, and followed her home to a place where she stayed as a guest. There, when he saw many bachelors waiting to court Ngaii, he felt unworthy of her. He said:

> When we entered the house, many were there already waiting for Ngaii, each vying with each other so that they could court her. They were sons of rich men, sons who came from well-to-

> do families. There was no way I or my friend could rival their advance. So, we sheepily sat in a corner, feeling small and insignificant (37).

When, after some time, Ngaii went back to her village, Remthanga contemplated visiting her. He thought he would invite his friend Lalauva for the same. Then, his traumatic orphan experience took over him again.

> She is a beautiful lady and from a well-to-do family. I don't deserve her at all. She will not even be impressed by me, the son of a widow. Besides, when people come to know, they will say, 'She is a beautiful daughter of a prominent person in her village. She is the pride of her village. He has no shame to even think that she will court him. He has so much work to do since he is the lone child of a widow. He should be ashamed of himself to even spend a night in her village' (43, 44).

Remthanga knew fully well the way he perceived himself was not healthy, but he could not help it.

> When I reflect upon myself, I know I have nothing to be proud of. I am the son of a widow. I am not handsome. I do not have any charm others have, and I am quite an idiotic person. Even when I go to visit her, I will never dare to sit by her side. Has Ngaii brought me good luck or bad luck, I wonder. At times, I think, she fills me with hope; but, at other times, she seems to arouse in me a lot of fear and insecurity (44, 45).

It was not that Ngaii made Remthanga feel insecure. She would often invite him and his friend to come to her house. When they crossed paths in a village, Ngaii would be the one to speak to Remthanga first. Despite all these, Remthanga never seemed capable to overcome his inferiority complex. He said:

> There is something that plagues me from inside and that is the awareness of my status in society; I lay blame on one for it, however (47).

2.4.2 The traumatic title of the novel *Kham Kar Senhri*

The title of the book *Kham Kar Senhri* itself already suggests trauma.

Senhri is the Mizo name for red vanda. In Mizoram, it is considered to be one of the most beautiful flowers. Besides, among the Mizos, *Senhri* refers to a lady whose beauty is beyond compare.

Kham refers to a cliff that is difficult to climb.

Kar means in between or amongst things.

Taken together, *Kham Kar Senhri* stands for a lady whose beauty is beyond compare and who is out of league for ordinary people. The title, therefore, poignantly describes the relationship between Remthanga and Ngaii. Whenever Remthanga thought of Ngaii, he felt deeply insignificant.

> To begin with, I keep having these thoughts whenever I try to attain *kham kar senhri*: I don't deserve her in any way. Though I am courting the love of my life, I prefer to sit silently in a corner of a room and let Auva do all the talking with her. I am plagued with a disease no one knows about (48).

He blamed God for the way he felt about himself and for all his insecurities. Ngaii might be affectionate towards him, still he feared that he would lose her any time.

> God has created me to live a life of poverty and destitution, to be always in want. I think a ray of hope will never come for me. Then, I met you (Ngaii); but, you are like *kham kar senhri* to me. I am afraid you may never be mine because you are way out of my league (80).

Though tormented time and time again with insecurities, Remthanga never confided about it to his friend Auva or to Ngaii.

> I do not deserve a woman who is not only from a well-to-do family but who is also extremely beautiful. If people come to know how besotted I am with her, they will ridicule me. Oh how miserable I am! But I cannot find a courage to confide the afflictions I am suffering to my friend Lalauva or to Ngaii, both of whom are unaware of my sufferings (47).

Although Ngaii and Lalauva did not understand Remthanga's emotional problems, Lalauva was quite aware of the class disparity between the families of Remthanga and Ngaii. He frankly told Remthanga how he felt Ngaii "way out of his league" (48). When he informed him of Ngaii's openness to have a relationship with him, he forewarned him that her family might come in their way. He said:

> "I don't think there is much to worry about between the two of you. When I observe her dispositions, I am certain you have the capacity to win her over. If at all there are obstacles along the way, they will be caused by her family and not herself" (57).

Ngaii's openness to be in a relationship with Remthanga showed that she did not mind his social status eventhough they seemed to come from different planets. When Remthanga went to visit her in her own village, she put her reputation at risk when she met him alone in the outskirts of her village. Then, she gave him a photograph of herself. That was something lovers used to do those days to show their love and devotion towards the other. So, Remthanga's dilemma regarding the love Ngaii had for her was not because of her but his own insecurities, the trauma that he felt deep within him. It was quite befitting, therefore, that Remthanga called Ngaii his *Kham Kara Senhri.*

The story was set during the time of Rambuai; but, the afflictions suffered due to it hardly saw any mention in the novel. Yes, the characters at times were afraid of the army patrolling their roads, and, yes, they had to avoid them sometimes, and because of the regrouping of villages, some had to migrate to new villages. But, besides these, the main thrust of the story was on the theme of orphans and the ordeals the protagonist had to endure because of being one such.

When the Indian Army began regrouping villages, Ngaii's village Theichangbung was to regroup and merged with Remthanga's village Hmar Hlimen. In the mean time, Remthanga had to travel to his grandfather Khuallunthanga's village, Darlawn, and had to stay there for three months. While he was at Darlawn, one day, he received a letter from his friend Lalauva telling him that a certain soldier from Assam Regiment was frequenting the house of Ngaii and that Ngaii's parents were quite hospitable towards him. He further told him of the rumour he had heard that they were planning to get married.

During Rambuai, soldiers were eligible bachelors because of the power they could yield and because they had a steady income. So, it was not surprising that Ngaii and her family, too, fell for the soldier.

Remthanga, on the other hand, was devastated. He hurried home and confronted Ngaii, saying:

> I did not know that you would be capable of such deplorable behaviour. I was so wrong about you, so wrong in trusting that you would keep your word faithfully. If you adore soldiers so much, you can find hundreds of them in their camp. Why don't you go to them now? I find

> nothing to blame but your infedility. If you ever make a promise again, make sure you keep it and not repeat what you have done to me (102).

Convinced that Ngaii preferred soldiers, Remthanga was determined to become one too. He said, “Look, if you admire men in soldier’s uniform that much, you will find me to be in one, too” (ibid).

To keep her away from him, Ngaii’s parents sent her away to Kangkap in Manipur. Remthanga, too, left Mizoram to become a soldier.

Remthanga felt Ngaii and her parents preferred a soldier over a commoner like himself. He was hurt by this thought. So, he trained to become a soldier and became he did. Whenever they visited Manipur, he looked around for her.

> The reason why I long to see Ngaii is to show her that I too can become a soldier and have indeed become one. She dumped me for a soldier back in the day. Enraged I promised her that I would become one too. I want her to see me now (110).

GLOSSARY

Bawlpu/Puithiam – A priest, an excorcist

Chhim leh Hmar indo – The Mizo civil war that was fought between the North and the South during 1850s

Inthawi – "To offer sacrifice or utter an incantation when one is ill in order to appease the evil spirit responsible for the sickness and thus bring about recovery" (Lorrain 214)

Pawite/Pawite lehnghal/Pawitepa - The word *Pawi* is used by the Lusei tribe to call the Lai tribe who do not wear their hair knot at the back of their head as the Luseis do. The Pawis used to knot their hair at the front of their head.

Riakmaw – A name of a bird; "The Mizos have an old tale about the 'riakmaw' bird, called so because it used to fly from tree to tree seeking permission to shelter, but would be repeatedly refused until it came across 'thingthiang' tree that agreed to shelter it. In poetic terms, this bird denotes a homeless and sad being (Zama 75).

Sadawt – A private exorcist or priest, especially such as are employed by ruling chiefs (Lorrain 397)

Suvel – A mizo cotton winding machine

Thingthiang – a name of a tree; ligustrum robustum

Thirdeng – A blacksmith

Thirhlum – Clod of iron

Tlangau – Village crier, local messenger

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CHAPTER 3

A CRITICAL STUDY OF COLONIAL TRAUMA IN SELECTED MIZO NOVELS

This chapter deals with the study of colonial trauma from three Mizo novels: Lalzuithanga's *Thlahrang,* James Dokhuma's *Goodbye Lushai Brigade,* and Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27.*

The *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* defines colonialism as "control by one power over a dependent area or people" (288). Ania Loomba says, "Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Loomba 8).

The British launched the first 'Lushai expedition' on 8 October 1871 in order to take revenge against the Mizos, whom they think had invaded them, and to rescue Mary Winchester, who was captured by Bengkhuaia's men in January 1871. The British administrators followed by the Christian Missionaries occupied Mizo villages from 1889 – 1890 up till the time India got independence from the British rule in 1947. This British colonial period has brought many changes in Mizo society.

> In the nineteenth century Christian missions and colonialism seemed to follow upon each other in Africa and Asia. It is for this reason that in the eyes of many African and Asian peoples, colonialism was seen to assume both the role of a 'politician' and a 'priest' and Christian missions appeared to be apart and expression of western colonial expansion. Some of them even go to the extent of characterising missions as merely the 'hunting' dog of western imperialism (Dena 1).

Colonialism brought about changes in the colonized's religion, culture, social administration and life style. It has also left behind traumatic experiences in literature that will be studied from the three aforementioned selected novels.

3.1 Colonial Trauma – The allegory of *Thlahrang* in Lalzuithanga's novel *Thlahrang*

The first political party in Mizoram was formed in 1946. Its first General Assembly was held on 24 – 26 September 1946 at Aizawl Boy's Middle English School. During that time, Mizos were separated into two, namely the Lushai Commoners Union and Mizo Chiefs and their supporters. Lushai Commoners Union felt that Mizo Chiefs were superfluous and the taxes paid to them were unnecessary. They demanded the abolition of impressed labour, which they called 'Kuli'. At the first General Assembly, Lalzuithanga was asked to draw canvas that could be posted in the Assembly. Chaltuahkhuma spoke about this painting in his book, thus: "A big man, chained in his neck by a large rope, bows down on a floor with buttock raised. The rope is held by another big man standing next to him; it seems like this man kicks the poor man. The painting was hung upon the lower part of a school step where it was plainly visible" (Chaltuahkhuma 59).

Macdonald, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills (1943-1947), was furious at the painting. He removed it, tore it into pieces, and evicted R. Vanlawma, one of the leaders of Mizo Commoners Union, from the meeting that night. Lalzuithanga was suspended from his agricultural demonstrator job and was imprisoned for a while. He opened a hostel in Silchar and breathed his last there (Thangvunga).

Laurie Vickroy said, "Trauma texts are a kind of testimonial literary history, a means of recovering cultural memories and traditions of groups often neglected or

suppressed by mainstream culture. Testimonial literature ("testimonio") has been particularly effective for politically or socially marginalized people who have not traditionally had access to public discourse" (Vickroy 172).

Thlahrang was a novel written during the British colonial period. The colonial hangover was found in the character of Kawla, but he committed suicide at the end. Of him, C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau said:

> Tawia represents our Mizo tradition of altruism, selflessness, that has been passed on from generation to generation, but Kawla, on the other hand, is a symbol of modernity. He can easily adapt himself to the changing circumstances. The relation of 'Kawla Thlahrang' and colonial-hangover in the novel is an interesting subject of study (Vanchiau 75).

Paul Lalremruata, too, had this to say of Kawla:

> If we examine the reason why he [Kawla] committed suicide it was because he was terrified of Bawrhsap's judgement, and not because he considered himself guilty.

In the story, Tawia saw what he considered to be a *thlahrang**. He felt that it was disturbing the community, so he set out and shot at it. He was captured by the police and questioned. He never denied that it was he who fired the shot. He was later released.

> A person who was well educated and well acquainted during their times such as Kawla and Tawia's characters portray the supremacy of the British. . . . They had the feeling that every order from the government must be followed without any complaint. Every Lushai tried their best to keep the British people happy and to be at their command (Lalremruata).

In his review of *Thlahrang* in his "Approach to the study of selected stories, fiction and folklore", Thangvunga questioned the propagandic approach of the author

regarding murder. He said:

> Looking at the theme and the plot, it is clear that *Thlahrang* was written with a propaganda in its background: murder should decline. One questions as to the kind of murder that the author claimed was prevalent at the time, and one that needed urgent decline (Thangvunga 18).

Between the time of the invasion of Mizoram by the British and the death of Lalzuithanga, there was only one famous murder case, that of Lamsuaka and Chala in 1900; these were hanged because they robbed and killed one trader. So, advocating that murder should decline seemed to be just an overstatement, a trademark of colonial hangover.

In his book *Pi Pute Biak Hi*, Zairema shows how the British colonizers oppressed the Mizos, physically and mentally.

> Missionary period was one of the hardest and darkest periods in Mizo history. The British colonizers subdued them totally. Those who opposed their orders were captured and sent to jails all over India. They demanded one person from every household to do free labour for them. If any village failed to meet their demands, they would burn down their village and their foodstock. Uptil 1937, whenever we met a white man, we would stand and salute them. Some tried to fight back. A certain Captain Browne was killed. But nothing much seemed to change (226, 227).

During the Lushai Expedition, Lt. Col. T.H. Lewin tried to impress himself upon the Mizos to let them think that no bullets could harm him. In Rothangpuia's village, he allowed himself to be shot at by a gun that contained only gun powder but no bullet. He was trying to assert that he was a superior being (Ralte 105).

The disdainful attitude with which they viewed Mizos was personified in the person of Capt. Wood, an officer in the British Army. During World War II, Lushai

scout served under him. They requested to be given better and healthier food. But, Capt. Wood retorted, saying, "For Lusei and bastard monkeys, dal is enough" (Lalhluna 10). Since he despised Mizos so much, they could not tolerate him anymore, and finally shot him dead.

Vickroy highlighted five major points on how colonizers oppressed the colonized:

> 1) They devalued the identity of the colonized to an extent that the colonized either had to assume the identity of the colonizers or accept the one given to them by the colonizers.
>
> 2) They devalued the cultures of the colonized till they were all forgotten or were replaced with that of the colonizers'.
>
> 3) They valued no individual differences, rather they classified the colonized as one collective.
>
> 4) They claimed all powers, responsibilities, and infrastructures for themselves thereby depriving the locals active participation in their society and political administration.
>
> 5) They imposed strict rules on them and were treated harshly when they did not abide by them; these alienated the colonized from their own history (Vickroy 39).

Vickroy said, "Dominant culture places less emphasis on individual memory than on marginalized groups who have not been fully assimilated or need to preserve their collective cultural memories as a type of a historical record, for survival, or to maintain their identities" (173).

None of the chiefs and elders mentioned in *Thlahrang* took part in any of the important decision making processes in their areas. When anything of worth happened, they were reported directly to the British officials, thereby, sidelining all

the chiefs and their elders.

When the protagonist, Tawia, saw a woman named Parmawii lying on a ground lifeless, he reported it to Lushei Clerk, an official under the British government, and not to Mizo Chief and his elders. The clerk then sent Tawia to report the matter to the Police. When Parmawii awoke in a hospital, it was "the Sapte, Tawia and Kawla" who listened to her account (Lalzuithanga 26).

The colonizers controlled everything, but when there was work to be done, they would entrust them to the locals.

When the corpse of Parmawii's kidnapper disappeared from the hospital, the Sapte immediately ordered Lushei Clerk to call upon the entire community to join in the search (32). And then, he asked the police to be on duty till 6 in the evening, leaving Parmawii alone without a guard in a hospital. When Tawia raised an objection, the Sapte left the decision, not to Tawia, but to the doctor in a hospital. This was interesting because had Sapte acted on the suggestion of Tawia, it would suggest that even white people needed counseling from time to time. This might lower their status. So, Sapte asked the doctor to decide on the matter. The doctor, as could be expected, refused to accept the suggestion of Tawia.

The doctor at the hospital, too, was careful not to offend the *Bawrhsap**. Sapte, *Dahrawk** and him, the doctor, went to visit Parmawii at the hospital. "The Sapte and the Dahrawk want to meet you, so we've come," said the doctor to Parmawii (42); a clear indication, indeed, to portray Sapte as a powerful person. While they were there, a bullock cart driver, Thawnga, reached the hospital. He had an injury in his arm. But, before he attended to his injury, the doctor asked him to

report to the Sapte and the Dahrawk what had happened to him: “You heard something last night, didn’t you? Tell the Sapte and the Dahrawk about it, then your injury will be attended to by our nurse” (43).

Mizos did not trust the two missionaries that came to their land at first, Lorrain and Savidge, because they behaved so unlike the white men they had grown accustomed to. The missionaries would carry their own luggage. So, the Mizos called them ‘Sap Vakvai’, which means the white strays (Zairema 226). They did not trust them and, as a result, did not even pay attention to them. When they wanted to construct a house of their own, only few Mizos helped them. The missionaries then asked Capt. Loch to help them out. Loch allowed them to exchange salt for labour rendered them, a thing that so far Mizos were not allowed to do. When they learnt that they would be given salt if they helped construct a house for the missionaries, many Mizos volunteered (Ralte, *Zoram* 205). Like this, and in many other ways, would the colonizers coerce and ruled over the Mizos.

When they were searching for the lost corpse, Tawia would spend money from his own pocket because he wanted to know the person behind. But Kawla reprimanded him, saying, “Even if we find a suspect, the Police will not arrest him because, then they would lose their name and fame” (Lalzuithanga 33).

Kawla knew the mindset of their colonizers as is evident from the way he reprimanded his friend Tawia. Tawia, on the other hand, submitted himself fully under the rule of the Bawrhsap and the Dahrawk because he thought that was how things were meant to be. Lalremruata commented on this thus: “The Mizos during that period were lucky that they were not aware of how they were being monopolised

and controlled" (Lalremruata).

In his attempt to be in the good book of the Bawrhsap, the Dahrawk wanted to frame Tawia as the murderer, though he knew fully well he was not (Lalzuithanga 62). Kawla tried his best to change the minds of Dahrawk. But the Dahrawk kept holding Tawia guilty.

> He was confident that he could hold up his case against Tawia, and proved him to be the murderer. The Dahrawk, therefore, was eager to present his case to the Bawrhsap (63).

Bawrhsap and Sapte carefully reviewed the case against Tawia. They knew that Tawia had fired the shot to protect Parmawii against the Vaipa (the man) who was attacking her. If Tawia had not fired the shot, the Vaipa would kill him. Bawrhsap and Sapte also found that Tawia had never been implicated in the past of any crimes and that he was a good and honorable man. So, they thought he should be forgiven (65).

"In this part of the land, the Bawrhsap's word is the final law. None can question it. He is above any law, and he has the full authority to pardon whomever he likes, even a murderer," said Dahrawk boastfully.

Even after being convinced of his innocence, the Bawrhsap accused Tawia of murder all the same and sent him to a prison for ten years.

> I, the Bawrhsap of this land, after having considered Tawia's case carefully, confirm that Tawia is the murderer. I know fully well that Tawia is a good man and that the one he killed deserved to die. Tawia has to be forgiven. However, murder of any kind should decrease in this land. To murder someone is evil and is condemned by our government. This is the judgement of the Bawrhsap (66).

The Bawrhsap used Tawia to teach people that murder was a serious and heinous crime. To him, the conviction of Tawia "…will reduce murder rate in the land" (ibid). The Bawrhsap's verdict had two objectives: first, his judgement would remind people how powerful a Bawrhsap was and that his rule was to be obeyed. Second, his words that the conviction of Tawia would help reduce murder rate in the land proved how much he, the Bawrhsap, thought of the future of the land.

Even Kawla was at first taken up by the Bawrhsap's intellect and his self-proclaimed love of the land. He wondered.

> He wants his friend Tawia be forgiven; but, he is accused of murder and sent off to jail by a person who proclaims that he does what he does because he cares for the future of this land.
>
> Is that really possible? Can a white man, whose home is far beyond the oceans (Europe), truly cares for the future of this land he now temporarily rules?
>
> Then his past experiences flood back. He (Kawla), too, had been to *vai ram* (India) and *kawl ram* (Burma) and had spent a part of his life in them. But, when he came back to Aizawl, he realised he had been to those places only to gain something from them; he never really loved those places nor the people therein. (67).

Tawia's father too was convinced that the Bawrhsap gave his verdict putting the future of this land first and foremost. He said, "It is not because my son has committed a crime that he will be imprisoned; it is rather because his being in prison will reduce murder in our land. My son is going away for a patriotic cause and I am delighted" (68).

Tawia's father was a man of principle. He believed "…instead of telling a lie to avoid something, I prefer to tell a truth and suffer for it" (69). But, Tawia's mother

believed if a lie could save them from harm, so be it. She said, "There are people who lie for no reason at all. To save ourselves, we should not hesitate to lie…if telling a lie can save us, we should tell it ten thousand times" (69). Tawia's mother was greatly distraught and could not suffer her son being sent off to a jail in foreign land.

Kawla then confessed everything. He said that he was the one responsible for all their miseries from start to finish. He claimed that he was greatly moved when the Bawrhsap said Tawia had to be sent to prison to convey the message that murder in this land was unacceptable, therefore, had to be reduced. He thought the Bawrhsap acted keeping in mind the future of the land. And so, he condemned himself thus:

> Murderer Kawla, who took bribe, who tried to kidnap Parmawii from the *Reng* [*Reng* is the Mizo older saying of Tripura], and who killed his fellow conspirator; in order to misled others, he stole away the corpse from the hospital before doctor could examine it; he who disrupted peace, who pretended to be thlahrang, and who conspired murder, something that had never happened in Mizoram;
>
> For Kawla, life imprisonment is not enough. Before his friend entered a jail, he must be hanged (86, 87).

Then, he hanged himself.

Why did Kawla committed suicide? It could be his guilt feeling: he was the one who should be in put in jail, not Tawia. In his suicide note, he wrote: "Tawia is not a murderer; he is a righteous person, yet he is going to be in jail for ten years. In the court of Bawrhsap, *zawnga tuar ai ngauvin a tuar mai a ni"* (an innocent suffers in place of a criminal) (86).

It could also be that he was afraid of the Bawrhsap. Kawla pleaded with the Dahrawk so that Tawia could be absolved. He said, “I had a talk with the Dahrawk and tried to convince him that Tawia could not be the murderer. But the Dahrawk would not heed my words. I was too afraid, on my part, to tell him or the Bawrhsap that I was the true murderer” (85, 86).

After Kawla’s confession, Tawia was declared not guilty. However, the Bawrhsap did not utter a word of apology for having convicted a wrong person. All he said was, “If Kawla were not to decide for himself, he would have merit forgiveness” (95). This shows how pretentious the Bawrhsap was in his forgiveness and kindness.

Tawia and his father lived by their traditional code of ethics known as *tlawmngaihna*, a kind of altruistic behaviour that puts others first. Till the end, they upheld their principle: to tell the truth no matter what. Before he was taken away, Tawia’s father advised him thus:

> Coward tells lie to escape punishment. Others end up suffering because of them. You too may be tempted, in the future, to tell a lie. But, hold true to your beliefs and align yourself only with the truth (97).

The author might have knowingly selected *thlahrang* to be the title of his novel to show how ordinary people could be led away easily based on their pre-existing ideas and beliefs.

In the story, most characters believed that they had truly seen *thlahrang* and were frightened of it; Ringi and Kawli fell unconscious at the sight of it, and Thawnga sped away from the place. None dared to verify it.

The fear of *thlahrang*, not *thlahrang*, haunted Aizawl and its neighbouring villages; everyone was afraid of it.

The Mizos thought highly of the British colonizers. They admired and feared them at the same time. They looked up to them and surrendered themselves totally to them. Just like *thlahrang*, none questioned the authority of their colonizers. Lalzuithanga must have know this and cleverly used *thlahrang* to refer to the colonizers who spread fear and awe among the population.

Just as Toni Morrison used Beloved to represent 'the forgotten sixty million and more who died in slavery' (Vickroy 187), Lalzuithanga used *thlahrang* to stand for the colonizers who were feared and whose authority none dared to question.

3.2 Reconstruction of the Identities of the Colonizers through *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* by James Dokhuma

One of the Europeans who came to Lushai Hills as a missionary, enjoyed his mission among the Mizos, and adored by the Mizos was Edwin Rowlands (1867 – 1939). The Mizos call him Zosapthara. His biography, *Zoram Khawvel 5*, was written by L. Keivom, a retired Indian Foreign Service officer. B. Lalthangliana, a renowned Mizo Historian also published a book titled *Zosapthara A Chanchin, Bible A Lehlin, A Lehkhabu leh Thu Ziakte, A Hla leh A Hlaa Debate*.

Of the 600 songs in the 18th revised edition of *Kristian Hla Bu (Tonic Solfa),* 75 (12.5%) were composed by Zosapthara. *Kristian Hla Bu* is a hymn book used by *Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran* and *Mizoram Baptist Kohhran.* Zosapthara was the one who contributed the most songs in this hymn book. Some of them were his original composition while some were translations or modified versions of hymns that already existed in the western countries.

Zosapthara spent ten years (1898 – 1908) of his life in Mizoram. He went back home in 1908 after a complaint was filed against him.

Keivom said white people who deeply loved Mizos were always swiftly sent back home. The same happened to Zosapthara.

> Any white missionaries, who deeply loved the Mizos, who did not despise them or were not ashamed of them to the extent of embracing their women and considering them for marriage, were held accountable by their government and their people as conspirators. For that reason, complaints were made against them and had to undergo a lot of problems. The belief that all the white people would love us is fallacious; their schemes that we thought were for our

> welfare, were only for their own glory and promotion, and we were just objects to fulfil their ambitions. I want to uncover the truth. It is the right of the younger generations to know the truth about their history as much as it is the responsibility of those of us who witnessed it to tell them what we think is the truth (Keivom 129, 130).

Keivom observed that some missionaries had superiority complex just like their political counterparts.

> Pu Mena (Rev. E.L Mendus), a missionary who stayed in Mizoram from 1922 to 1944 had a conception that the whites and the Mizos will live separately in heaven. Once he told a church elder, "I miss you dearly; when I reach heaven, I will often visit you where you stay." We Mizos had never reached beyond the porch of the missionaries. But Zosapthara was different because he lodged in the house of a Mizo when he first arrived, lived with them, and ate whatever they ate (103).

Personal difference even among the missionaries was also confirmed by Lalkhumi, daughter of Chuautera, when she said that she had often visited F.W. Savidge's (Sap Upa) house but never dared to visit Pu Buanga's house. Just like Zosapthara, Sap Upa was also asked to leave Mizoram in 1925 (Vanlallawma).

In his book *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)*, J. Meirion Lloyd confessed the departure of Zosapthara from Mizoram was one of the greatest losts of the mission. "Looking back, over the best part of a century, it seems fairly clear that Rowland had not done nothing to justify his sudden dismissal. Culturally, musically and educationally his departure was an enormous loss" (Lloyd 105).

In one of his writings published in January 1904, Zosapthara talked of his support for the Mizos. He thought Mizos were fit to compete with others and

overcome anyone, and he encouraged them to do so, too. He told them that the best way Mizos could attain sovereignty was through education. He encouraged Mizos to educate their children and send them to schools. Unlike their administrators, he told them that the Zosap (Missionaries) were different and were concerned about the welfare of the Mizos. This statement confirms the administrators' attitude towards the Mizos. He wrote: "Now give your children education; instead of being subjects, you can become rulers of your own land. This is the easiest way you can achieve sovereignty. The missionaries are not like the administrators, we want what is best for you which is why we instruct you about these things" (Lalthangliana 84).

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Herbert Lewin (1839 – 1919) was a different class altogether. He came for the 'Lushai Expedition' and won the hearts of the Mizos. Under his leadership, the British were able to retrieve Mary Winchester safely. Mizo chiefs trusted him. He was known among the Mizos as "Thang-lian-a", a derivative of Lewin's name "Tom Lewin". Lewin took seven Mizo chiefs, along with their attendants, to Culcutta for a trip. Throughout the trip, Lewin could not leave the chiefs because if he was out of their sight, they got frightened thinking they would be lost. So, Lewin pitched a tent near the chiefs and stayed there instead of staying in his quarters. They trusted him that much.

> To the Calcutta idlers who came to stare at the wild men encamped on the "maidaun," they seemed but a handful of barbarian, with unkempt hair, clad in curious tartans, and armed with strange weapons; but to me, who had lived among them, and knew the nature of these men, and the authority wielded by them among their own people, it seemed a wonderful thing that I should ever have succeeded in persuading them to trust their lives in my hands (Lewin 312).

Lewin adored the Mizos and was very popular among them, much to the disdain of his own people. He wrote:

> I think, also, I was out of spirits, as I certainly was out of health. . .. Without friends, without society, and (until the last year or so) without the companionship of a fellow-countryman, and now, added to this, the lack of any recognition of my services, filled me with such a chill sense of disappointment, that I felt it impossible to renew work on the old terms. . ..
>
> I knew and love my hill people. I lived among them and was their friend. They admitted me into their homes and family life as few Englishmen have been admitted. I ate with them, talked with them, played music at their feasts, and joined in their hunting expeditions. They concealed no thoughts from me ; I had their confidence. They gave me their sons to educate, and invited me to the marriage-feasts of their daughters. I was ready to spend and be spent in their service. But, after all, I was only "a fly on the wheel"; they were not *my* people (312, 313).

In his letter to Lewin dated 25 April 1899, Lorrain spoke of the praises and respect people still had for him.

> Your own influence upon the Lushais is still felt. I do not think there is a man or woman in all those hills who does not know the name of Thangliena or Luan Sap. It is handed down from father to son, and they are never tired of singing your praises. We have sat for hours and listened to them talking the bye-gone days and the wonderful white chief, who has become to them the ideal sahib or Englishman. Some few we have met who could boast that they had actually seen the great Thangliena in the flesh (317).

In trauma novel, the intention of the author in writing such novel occupies an important place.

In the "Thuhmahruai" (introduction) of his novel *Goodbye Lushai Brigade,* James Dokhuma mentioned his intention thus:

> During the Second World War, Japan fleet extended their sway towards Mizoram (earlier known as 'Lushai Hills'). They had a huge impact in the area and greatly affected the lives of the people.
>
> This story portrays a relationship between an English Army officer and a Mizo damsel who met during this period. The story aims to project how Mizo women were quite competent and eligible for white men, and how the latter regarded themselves as superiors.
>
> The zeal with which missionaries preached the word of God was admirable but even they themselves felt an aversion towards us when it came to marriage of their kind with that of ours (Dokhuma 5).

The introduction made it clear how even the missionaries themselves wanted to maintain their distance with the Mizos so as not to compromise their dominion status.

In *Goodbye Lushai Brigade,* Lalriamliana, a Mizo lad, had just finished his M.A. final exams from Arizona State University, USA. Their university organised an 'Inter National Students Cultural Show'. Students performed according to the alphabetical order of the nations they represented. Although Lalramliana came from India, he was told, "Students who come from India belong to diverse cultural backgrounds. So, you will perform under 'M', and we will announce that you have come from one part of a region in India" (9).

The fact that Lalramliana was asked not to appear together with those from mainland India showed how different he was from them.

James Dokhuma, the author of the novel, was not only one of the freedom fighters in MNF but he was also its senator. He was well aware of the differences between the Mizos and those from mainland India in many aspects, be these religion, culture or tradition. It is not surprising then that he highlighted this aspect in his novel.

Coming back to the 'Inter National Students Cultural Show', the novel described the scene when Lalramliana was about to enter the stage thus:

> He wore a traditional Mizo attire, *ngotekherh*, with a white shirt. On his head, he put on a *diar*, a traditional Mizo headgear. He did not put on any shoes or sandals. He carried a beautiful *khiangkhawi* sack and smoked a *tursing* pipe.
>
> He came up on the stage and stood on its wide sparkling platform. The place roared with the applause he received from the thousands of attendants.
>
> The announcer then introduced him to the audience: 'The name of this gentleman is Lalramliana. He lives in the furthest eastern region of India, bordering Burma. When India was occupied by the British, his place was known as 'Lushai Hills', but now it is called Mizoram. He belongs to a brave and honest tribe who, like us Americans, fought against the British government, and like Red Indians are known for their bravery and altruism. He has just completed his M.A. exams from Arizona State University' (9, 10).

After the introduction, Lalramliana began singing. The audience were immediately captivated by his voice. After he had sung one song, he was requested to sing at least two more. Listen to the account of his performance:

> The applause of the audience shook the hall when he finished his performance. They requested fervently for more. So, he sang two more songs: P.S. Chongthu's 'Chhingkhual Lenmawii' and Rokunga's 'Lentupui kai vel leh romei chhumin'.

> His voice might not have been the best but he definitely endeared himself to his audience. That day, Lalramliana was by no means less admired than stars like Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton and Olivia Newton John who were also invited for the function (10, 11).

At the end of the show, the protagonist of the novel, Mark Martin, who had been to Mizoram and had stayed with the Mizos, told Lalramliana, "If you are a Lushai, then you are my son" (11). Martin adored the Mizos so much during his stay in Mizoram that he proudly named his house 'Lushai Brigade' (14).

When the University results came out, Lalramliana secured one of the best results (13).

Martin adored the Mizos so much that he said, "Mark Martin adores the Mizos very much. As he could not marry his Mizo lover whom he met in Mizoram during the World War, he resorted to marrying a Red Indian girl, Olivia, who looks most like his former Mizo beloved and, who, just like the Mizos, adorns a head dress" (16).

James Dokhuma constructed his plot in such a way as to project the pre-eminence of Mizos among others in the world stage. He did this in order to disprove white men's perception of Mizos as inferior. This was important because the Mizos then held white men in high esteem. Mark Martin said it so himself:

> The main reason why they (Mizos) admired white people so much was because when the British Expeditionary Force attacked Lushai Hills and occupied it, all of the men in authority were the whites, whom they called as 'Sap'. They saw that the Indians were below them. Those white-skinned men were officers, feared and respected by everyone. Besides, all the civil administrators were white-skinned men, too. The christian missionaries, too, were white

> and were on good terms with the administrators. Gradually, the Mizos came to realize that the whole of India was under the rule of the white people. No wonder then that the Mizos had high consideration for the whites (39, 40).

3.2.1 Problem between Mark Martin and Lallawmi

Though Mark Martin and Lallawmi loved each other very much, they could not marry. The Europeans, and that included the missionaries too, felt that if Martin married Lallawmi, the Mizos would begin to think that the whites were their equals and would treat them accordingly. In the process, the whites might lose the respect and loyalty they commanded on the Mizos. The outcome: Martin was promoted from Captain to Major and was transferred outside of Mizoram so that he would never have a chance to meet his lady love again.

So said Martin:

> Although they (the whites) built a church and shared their religious beliefs, social equality was a far-fletched notion. . .. When I, a British Officer, of pure English blood, wanted to marry a girl from the race we consider inferior, they felt it was humiliating for the white people. They were afraid that the Lushais will see us as their equals which will threaten our supremacy. This *politics* is deeply embedded in them and, for a mere reason, it was beyond comprehension (Dokhuma 64, 65).

Martin did not care what his fellow white people might think of him. He did not care whether the missionaries approved his actions or not. He was even willing to give up his job because he felt that it was his job that came in their way. He, therefore, Lallawmi of his plans:

> I will quit my job as a soldier because it obstructs our marriage, and I will free myself from their sovereignty. When that time comes, freedom will be all ours. As long as we're married, I do not care if they do not allow us to live in England, we can go to Canada, or even Morocco. If that is still inconvenient, we can consider living in British Honduras where no one can bother us anymore (73).

However, his plan to leave his job so as to get married with Lallawmi never saw the light of day. He was transferred from Lushai Brigade with an order to immediately join the 161 Brigade. He knew and the others knew it too that the transfer was ordered so as to separate the two lovers. Besides, Martin also knew that leaving his job would not solve their problems for long: his fellow whites could still stir up a host of other problems for him and Lallawmi, and he did not want that to happen.

3.3 Identity crisis in Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy No. 27* with reference to the protagonist, Ralkapzauva

K.N. Panikkar said, "African novelist Ngugi Wa Thiongo identifies 'cultural bomb' as the biggest weapon of colonialism. The effect of a cultural bomb is to 'annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves'" (Panikkar 20).

Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27* is a novel that depicts how Mizo society and Western society, led by colonial people, wrestled with each other over the lives of Mizo people. This wrestling is neatly presented through the life of a protagonist, Ralkapzauva.

The novel was written in an autobiographical form. The narrator was the protagonist who said, "When I wrote about my efforts to escape a land of idiocy and ignorance, it became a story" (Zikpuii-pa 15). This land of 'idiocy and ignorance' represented the life and culture of the protagonist. He wanted to escape to 'the other land'. At the end of the novel, the protagonist did reached 'the other land'. However, one wonders whether he truly received what he had been searching for all through his life.

The protagonist's village name was never mentioned in the novel, but these were given: his village chief was Dolura, and the village was a remote area in the eastern part of the Lushai area; from Mizoram's capital Aizawl, it would take five

days and four nights to reach the place. In the village was a primary school but no high school: the colonizers had no intention of opening one.

Ralkapzauva, a boy from the village, wanted to study further. So, one day his father took him to Aizawl. From Aizawl, Ralkapzauva went on to Shillong where he finished his Matriculation with first division marks. He could not continue his studies because of the war. He applied for the King's Commissioned Officer post and got recruited. He received Best Cadet award during their training.

But he felt that the more he achieved, the farther he was from his community. That made him feel out of place even in his own community.

Zikpuii-pa wanted to uplift Mizo society but he was an ardent admirer of the colonizers. In many of his writings he would refer to Mizos and their behaviour as 'mawl', which means 'stupid'.

> The path where I begin my life journey is way up yonder, in the remote distance**,** beyond the River of the East, where it narrows up amidst the clouds of ignorance. That is the land and the place where I was born. I was born in a plain land. I recount all of the things I've done since my childhood, that is from the time when I become conscious, I know that I have done nothing to boast to others. But when I write about my efforts to survive and my journey to escape the plain and stupid land, it becomes a story (17).

The British occupied Mizoram from 1889/1890 uptil the time India got its independence from British rule in 1947. Christianity spread in the land after 1894 when Lorrain and Savidge arrived. In *C.C. Coy No. 27,* it can be understood that Christianity changed the life of Dolura's village, where they observed Sunday as a Holy day.

After church service on Sunday, they would gather together at Ralkapzauva's house. Ralkapzauva's mother would make boil yam and they would share it among themselves. They would drink red tea with a slurp. They had learnt a song "saw saw ddoh ddoh" and they would sing it throughout the day (9). Ralkapzauva had two beautiful sisters and a father who was an eloquent speaker. So, their family would attract many from their village.

Every month, travellers would bring to the village *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu.* It was a newsletter through which colonizers passed around information on various topics; it would also contain notices to chiefs and villagers. With Chief Dolura sitting on a western chair and Zakiamlova, a teacher, sitting on a *herhsawp* (a short stool made of cane), and the rest sitting on a floor, they would listen to the news and would have a discussion later on.

They would often talk about the glory of Italy, France and Britain. Being an eloquent speaker and a village elder, Ralkapzauva's father would often dominate the conversation: he had been to France for an expedition during World War I; he would narrate his experience, adding humorous elements and, at times, making up a few. His precious treasures were his *tukuli** gun and the overcoat that he used to wear to court French lady in Marseille.

Ralkapzauva longed to see Aizawl ever since he was young. He heard that in Aizawl, most houses had corrugated roofs. There were Superintendent's quarter, office and jail, too. He wanted to see all these.

The life of Ralkapzauva at his village was very different from the life he led after he became King's Commissioned Officer. This contrast highlighted how he had lost his identity and happiness. He said, "I do not know what is joyful in this world anymore" (98).

When his father took him to Aizawl, on the way they saw a Babu, a government official, near Paikhai Bangla. The Babu was treated warmly by the people and his servants seemed to respect him a lot. So, Ralkapzauva asked his father as to who was more powerful: Babu or Sap. His father told him that Saps were more powerful. He wanted to become a Sap there and then. His father told him that he could become a Babu but not a Sap (13). That angered Ralkapzauva; he blamed his village. He regretted that he was born there. He wanted to be a powerful man but now he would not be able to become one.

> Although the Babu is quite powerful, the white people are still above them so I think being a Babu is not enough, though even to become a Babu requires God's grace in abundance. That day I realized how unfortunate it was to be born on the opposite side of the Khawchhak Tuipui*. If only I was at least born in Aizawl, I could have at least become a Sapte*, if not a Sappui* (23, 24).

During the British occupation of Mizo land, there were only few people who went for higher education, and only few got government jobs. Army or police, teachers, chowkidar and Rahsi (Circle Interpreter) were the main jobs that were available. As it was difficult to get government jobs, as they were few, the ones who did get were quite arrogant and they considered themselves superior to others. There was a wide gap between them and the common people.

In Kulikawn, once one Mizo came riding on a horse and trod around in front of the kulis that had gathered there. To them he said, “There is a huge distance between our feet and spiked caterpillars because we wear shoes. . . .although we all are Mizos, although we all are Mizos” (Sailo). He boasted in front of them. He was a peon in one government’s office.

Ralkapzauva spoke of the conditions during those days:

> The rich and the the powerful were so mighty, while the poor lived a wretched life. We had no idea that people could be so alienated from the love of their own land, government and society.
>
> When Aizawl Babu reprimanded us, none of us dared to retort; we would just grumble behind his back and felt contended with it. We just hoped to receive what was left of God’s grace for men (Zikpuii-pa 24, 25).

As it has already mentioned in Lalzuithanga’s *Thlahrang*, that the Bawrhsap was regarded by people as an almighty whose orders could never be challenged. Similarly in *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, Ralkapzauva stated that challenging the words of the Aizawl Babu was out of the question. No one dared to question white men even when they were wrongfully accused and persecuted. It was not only the Bawrhsap who oppressed and ill-treated them, but also his subordinates in the government including the Circle Interpreter and Dahrawk. Due to this, Ralkapzauva hoped to attain a rank equivalent to the Aizawl Babu. He did not aspire to become a Sap because his father could not offer him any advice on how to become one. So with ‘God’s grace for men of the East’ he hoped to become a government official with a certain amount of power under the Sap. Ralkapzauva believed that God’s grace and

patronage mostly favoured white men. In his opinion, God's mercy and love were not necessarily equal towards all nations because not all the white men that they encountered were either Bawrhsap or important officers in the government; even in the white men in the Church, the missionaries, wielded much power and authority. They were, therefore, extremely in awe of the white men and at the same time, they were afraid of them.

Ralkapzauva wished to attend higher studies (High School) because he admired the way students dressed themselves, the way they combed their hair, and also because he wanted to put on a coat that they put on. He also admired the way the High School students talked in English (28). He revered knowledge, true, but he deeply admired the lifestyle and behaviour of the white.

In two of his novels, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, Zikpuii-pa portrayed the protagonists as being superior to other races in terms of knowledge and intelligence. He encouraged Mizos to study diligently so that when they mingled with people not of their tribe they would show great leadership and command. Zikpuii-pa also expressed this sentiment in his essays. In one of his essays titled "A ruh no no chhuakah" he wrote, "It is not enough to just survive, it is important to become distinguishable and to be a decision maker among the survivors" (Darhmingthangi 48). He went on to say that he expected Mizos to compete with and overcome non-Mizos and work deligently and professionally. He wrote thus:

> On this earth, people belonging to different tribes and races adore each other; to be the most beautiful and the most colourful among these and to be revered by others must be a fortunate

> thing . . . let us strife not to become an object of ridicule and contempt especially in our own land, and let us try to succeed in things we are capable of. Let our culture and sensibilities enchant those who live around us so that our land and fields may earn their respect. This is my dream (49).

Zikpuii-pa did not advocate individual progress, but he was concerned about the development of his land, the land of the Mizos. He wanted people to recognize Mizoram, and he wanted Mizos to attain great heights in terms of education and knowledge so that people would remember Mizoram as a great and respectable place.

Zikpuii-pa had served India as an Indian Foreign Service officer. He had spent much of his life abroad among other races. He wished for the Mizos to achieve many of the good qualities, practices and development that he had seen. Whenever they went outside Mizoram, many Indians thought Mizos to be Chinese or foreigners. Even today, there are many people who do not know that Mizoram is one of the states in India. One of the major reasons for this is because Mizoram has not achieved much in the field of development and knowledge for people outside to recognize. Mizoram has not made any significant contribution for India; so, for many Indians, they are quite insignificant. This was true during the time of Zikpuii-pa, too. He wanted to change it. He wanted Mizo people to assert their superiority by making significant contributions in whatever field they could so that Mizos and Mizoram would be recognized. This was the reason why, in his novel *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, Zikpuii-pa made his protagonist, Ralkapzauva, a person who was determined to overcome any obstacles that might come his way.

When Ralkapzauva and his father reached Aizawl, children gazed and laughed at them because they were quite dirty. From that day on, Ralkapzauva was determined to be cleaner than the children of Aizawl. Zikpui-pa created the character Ralkapzauva as an ambitious person with a determination to be better than others. In this sense, his character was the reflection of the author himself. In his analysis of *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, Siamkima Khawlhring, an important pioneer among Mizos in the field of literary criticism, felt that Zikpuii-pa's thoughts and beliefs were clearly reflected in the story of Ralkapzauva. He wrote, "Zikpuii-pa wants the Mizos not to be followers but leaders. He reserves the highest and the best positions for us. If we give our best in all things, we have a potential to achieve things that others cannot, and this is what Zikpuii-pa is trying to tell us" (Zikpuii-pa 12).

Ralkapzauva imitated the white men and those from other cultures not only in the fields of education and knowledge but also in his behaviour and attire. He desired to be like them, and he was proud that he was able to perform like them. When he was in Aizawl, one day, his father came to bring him home to their village for a summer holiday. "Wearing traditional Indian dress, we headed towards our village carrying an Indian umbrella; I felt that then I had resembled the Babu at Paikhai bungalow more than before" (27). He was convinced that by imitating these people, he was becoming more like them and this bettered the way he perceived himself.

When he left his village for Shillong to attend High School, the entire village came to see him off. They hoped that, one day, he would become one of the leaders of the government, such as a Babu. Even their local teacher Zakiamlova advised him to aim for such. Expressing his hopes that Ralkapzauva would become a Babu and

tirelessly worked for his people, he said, “We have never had any intelligent person such as him in our village. Ralkapzauva has become a topper in the whole of Mizoram, and now he is preparing to attend High School, which is such a marvellous thing. By the grace of God, he will one day become a Babu in the hills of Aizawl, and it will be so comforting for our community” (33).

His aspiration to have a better future might be great but he had to go through many hardships for it. For instance, when he arrived in Shillong to continue his studies, he stayed at Earle Hostel. The Mizos who resided there had their own tradition which was to be followed. As Ralkapzauva was new to that hostel, his senior, Saichhinga, ordered him to steal a pear fruit from the Headmaster’s garden. Unfortunately, while doing so, he was caught. While being interrogated, he revealed that he had been asked to steal by Saichhinga. Both of them got a beating from their Headmaster, and Ralkapzauva got beaten by his seniors, too. He really felt hurt by that and saddened by the thought that Mizos will then consider him “a rascal and a coward” (51, 52).

He contemplated the huge difference that he found between his village and Shillong, and he felt nostalgic.

> When I think about the huge differences between my two worlds, the opposite of khawchhaktuipui* and the city of Shillong where I am studying, I contemplate going back home. I feel that I will be happier back home laying traps in a forest to catch animals, joking and laughing with the lads and the ladies on our way home from our fields. So, I decide to go back home because I miss my relatives and friends very much (53).

He expressed his views about being a Mizo, saying, “Although we are ignorant and have a narrow worldview, we envy no one; when civilised peope see this in us, they respect us for it” (104, 105).

He, however, still longed to have power and authority. He wanted to become a white man, as he believed power and glory came with being white. So, he put aside his desire to go back home; he decided to continue his studies as he wanted to achieve his goals and move forward in life.

During a summer break, he went home for a holiday. He bought a pair of secondhand long trousers and a shirt to wear in Aizawl and in his own village. From Lalaghat, he reached Sairang by boat. As he breathed the air of Mizoram, he experienced deep joy. He exclaimed, “When I breathe the air of Zoram, I don’t know how to explain, my mind somehow feels free, and I become quite content” (68).

In one of his novels, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*, Zikpuii-pa claimed that the regions where non-Mizos lived were the places where Mizos encountered fear and hardships. When the protagonist Chhuanvawra and his girlfriend arrived at Vairengte, the first village that is within the state of Mizoram, they felt blessed and peaceful. For them, the region outside Mizoram was a foreign land, and they regarded it as the “land of shame” (Zikpuii-pa, *Nunna* 196). They could not feel comfortable among the Indian people. He said:

> For Mizo offsprings, who are bored of living in foreign lands, and who are tired physically and mentally, the hills of Vairengte are hills that give joy! . . . we are relieved of our pain and suffering. We turn our back against the *vai* land, the land of shame for us, and in Zoram, our land of hope, we find rest for our poor spirits. Prayers find fulfilment only in Mizoram (ibid).

Likewise, in *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, Ralkapzauva's mother was paranoid that her son was going to study in Shillong and she would not be able to speak to him. Those days, due to lack of proper transportation and information, Mizos had little knowledge of the non-Mizos. She was scared that her son could come to harm because of the differences in culture and traditions. Ralkapzauva spoke of her mother's fears in the following words:

> For my mother, Shillong is a land of the unknown. In big cities, people die without without no one knowing about it. She is worried. Besides, we are to travel by train, by boat, by motor vehicles, and she has no idea how far we are going; for her, it is equivalent to the land of the dead, a completely different world; she finds it hard to be at peace when she considers all these (32).

One recurrent idea in the novel was, "The position that we desire is really nothing once we achieved it" (Zikpuii-pa 28). Ralkapzauva abandoned the life he considered ignorant and contemptible, and attended High School. When he came home to Mizoram to spend his holidays, he bought secondhand shirt and trousers in order to look like other High School students. Instead of heading straight to his village, he spent Sunday in Aizawl. With some of his friends, he roamed around the city imitating High School students that he had seen, but realized that no one actually seemed to admire them or longed to be like them (68).

Although Ralkapzauva admired people who belonged to other races, especially the white men, deep in his heart he enjoyed the social life of the Mizos and their love for each other. He respected the social life of the Mizos, which he once declared ignorant, and said, "Although it may not be much in terms of worldly standard, but their love for each other is extremely wonderful" (37). He continued:

> Those were the days when people loved each other. . .. The whole community would support specially-abled persons and the sick, give food to the poor, console those who grieve….That was the golden age of Mizoram and our laws were golden laws (71, 72).

However, he was constantly disturbed by his desire to achieve worldly accomplishments and progress. His desire to be on par with the white men and to be powerful made him flee the social life of the Mizos. Even when his family tried to persuade him to stay he said, "I am running forward. I do not miss anyone to the point of making myself miserable. I am captivated by the path that leads to my future" (37, 38).

He passed his tenth standard examination in a first division. As World War II broke out, he could not continue his studies. He applied for the post of the King's Commissioned Officer and got selected. He went for a training at Military Academy, Dehradun. He was awarded the Best Cadet award. There had never been any Mizo in history who had achieved such rank. On the day when he got that award, none of his family could be with him. He said, "All the other cadets have their family to celebrate with; I am the only one who does not have any of my family members on that occasion" (93). He left his family in pursuit of a better future, but missed his family and their love.

After completing his training, he went home for a holiday. The Bawrhsap warmly welcomed him and reserved all the Inspection Bungalows for his family to stay in. But, Ralkapzauva's father preferred to stay at his own friend's house. His father had lost one of his precious treasures: a tukuli gun; he had sold it to support the education of his son. Now, he had just one treasure: a shirt he used to put on

when courting damsels in Marseille. Though his son had bought a new shirt for him, he preferred to put on that treasured shirt of his.

When Ralkapzauva reached his village, he was received only by a handful of his relatives. That was in great contrast to the time when he was about to leave his village to do his higher studies; then, the whole village had come out to bid him farewell. Now, after he had finished his studies and had become a great officer, people seemed to avoid him because of his status. He said, “The others did not have the courage to come. I can no longer summon the ladies and lads who once sang for me” (99).

While he was studying, people hoped that he would, one day, become a Babu. Now, he had achieved an important position in a government, but his people were not pleased with him. Said his Chief Dolura, “We thought you will become a Babu in Aizawl, but you have become a white man. I’m afraid we will not be able to keep each other’s company anymore” (ibid).

According to Dolura, the dining habits of the whites were too foreign to the Mizos. Their glasses were too fragile and might easily break. Their food did not have a typical vegetable soup of the Mizos. Though he once dined with the Bawrhsap, he never wanted to be invited for a meal again with him.

Chief Dolura invited Ralkapzauva to have dinner with him. Together with him, he also invited all the elders and teachers too, including the church elders. Dolura had a chair he set aside for the Sap. He asked Ralkapzauva to sit on it, saying,

"I have always made any white man who comes to have dinner with me sit to on it; you too, therefore, must sit on it, the rest will sit on a floor" (101).

The village men could no longer see him as a Mizo. The chief, who used to call him his "son", no longer had the audacity to call him as such in the presence of Ralkapzauva's friends. They no longer felt comfortable in his presence.

Ralkapzauva tried his best to retain his past demeanours and preserve his identity as a Mizo. He tried to present himself as a likeable person in front of the chief and the elders. But his status prevented them from maintaining the close relationship that they once had with him.

Mizos would visit each other's home and had a lively chat. They loved to socialise. But, white men isolated themselves from others. Said Chief Dolura, "The white men's homes are exactly like I have said before: they have no regards for other people. They just go on doing whatever they want to, and I cannot tolerate this behaviour. They are tidy, they are clean, and it is impossible for us to keep up. Even when we want to shake off ashes from our pipe, we have to look all around to find the place for it; I find it so unrelaxing" (102).

When he thought about the way of life in his village and the changing perspectives of his village folks of him since he had became a "white man", Ralkapzauva found it difficult to adapt to the situation. He felt people no longer liked him like they did before; the community that once embraced him and wished him well now distanced themselves from him. He said, "First of all, I think people do not embrace me from their hearts; they talk to me as if I am an outcast. I am in a place

where I do not belong. They cannot even say the things they want to say to me, and if I don't treat them delicately, I will soon be regarded as an arrogant person. Being a white man is not an easy task" (100, 101).

Ralkapzauva said that he had become a white man, a thing he desired so much to be:

> I have become a white man which was what i dreamt of becoming ever since I first came to Aizawl as a child. Although my skin may not be white, the white men themselves accept me as one of them; my folks and chief also consider me as such, and I have succeeded in achieving what I wanted and aspired for (97).

Despite claiming that he had achieved his goal, he felt he had become a stranger to his own people, and that made him question everything in his life.

> But the belief that being a white man would equate acquiring all the happiness just as in fairy tales is a misconception. The moment I became a white man was the beginning of all my problems…when we thought that the clouds were in the sky, we realize as we flew in planes that they were not in the sky at all, but the place above the clouds is a lonely one. Similarly, when I became a commissioned officer, my childhood friends no longer felt at home to be with me, the chiefs seemed to be quite scared of me. Loneliness becomes apparent: I no longer know what is pleasurable in this world (97, 98).

Before he became an officer, his mother wished that he would one day become either a Circle Interpreter or a Chaprahsi and work in Aizawl. She hoped that he might become a Babu so that their family could stay close together (79). But since Ralkapzauva was an ambitious person, he chosed to attain a higher rank, so he did not pay heed to his mother's wish. Now, whenever he went home for his holiday, his

mother would dread the time he would have to go back to his post, and her mind could never be in peace (104).

Ralkapzauva's father and a Gorkhali named Bahadura had both gone to France during World War I. After they returned, Bahadura became a kuli, and when he died, his son took over his job. Both Bahadura and, later, his son would carry Ralkapzauva's luggage. Ralkapzauva and Bahadura's conditions were quite interesting. Ralkapzauva was a high ranking officer, but his friends and relatives distanced themselves from him. Bahadura, on the other hand, had a low profile job but he was closed to his friends and relatives, and he seemed to be quite content in his life (110). Moreover, Bahadura was always ready to assist Ralkapzauva whenever the latter needed his help. Ralkapzauva remembered him fondly.

Whenever children saw Ralkapzauva, they would say, "Look, this white man knows Mizo language" (98). Though becoming a white man was his heart's desire, he realized that it had only made him empty and lonely.

Throughout the novel, *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, though its author, Zikpuii-pa, did not say it directly, one thing stood out clearly and that was the effects of modern advancements in Mizo society. The Mizo society was once a society where people loved socializing. They would gather together happily and while away their time envying no one. Love bonded them together. But, when modernity came, it disrupted the fabric of the Mizo society. Unity declined and people became lonely and isolated. All these were presented in the character of Ralkapzava. It is plausible too that through Ralkapzauva, its author Zikpuii-pa narrated his own experience working in a foreign land as an Indian Foreign Service officer.

GLOSSARY

Sap, Sappui or Bawrhsap : The Superintendent of Lushai Hills; the District Commissioner; the top official; only white men were appointed as Bawrhsap during those days.

Sapte : Assistant Superintendant of Lushai Hills, Additional Deputy Commissioner level

Tukuli : An ordinary muzzle-loading gun used with a percussion cap, (Lorrain 528); a Turkey-made gun (Vanlalnghet 553).

Babu : The Goverment servant; an official; this post could be held by Indians also.

Khawchhak Tuipui : The Kolodyne River

Fatumtu : A long pillow-shaped cloth for carrying rice and other things

Dahrawk : Sub-Inspector of Police

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CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL STUDY OF RAMBUAI TRAUMA IN SELECTED MIZO NOVELS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the study of Rambuai trauma from the novel of Zikpuii-pa, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah,* and James Dokhuma's *Silaimu Ngaihawm. Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* is a unique Rambuai novel for it reflects the physical and mental trauma caused by Rambuai. The novel opens from the pre-Rambuai era that is soft and calm as compared to the post-Rambuai era; place and landscape have different meanings depending on the protagonist's perception of trauma. In *Silaimu Ngaihawm,* the protagonist Lalramliani became despondent and died because she lost her boyfriend Sanglura in a battle between the MNF and the Indian Army during Rambuai. The trauma she suffered is studied in this chapter. Besides, different kinds of traumas caused by Rambuai in these novels are combined in this chapter as 'Rambuai Syndrome'.

4.1.1 Brief Sketch of Rambuai (1966-1986)

The Mizo National Front declared independence of Mizoram from the India Union at midnight, 28th February 1966. They seized some posts of the Indian army in Mizoram and declared themselves the new authority in Mizoram. Indian army came; gun battle, rape, torture and other traumatic violence began. Ordinary people were caught in between. There were famine, fear, loss of confidence and morality, identity crises, and numerous deaths. After Rambuai ended in 1986, its sting still haunted

Mizo literature; Zikpuii-pa's novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and James Dokhuma's novel *Silaimu Ngaihawm* were substantiations of it.

4.1.2 The Pre-Rambuai Era

Mizos have experienced movements that brings about great changes in society: the first and the second Lushai Expeditions of the British, the coming of Christianity, the outbreak of *Puma Zai*, the *Lengkhawm zai* and the revival movements that followed them, the Mizo Union movement and the two world wars. Over and above all these, an independent movement led by MNF Party from 1966 – 1986 is regarded as the most traumatic movements in Mizo history. Profound mental and physical wounds, spiritual backwardness, deaths and segregations are some of the outcomes of this movement. These find their expressions in songs, articles, research papers, dramas, and novels. Most of these writings have themes of suffering and pain; therefore, the term 'Rambuai trauma' is suitable for representing traumas brought by this movement. Though it was the darkest period in Mizo history, but it was a period that resulted in the production of many literary pieces; Mizo literature greatly stood to gain from it.

Michelle Balaev said that characters in fictions not only behaved on their own, but they represented the collective sufferings and experiences of the society. He said:

> The trick of trauma in fiction is that the individual protagonist functions to express an unique personal traumatic experience, yet the protagonist may also function to represent an event that was experienced by a group of people, either historically based or futuristically imagined. . ..

> The traumatized protagonist in fiction brings into awareness the specificity of individual trauma that is often connected to larger social factors and cultural ideologies. Trauma in fiction provides a picture of the individual who suffers, but paints it in such a way as to suggest that this protagonist is an "every-person" figure. Indeed, a significant purpose of the protagonist is often to reference a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture, race, or gender have collectively experienced trauma. In this regard, the fictional figure magnifies a historical event in which thousands or millions of people have suffered similar violence, such as slavery, war, torture, rape, natural disaster or nuclear devastation (Balaev 16, 17).

As trauma affects one's mind, the perception of a same event may differ from individual to individual, society to society, and from time to time. Said Alan Young, "From the nineteenth century on, it has been observed that people do not respond uniformly when exposed to the same potentially traumatizing event. . .. Encounters with death and injury affect different people in different ways, also. . .different people can have profoundly different conceptions of what constitutes a realistic 'threat'" (Balaev 10).

There is a period of calm before a storm. Likewise, peace and joy may precede traumatic events. Joshua Shannon Rynjah said thus:

> Trauma . . . redefines a pre-existing sense of being or in terms of a trauma felt by a community, it redefines a pre-existing cultural and social structure. . .. There is a sense of harmony, completeness, the sacred and the ultimate before the advent of a traumatic event and as such the sacred and the complete are deconstructed by the consequences of the traumatic event. Narrating such a traumatic event then focuses on the idea of the 'downfall'; the destruction of the structure, the soiling of the sacred and the violent desecration of the ideal by an external or internal element (Rynjah 142).

Laurie Vickroy explained how society and trauma are related to each other. She thought "the possibilities for healing often depend upon social interconnections, through acts of witnessing or sympathy. Unfortunately, social opinions can re-traumatized or undermine victims" (Vickroy, *Voices* 137).

To study and to have a better understanding of the traumatic effects of Rambuai, let us review and highlight the condition of pre-Rambuai era and the findings of researchers.

When pre-Rambuai period and post-Rambuai period are compared, many are of the belief that pre-Rambuai period was more peaceful and morality was more profound. Many scholars and writers argue that stealing becomes commonly known after the Rambuai. In her novel, *Nghilh Har Kan Tuar,* author Mafeli said, "Mr. Rochhuaha thinks stealing is the product of Rambuai" (Mafeli 44). After comparing the pre-Rambuai period and the post Rambuai period, Lalrimawia said Rambuai have negative impacts on the Mizos.

> *Zoram buai* brought many evils to Mizoram. Before, Mizos were self-sufficient; they could support themselves and every family had enough grains for their sustenance. After Rambuai, due to the fear instilled by Rambuai and the grouping of villages, Mizos could no longer support themselves. Rambuai made people dishonest, selfish and greedy. They became treacherous. They accused each other and many lost their self confidence (Lalrimawia 130, 131).

Chawngsailova also compared the two periods and said crime rate saw a great increase after Rambuai.

> Before the outbreak of violence, Mizos enjoyed peace and harmony in society. Theft and robbery were very rare and uncommon; as such, no one needed locks to lock their doors. Between 1920 to 1956, there was only one murder case in Aizawl. Sareen remarked, "*Mizoram was an exceptionally crime free district, and there was not a single jail.*"
>
> But the peace loving society was turned upside down by the insurgent movement and its consequence counter attack from the Indian security forces. For instance, between 1986 – 1987, 45 murder cases, 62 rape cases, 28 robbery, 133 burglary, 347 theft were reported; and there were 1157 IPC crimes (Chawngsailova 94).

Mizo historian B. Lalthangliana calls pre-Rambuai period between the years 1920 and 1965 as '*Hun Laihawl'* (Middle Period); he sub classified 1920 to 1940 as the Golden Period in Mizo history.

> The years between 1920 and 1940 can be called for the Mizos the most joyful period. Years of wars between villages were gone, and people could sleep in peace at night. Traditional class distinction was done away with by the British.
>
> Superstitions and taboos were replaced by Christian's beliefs and faiths. To accuse someone a witch or as possessing *khawhring* [the name of a malignant spirit] were banned by law and Christianity set them free from those. Every member of a village had a same occupation and they would happily toil in their fields together. They were not much tempted by worldly things and aspiration to amass wealth was unheard of.
>
> So the year between 1920 and 1940 can be regarded as the most joyful period for the Mizos, the "Hun Rangkachak" (Golden Period) (Lalthangliana 168).

Vanṭhuama also said that the years after the coming of the British colonialists in 1890 and the establishment of the first Political Party in Mizoram in 1946 was "The most joyful period in our land" (Vanṭhuama 222). British colonialists ended wars between villages and the fear of bogey when people accepted Christianity.

Though *Puma zai* and *Tlanglam zai* (the traditional style of singing and dancing in a group) revived throughout the land, yet the Churches also often experienced spiritual revival known as *Harhna*.

In a compilation of research papers that studied Rokunga's song *Mizo Nih Tinuamtu Rokunga,* Rochamliana spoke of the period between the 1941 and 1969 thus:

> This period saw the climax of joy in Mizo history. Christian's beliefs and faiths substituted old bad habits and superstitions. Love, brotherhood and goodwill hovered over all. In the fields of education, entrepreneurship, and parliamentary affairs, Mizoram took great stride and developed itself as much as possible (Rochamliana 283).

But later, Rochamliana said, "The songs composed by Rokunga after the Rambuai in 1966 took a different turn altogether" (284). This clearly shows how Rambuai affected the Mizos. Many expected Rambuai would result in greater happiness but that happiness never came, and Rambuai has become the source of trauma in Mizo literature.

4.2 A Critical Study of Trauma in Zikpuii-pa's Novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*

In Zikpuii-pa's novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah,* Zopui village represents the suffering and troubles of Mizoram villages during Rambuai, and Ngurthansangi represents women who were victims of the atrocities committed during Rambuai.

4.2.1 Social harmony affected by independent movement

Having its setting in Zopui village, Zikpuii-pa in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* detailed how the notion of independence of Mizoram divided Zopui into two:

youngsters were enthusiastic with the idea of freedom movement, and many volunteered to join the Mizo National Front, but the elders questioned the very idea and the manners in which the fight for freedom had been carried out. Besides, many still remained faithful to Mizo Union, the first political party established in 1946. So, the so-called freedom movement brought about division in the society of Zopui village.

Among those who opposed the freedom movement in Zopui village were Pastor Lianzuala, middle school headmaster Zalawma, former Chief of the village Khawvelthanga, and Selṭhuama, a medical doctor and the father of the protagonist Chhuanvawra. These believed Mizoram was not ready to become an independent nation in that time and age. They said, "Mizoram is not big enough to become an independent nation. We have absolutely no export and we are backward in wisdom and craft. If we were an independent nation, we would have nothing to rely on" (Zikpuii-pa 14).

These preferred to remain under the Indian government, but they were resolute that, under the Indian government, they would fight to better their status. Did these dared to express their views? The narrator answered this saying:

> Many reviled the fight for independence. Those who joined the fight said the Indian government had no consideration to develop a state like Mizoram. So, they joined the MNF party. Their parents objected it, but they did it all the same; sometimes, such arguments became a source of fun for others" (ibid).

Like many other youths, the protagonist of the novel, Chhuanvawra, also enrolled himself as a volunteer. He, along with others, underwent training in combat

and discipline. However, Chhuanvawra thought Mizos were not yet ready to build an independent nation. But, other volunteers thought otherwise. So, Chhuanvawra preferred not to reveal his conviction lest he be persecuted.

The topic of independence dominated the talks among Mizo students in Shillong, too. Some supported the movement and some mocked the very idea of it. There were some who tried to instigate others and this soured the relationship between Mizos and Assamese.

Even the *Zosap* (white missionary) could not escape being asked on the topic of Mizoram independence. In Seling, Chhuanvawra asked the *Zosap* whether Mizoram could be an independent nation. The *Zosap* replied, "If I say you could, the Government will be angry with me. If I say you could not, then the bachelors would probably hate me. I am afraid of them" (25).

When Chhuanvawra arrived in Shillong, he had a discussion about the current movement of independence with his friend Rohluta and Thansavunga, and he mentioned about the answer *Zosap* gave him. Thansavunga jumped in and said, "All the *Zosap* must be beaten and driven to their home now!" (26). According to Thansavunga, the British left the Mizos in the hands of India in 1947. They just abandoned the Mizos. He, therefore, was of the opinion that all Bristish citizens, whether they were missionaries or not, should not be allowed to stay in Mizoram.

At Zopui village Zalawma told Chhuanvawra: "The way youngsters today behaved surprised and saddened me a lot. They wouldn't give proper response when we talk to them. They show their arrogance to us, their elders. It's as if we are living

in separate worlds." Zalawma was the Headmaster in the village's middle English school. He was also the Superintendent of a Sunday school in the church. Both were positions held in high esteem. So, he was surprised and saddened that youngsters did not even pay heed to what he said.

Opinions were divided regarding the independent movement. The song of V. Thangzama "Tho La, Ding Ta Che" composed in 1971/72 spoke of the movement as '*duhthuleng sam sual*', which means blundered wish. Vanchiau, who published *Rambuai Literature* book in the year 2014, too said, "To talk about the impossibility of independence is like to give oneself a death warrant" (Vanchiau 124). Mizo politician A. Thanglura (1926 – 1994) said that Laimana was killed on 3rd January 1966 by the MNF, which was two months before the MNF declared independence (Thanglura 222).

4.2.2 Collective trauma experienced by Zopui village

As already said, Zopui village in the novel represented all Mizoram villages during the period and the people and their sufferings represented the same. Rambuai changed the environment of Zopui village. Before Rambuai, Zopui village used to be 'an united village where conflict and factions were none' (Zikpuii-pa 13); but after Rambuai, three women, Kungi, Sangi and Remmawii, died at the hands of MNF undergrounds, and people of the village thenceforth were careful not to speak ill of the independent movement for fear of the MNF. Those three women had jeered at and defamed victims who were raped by the Indian army. Their words hurt the feelings of many, and they were reported to the MNF. This clearly showed that the

once united village now conspired against each other, and none dared to air their true views regarding the Indian army or the MNF.

Balaev expressed how landscape and place in a novel affected the mind of the protagonists and how author incorporated them to display trauma: “In analyzing the narrative methods authors employ to portray suffering, I found two major patterns: the use of landscape imagery to convey the effect of trauma and remembering, and the use of place as a site that shape the protagonist’s experience and perception of the world” (Balaev xi).

In Zopui village, Rambuai affected not only their social life but their landscape, too. Rambuai, places, and landscapes were used by the author to distinguish between the two periods: pre-Rambuai period and post-Rambuai period.

Before Rambuai, flowers bloomed near Ngurthanpari’s house (Zikpuii-pa 58) and a beautiful gate was formed using bougainvillea shrubs. After Rambuai, these flowers and bougainvillea shrubs withered away and lost their beauty (50). Zikpuii-pa made use of flowers and bougainvillea shrubs to represent the sufferings and pains of Rambuai.

Balaev explained how place played an important role in the protagonist and in the characters’ behavior, feeling, and mentality.

> The representation of place in narrative descriptions of trauma carries individual and social values that direct the understanding and remembrance of trauma. Place is thus a central aspect of traumatic experience in literary representations because place provides a conceptual framework in which emotional responses occur.

> Place often function as a generative site for meaning in the novel because it influences the emotional texture, cognitive codification, and narrative form of the event, rather than standing solely as a backdrop screen for the action of the plot. At times, a place in nature is the arena where the literal and metaphoric actions of the plot reach a catharsis because the land is the location where protagonist comes to terms with memories of a traumatic experience (Balaev xv, xvi).

Zopui village used to be self suffiencient in rice and crops. But, after Rambuai, none had enough time to work in their fields. So, "those who used to harvest *kakzawn****** now harvested just *chhipzawn****,** but still, they were considered lucky. Chhipzawn is equivalent to thirty to forty *phur** of rice" (Zikpuii-pa 123). Zopui villagers were lucky in a way because they had permanent fields to grow crops. Other villages that practised jhum cultivation had tougher times.

Nirmal Nibedon, in *The Dagger Brigade*, spoke of the poor condition of Mizo people after village grouping and how they were neglected by the Indian government thus:

> The New Year of 1967 was to rudely shatter the dreams of the tribesmen. New Delhi had given clearance to Operation Security. The Mizos were caught totally unaware . . . it was cruel all right; cruel for those being thrashed about in the merciless cross-currents of insurrection, with no power to influence either side in the Mizo theatre, with no power to speak or intervene. . .. Protest from the people of India were hardly to be expected (105).

On 22 June 1967, at Assam Assembly house, MLA Stanley DD Nichols-Roy spoke up defending the Mizos against village grouping; he said, "I was surprised to learn that the District Council leaders had not been consulted before the decision was taken by the Deputy Commissioner or whoever did take the decision for this

regrouping" (Hluna 251). H.K. Bawichhuaka, Chief Executive Member of the District Council during the time also said that leaders of the District Council were not consulted by the Government of India: "Early in January of 1967, grouping of villages was ordered without even consulting the District Council" (Vanlalhriatrenga 382).

In a novel *Silaimu Ngaihawm*, James Dokhuma highlighted negative impacts of village grouping and how people suffered mentally. Hualtu village, the setting of the novel, was blessed in more than one way. They were self sufficient in rice and crops. They were ruled over by a wise and good Sailo chief. They enjoyed their festivals and social life was very peaceful. Rarely did anyone migrate to other village.

On 2 January 1967, while they were still celebrating New Year, Indian army ordered everyone to move to Baktawng village on the next day (Dokhuma, *Silaimu* 36). Dokhuma said, "There were no happy faces that day" (37).

Suakliana, a songs writer, said in one of his songs, "Kan hun tawng zingah khaw khawm a pawi ber mai," which means "Of all the things we have been through, village grouping is the most tragic". His song is popular till today and is an important Rambuai literature.

Kan hun tawng zingah khaw khawm a pawi ber mai,
Zoram hmun tin khawtlang puan ang a chul zo ta.
Tlang tina mi kal khawm nunau mipui tan,
Chhunrawl a vang riakmaw-va iangin kan vai. (Line 1 – 4)

The song means “Of all the things we have been through, village grouping is the most tragic. The entire Mizoram became lifeless and everyone felt homeless like a *riakmaw** searching for a shelter” (Zama 69).

Neil J. Smelser explained how social dislocation can be called a trauma.

> It is possible to describe social dislocations and catastrophes as social traumas if they massively disrupt organized social life. Common examples would be decimation through disease, famine, and war. The Great Depression of the 1930s can also be regarded as a social trauma, because it crippled the functioning economic institutions of those societies it affected, and it often led to strains or even breakdowns in their political and legal systems. The important defining characteristic of social traumas is that the affected arenas are society’s social structures (Smelser 37).

Zopui village, too, was a grouping centre. There were 250 houses before Rambuai, and after regrouping there were 750 houses. Many live in thatches and poverty was rampant. When he returned from Shillong to Zopui, Chhuanvawra said, “It seemed everyone wanted to tell me their problems and the many hardships they had endured” (Zikpuii-pa 121). When he went for a church service, he felt out of place because most of the faces were unfamiliar faces.

> I went to our church and saw the benches where the choir used to sit last year: Ngurthansangi and other suprano members would sit in the second row bench; contraltos would sit in the third and fourth rows; and bases would sit in the sixth and seventh rows. But that day, those benches were occupied by people I had never seen before. They had come from other villages. Their houses and farms, their rice and crops were all burnt down by the Indian army. We sat together there strangers meeting each other for the first time. The prayer service was too formal to me, and I felt there was no life in it. Dead bodies would come in, bodies of

> people who fought with the army in a forest. That made the mood heavier and more intense. So, I did not enjoy going to church anymore (119, 120).

Goeffrey Hartman, the director of Yale Video Archive, spoke about the making of documentary video and holocaust testimony:

> However many times the interviewer may have heard similar accounts, they are received as though for the first time. This is possible because, while the facts are known, while historians have labored – and are still laboring – to establish every detail, each of these histories is animated by something in addition to historical knowledge: there is a quest to recover or reconstruct a recipient, an "affective community" . . . and [thus] the renewal of compassionate feelings (Alexander 94).

When Chhuanvawra socialised with his friends, all their conversations centred around the stories of Rambuai. He said, "At times, they would ask me about my live in Shillong, but we would soon revert to the many hardships that people had to endure those days, gun battle, famine, arrest and beating. No one seemed to be interested in talking about any other subjects (Zikpuii-pa 120). "Everyone tried to tell me about their worries and how destitute they felt. It didn't matter how many times they had told me in the past, they would repeat them to me all over again every time we met" (120, 121).

Thangzama's song "Tho la, ding ta che" was a redemptive song for people under Rambuai. It spoke of the dreams of the poet, and urged people to stand up with hope for a better future. "Tho la, ding ta che; I hliam a dam e," said the poet. It meant "Wake up and stand tall; your wounds are now healed" (line 5). Though the wounds suffered by people then were not yet healed, they needed something to hold on to, something to give them dreams, some words to comfort them.

In a compilation of articles, *Zoram I Tan Chauh*, released in 1998, there was one article written by Thangzama. It had the same title as his song "Tho la, ding ta che". He wrote:

> I am afraid that the loss of our dear ones, houses and lands, and the wounds we suffered during Rambuai will one day fill our hearts with a desire to take revenge. If it is possible, it is better to forget the past and the traumas we went through, and look forward with ardent hope to a better future (Thangzama, *Zoram* 16).

During Rambuai, Indian army not only targeted MNF undergrounds but all Mizo people. Anyone who raised their suspicions or were troublesome would be either arrested or killed. When they raped and tortured, anyone who tried to spill the beans would suffer the same fate. If MNF ambushed them, they would plunder nearby villages and burnt their houses down. It was not surprising, therefore, that they were looked upon with hatred and fear.

From Shillong, Chhuanvawra came with an army convoy to go to his village. Unfortunately, they were ambushed between Kawnpui and Zanlawn. The army suffered heavy casualties. Enraged by it, they arrested all the Mizos who came along with them in the convoy. They separated men from women. While they tortured men in one room, they raped women in the other.

Zopui High School students, too, suffered greatly because of Rambuai. Under the guidance of their Headmaster, Kapṭhianga, they welcomed the Indian army by raising white flags. But, the army opened fire on them. Five students died on the spot. The girls were arrested, tortured and raped.

4.2.3 Rambuai and Women's Suffering

The research already talked about the death of three women Kungi, Sangi and Remmawii in the hands of the MNF.

Pi Kungliani, the wife of Ngurtawna, was arrested by the army and "she was roughly abused by the army" (Zikpuii-pa 110), meaning she was raped by the army. Later, she committed suicide. Many Mizo women were raped by the army and this broke the hearts of the Mizos. Angered by it, many joined the MNF undergrounds so as to fight the army, and to protect Mizoram and the Mizos. The atrocities committed by the army back then are clearly mentioned in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* novel.

The government of India sent its army to crushed the MNF rebellion. Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, was bombed by jet fighters. Many died and many lost their homes. But, the thing that hurt the sentiments of the Mizos the most was the rape of women by the Indian army. The narrator in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* said: "The army raped every woman they came across; they didn't care whether she was a minor or a wife. That burnt the hearts of the Mizos. Many students in Shillong went to East Pakistan to join the MNF. From there, they went back to Mizoram to fight the Indian army and help those who suffered under them" (67).

Those who are raped suffer psychologically and have inferiority complex. These find mention in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* as well. Ngurtawna was an MNF volunteer who was captured by the army. The army forced him to sign his surrendering paper, but Ngurtawna refused; instead, he spit on the paper. He was

then beaten to death. His wife, Kungliani, was also arrested and was physically abused by the army. She, later, committed suicide by hanging herself.

According to Christian teaching, committing suicide is a sin. But, the reason why Kungliani committed suicide was because of the atrocities and abuse she suffered at the hands of the army. She thought it was better to die than to live under the shackle of the army.

Rape and its related issues were discussed even in the church circle. Some said women found pleasure when being raped and so they did not object; this disturbed the leaders of the church and they did not know how to react to it. Rohluta, on the other hand, said army raped women because they were ordered by their superiors to do so (113).

When East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was fighting for independence from Pakistan, a certain Army General ordered his soldiers to rape women. He said, "All young Bengali Muslim girls are to be raped not to satisfy one's lust but to perform a religious duty: to produce a new generation of true Muslims" (Vanchiau 324, 325).

Chhuanvawra's girlfriend Ngurthansangi was forced to marry Captain Renade. Had she not agreed to it, she and her family would be tortured by the Captain and his men. Besides, Ngurthansangi had already been raped by the army multiple times. Her own people already considered her impure. And when Captain Renade asked her hand for marriage, her parents thought that instead of living like a prostitute only to be raped by soldiers, it would be better for their daughter if she had a life partner. It was only later that they found out Captain Renade was a married

man. Once he got tired of her, he sold Ngurthansangi to a brothel owner Manohar Singh Yadav. Many women suffered similar fate during Rambuai.

Ngurthansangi and her relatives' reasoning during the time was vividly expressed by Ngurthansangi herself when she said, "It would not be wrong that she got married to him because they were extremely poor and that she might never have a proper husband; their lives were so pathetic that anything would be preferable than to continue living in such dire poverty" (Zikpuii-pa 109).

It is partly because of the atrocities the army committed against the Mizos during Rambuai that, till today, many Mizos have an aversion to those from mainland India; they lost trust in the Indian government and hate Hindi language.

Chhuanvawra spoke of the time when he was arrested and sent to an Army camp in Tawito thus:

> They kept us, men, around 100 of us, in a big cell. In the adjoining room, they kept Mizo women prisoners. Every night, soldiers would rape these women. We could hear their cry for help. But, if we dared to raise even our voice, they would beat us black and blue (81).
>
> When they distributed drinking water, they would throw it on our face instead of giving it to us properly. . .. The food was awful; we received only rice and water. They would give us the first meal of the day at 02:00 pm, and at 04:00 pm, they would give us our dinner. Then, from around 6 o'clock in the evening, they would begin raping our women.
>
> When I sleep at night, Ngurthansangi would come to my mind. If she were to be captured by the army, she might be suffering the same fate as our women here. But, I would not dare to think too much about it, because then I would become really angry. . .(82, 83)

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4.2.4 Mizo Trauma in Foreign Land

Due to their looks and differences in culture and tradition, Mizos, before Rambuai, were treated like foreigners by the mainland Indians. An Indian Foreign Service officer, L. Keivom, said in his essay "Lung Phang Lo La" that Mizos felt like strangers wherever they went; that was why we did not mind keeping to ourselves, and remaining as an underground for a long twenty years (Keivom 15). When Mizoram became a Rambuai, they suffered all the more because they were treated like strangers, as mentioned before. Chhuanvawra spoke of his experience in Silchar like this:

> When we arrived at Silchar, it looked like the locals there were looking for ways and means to trouble us. For instance, they would charge us ten rupees for a rickshaw ride when the rate was twenty five paise. After a long negotiation, they would settle for five rupees. There was no point in going to the police because the police sided with them (Zikpuii-pa 79).

When he was released from Tawito Camp, Chhuanvawra boarded a train to Lumding. There he met one Major who immediately knew that Chhuanvawra was a Mizo. He told him with contempt, "You Mizos are a wicked tribe. You rebel against the government. Good men, bad men, you are all the same, and all of you deserved to be hanged" (91). When Chhuanvawra was interviewed under UPSC, one interviewer asked him bluntly, "How foolish are you Mizos?" (142).

As mentioned earlier, Chhuanvawra and his girlfriend Ngurthansangi felt blessed and peaceful when they reached Vairengte. For them, anywhere outside Mizoram was a "land of shame" (196); they could never feel at home anywhere outside Mizoram. Chhuanvawra said:

> For Mizo offsprings, who are bored of living in foreign lands, and who are tired physically and mentally, the hills of Vairengte are hills that give joy! . . . we are relieved of our pain and suffering. We turn our back against the *vai* land, the land of shame for us, and in Zoram, our land of hope, we find rest for our poor spirits. Prayers find fulfilment only in Mizoram (196).

When he was still studying in Shillong, one year, Chhunvawra went home for his summer vacation. From Shillong he and the other Mizos took a bus to Silchar. All of them were Mizos. They had a lovely time and they sang thoughout the way. After Rambuai, he and the others took the same bus from Shillong to Silchar. This time, too, all the passengers in the bus were Mizos. But, there was no more singing. Rambuai had burdened them. He said, "None of us were in the mood for singing. It was clear we all were facing problems and each might be thinking that the problem he faced was worse than that of his neighbours!" (79)

While in Shillong, his friends, Zauva, Zahmuaka and Khawliana, thought Chhuanvawra did not support the independent movement. But, later, when they heard how he had lost his girlfriend, Ngurthansangi, and what had happened to his village Zopui, they could see his hatred towards the army and the Indian government. Said Chhuanvawra himself: "I would strongly criticize the Indian government and the people of India. I would defame them with such ferocity that my friends would be surprised. They were all MNF supporters. They would ask me if I had been born again" (74).

Malsawmi Jacob's novel, *Zorami,* spoke of the things that happened to Biltlang and Bakla village during Rambuai. The Indian army burned all the houses in Biltlang village and tortured six men to death. When the army entered Bakla village,

a young Pastor, Rohlupuia, greeted them. He begged the commander not to harm anyone in the village, that was “assuming that they (the army) had human hearts” (Malsawmi 118). But, the commander told him that they were going to burn his house, so, he could take out anything he wish from inside it. When the pastor was about to enter his house, the commander shot him from his back. Then they burnt down his house while the pastor was still writhing on a floor. “All the inhabitants of Biltlang and Bakla fled to a forest. Most of the young men in both the villages decided to join the MNF or help them out in every way they could. They had seen that being neutral did not guarantee safety from army atrocities” (119).

4.2.5 The Protagonist Chhuanvawra’s Individual Trauma

Ngurthansangi grew to be a beautiful and attractive lady. Besides, her character and behaviour were flawless. The eyes of everyone seemed to be on her. She looked upon Chhuanvawra as her own brother, and later the two fell in love. Of her physique, Chhuanvawra said, “She is a lady of 5 feet and 4 inches tall. She is fair and she has a beautiful body. Her breasts were enormous I fell urged to hold her” (Zikpuii-pa 23).

They would send letters to each other often. When Chhuanvawra read Ngurthansangi’s letter, he would imagine her and would get aroused. His studies would suffer in the process.

Back home in their village, one day they went out to a farmhouse for a date. Chhuanvawra, overcomed by his sexual desire, tried to copulate with Ngurthansangi. But, Ngurthansangi told him that she would like to remain pure for him and would

submit her entire self to him only after marriage. She said, “Look at my body. No one has ever touched me, not even my fingers. So, u Chhuan, my body will forever be yours and I would like to keep it pure only for you. Later, you can use me for your enjoyment the way you like. As for me, nothing is more joyful and valuable than serving you” (61). The purity of her heart won him over that day, too.

Chhuanvawra then returned to Shillong for his studies. After few days, they came to know that Mizoram was in trouble. The army had rounded up many men and women. Men were beaten and women were raped, and Ngurthansangi was one among the women. That broke Chhuanvawra’s heart. To think that her purity was cruelly taken away from her was too painful for Chhuanvawra. He recalled her words, “If I am pure, it is for you as I am your disciple” (71). So, he said, “There is someone who makes this world and everything in it so beautiful; that someone, for me, is Ngurthansangi! But, today, her beauty has been taken away by culprits” (127). The beauty Chhuanvawra referred to here seemed to be the virginity of Ngurthansangi.

After she was raped by the army and suffered the lost of her virginity, Ngurthansangi’s father Khawvelthanga was of the mind that his daughter was no longer eligible to marry Chhuanvawra. He told him, “Chhuana, we did remember you dearly. Mami (Ngurthansangi) too could never forget you. She cried all the time. But, after careful consideration, we thought she was no longer fit to be your wife. So, we gave her to someone else. She kept hoping that you would come back, but considering the time that we were in, we dared not hope for such a thing” (106).

Before she was married off to Captain Renade, Ngurthansangi left a short message for Chhuanvawra to his friend Thanhranga: “Tell this to Chhuana: I am swept by an ocean of misfortune, and its wave carries me to a strange land. The only thing I can do is remember him. I will never stop regretting this, for I do not grant his wish” (131). The thing she said she regretted referred to the time when she stopped the advances of Chhuanvawra when the latter tried to sleep with her. Chhuanvawra was so enraged by the things that happened to his beloved that, not knowing how to vent his anger, he just felt like blasting Shillong city off.

Chhuanvawra was one of the relatives of their village chief. He came from a well-to-do family and of him was often said he was “more princely than any prince” (11). Everyone looked up to him and treated with respect. Rambuai changed all that. In a prison, he was beaten up; he suffered torture, hunger and thirst. In his attempt to plead for Ngurthansangi’s release, he had to humble himself before the District Commissioner. Rambuai had caused him many harm, one such was it hit his self pride and confidence hard.

Before he was arrested, he would just give a smile even when a soldier pointed a machine gun at him. But, after all the things he had to endure in a prison, he dared not confront a Major who, in a train, was humiliating him and his tribe. He was afraid that if he angered him, he would make a case up and send him back to a prison. He said, “I am afraid that they will send me to Mizoram and put me in a cell to be beaten and tortured again” (89).

Ngurthansangi’s father also suffered a blow to his pride and confidence. Before Rambuai, he was a very successful merchant. He would import goods worth

thousands of rupees and sell them. When Rambuai came, he lost all his goods in fire. (Zikpuii-pa 71). He lost his house and all his properties. His daughter was raped and doom descended upon his family. Rohluta said of him, "Initially, he did not support the MNF. He blamed them for the fire that burnt his shop down with all the goods in it. He was tortured by the army, too. It was hard for the old man, but he dared not stand up against his torturer" (130).

Vickroy also said "Important connection between trauma and identity is that the self is bound up closely with awareness of mortality and the fear of breakdown or death. According to Winnicott, these fears, which often accompany trauma, threaten to return us to a state that we dread, that unintegrated state existing before the ego created defenses against it . . ." (Vickroy, *Trauma* 26).

The epilogue spoke of the re-union of Chhuanvawra and Ngurthansangi. They met each other in a brothel in Bombay. They still loved each other, so they got married and lived a happy life. By then, Chhuanvawra had become an IPS officer. So, they would be transferred to different cities. At times, their past traumas would surface.

> In every city where he is posted, they easily make many good friends and acquaintances as his wife Ngurthansangi is a sociable person. But somethings that are not easy to talk about are how and where they got reunited and the things that happened to them before their marriage (216).

Literature bears the testimonies of love, pain, and suffering. *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* is a living testimony of the traumas suffered because of

Rambuai. It substantiates what P.B. Shelley in his poem "To a Skylark" said: "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" (line 90).

4.3 Traumatic Memory - The Cause of Ramliani's Death in the Novel of *Silaimu Ngaihawm* by James Dokhuma

The protagonist Lalramliani in the novel of *Silaimu Ngaihawm* by James Dokhuma died of despondency because she lost her boyfriend Sanglura in a battle between the MNF and the Indian Army during Rambuai. Her boyfriend Lt. Col. Sanglura died in a jungle. There was no medical facilities there. She was not there for him when he breathed his last and that increased the pain in her heart.

Sanglura suffered a fatal shot in a battle in the outskirt of Lungpho village. The Indian army was pounding on them, so they had to retreat if they wanted to survive. Though Sanglura was in a critical condition, there was no time for tender care. "They dragged Sanglura between the bushes…for it was not possible to give tenderly care" (Dokhuma, *Silai* 77). His whole body was covered with blood. Later, he succumbed to his injuries. Secretly at night, they dugged a grave for him using their bayonet, and then laid him there. They placed a small gravestone upon it wherein they inscribed 'L.T. SANGLURA, 'CH' Bn. MIZO ARMY'.

If it were to be peace time, Sanglura's body would be in his own house surrounded by his relatives and friends. According to Mizo tradition, if a person dies after 9:00 am, funeral would be performed only on the next day. The whole day and night, relatives, friends and neighbours would sit around the body. Relatives and

companions would bring clothes to convey their respects. Messengers would be sent to inform relatives and friends. Uptil the time a funeral is performed, people would be singing songs of lamentations. At night, youths would stay in the home of the bereaved family to comfort and assist them in whatever way possible. If the dead person is a bachelor, his fellow bachelors would dig his grave deeper than other persons to show their respects.

Lt. Col. Sanglura was "an underground, an enemy of India, who deserved to be executed in any manner" (23). It was dangerous to be considered his relatives and acquaintances. Besides, since he was an underground, it was forbidden to lend any help to him or to the other members of the underground faction. That was why Sanglura did not receive proper funeral rites**,** and his grave was dugged by his friend using only bayonet. Lalramliani, his girlfriend, used to clear shrubs that grew upon her boyfriend Sanglura's grave. Many thought "the grave is cleared secretly because of fears of the army" (21).

In his two novels *Silaimu Ngaihawm* and *Rinawmin,* Dokhuma mentioned several times of the people who dedicated their life fighting for the freedom of Mizoram. Most of these persons did not have an attendant or a nurse to tend to their wounds, and their funerals were not attended by many. Their bodies were not laid in proper graveyards, and for many of them no tombstones were erected.

> During Rambuai, it seemed life was of no worth. Many young people died in deserted areas with no one to bury them or give them proper funeral.

> The only attendants in their funerals were flies, maggots and the soft leaves that rustled in the forest. The friends who buried them would not dig the earth deep enough for fear of the army. Their bodies were not covered with clothes.
>
> Among the countless beloved sons who died without proper graves, the grave of Sanglura still receives visitors upto this day and flowers would adorn it every Christmas (24, 25).

As pointed out, Sanglura was more fortunate than the others; his friends buried him a grave. But for Ramliani, this was not enough to heal her anguish. She had lost the love of her life yet she could not be there when he breathed his last, and that wounded her profoundly.

Let us discuss some of the causes of Lalramliani's emotional pain:

Before he died, Sanglura had given Ramliani a bullet as a remembrance. After he died, Ramliani cherished that bullet very much, but, at the same time, it made her depressed; it reminded her of the times they used to be together. Her father spoke of her condition like this:

> She seemed to suffer from melancholy and deep despair. . .. Her mother and I used to worry a lot because we felt that she was going mad. Even when we tried to talk to her or asked her anything, she would not say anything; may be she had nothing to say (84).

Ramliani died of depression. Her family members suggested that if she got married, she would regain her normal self, but she told them that she would not marry. She found no reason to live and was filled with a desire to die.

Because of village grouping, Ramliani and her family had to leave their village, Hualtu, and moved to some other village. She longed to return to Hualtu. But, when she returned, everything reminded her of Sanglura. The sorry manner in

which he died would keep flooding back to her mind. She could not find happiness anywhere anymore.

Another cause of Ramliani's death could be speculated as follows. Before the villages were regrouped, Sanglura and Ramliani promised each other that they would remain faithful, no matter what. Sanglura told Ramliani, "I unexpectedly have found love that flowers in you in this battlefield. I will not go until I pluck this enchanting flower. It does not matter if I can savour it for long or not, but I am determined to keep it for myself. You won't disagree, will you?" (58). Ramliani accepted his proposal. Then they lovingly embraced each other. "Sanglura can no longer contain himself. So while embracing Ramliani, they lie down in the small but smooth grassland beneath a Keifang (Myrica esculenta) tree. They no longer carry on with their conversation but silently lay there together contentedly" (60) writes Dokhuma. It was in the year 1966 that Sanglura and Ramliani made a pact to love and remain faithful to each other, and then they consummated their love that day.

That day, Ramliani toyed with Sanglura's revolver bullet. She was aware of the fact that a gun could take someone's life but at the same time she also knew that that bullet would be a souvenir of his beloved Sanglura. She told him, "Because of you, gunshots that will be fired during the war will leave me desolate. A rifle and a bullet will rekindle memories about you forever" (ibid). Even before Sanglura's life was cut short by a bullet, the sight of that bullet made her feel lonely and always reminded her of Sanglura. She also cherished the Keifang tree under which they consummated their love. In 1972, when they returned to their village, she visited the spot where the Keifang tree grew. Some people had disfigured its bushy branches.

That hurt her very much and she lost her consciousness for a brief moment. She told her friend, Chalkimi, that one day she would tell her everything. She even admitted to her that she had no desire to live anymore.

She requested Chalkimi to place the bullet near her face when she died. Without having any specific illness, Ramliani passed away in 1976.

4.4 The Rambuai Syndrome

Piotr Sztompka pointed out trauma symptoms experienced by the Polish people after the break of 1989, and he said that these symptoms were worth studying closely. Some of these symptoms are distrust syndrome, bleak picture of the future, nostalgic image of the past, and political apathy (Sztompka 178 - 181).

Silaimu Ngaihawm and *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* detailed the sufferings of the Mizos because of Rambuai. In his preface to *Silaimu Ngaihawm*, James Dokhuma wrote:

> Those dark times still leave either a positive or negative impact in everyone's life. It has given birth to a number of songs and a lot of writings….Some lose their hands, some became disabled, while some became widows and orphans (Dokhuma, *Silaimu* 5, 6).

Rambuai and its effects that cause emotional disorder are known as 'Rambuai Syndrome'. Let us examine these in the following.

1) Aversion of Indians and its Army

The perception of non-Mizos as villainous, with no qualms to steal, murder, rape or commit crimes became common. Parents who had witnessed Rambuai often reprimanded or consoled their children by saying, "The Indians will come and take

you," or, "The Police are coming," or even, "The Army will capture you." Many parents equated terms like 'police' and 'army' to people who were torturous and sadistic with no qualms to murder. Instead of being protectors, police and army were seen as robbers, torturers, rapists and sadists. They would frighten children by propagating these ideas, so, for children, policemen and army were objects of horror rather than protection. Lalngurauva said Rambuai "gives birth to the fear of Indians; everyone is scared of them" (Lalngurauva 18).

In *Silaimu Ngaihawm,* the explanation given of Sanglura's grave being secretly cleaned was that "some believe that the grave is cleared by his family in secret out of fear of the army" (Dokhuma, *Silaimu* 21). As the army used to torture those they hated and deemed suspicious, people were extremely terrified of them. "In the house behind Police Thana leh Assam Rifles Prison, they used to torture people and the sound of their agony would echo throughout the streets" (41, 42).

Wherever they went, the Indian army would leave behind trails that were too gruesome to even describe: innocent people were shot, women were raped, domestic animals and the wealth of the people were plundered. Tales of these horrors spread from village to village. Hoping that they would be safer, many left their village and moved to some other villages. Rebeki gave an account of the socio-political condition of the time thus:

> We continued towards Zokhawsang, looking back on our path every now and then. The market place was blazing with fire. We reached Zokhawsang at around 12 midnight. A restless multitude of people were there, watching the market place that was on fire. No one was able to sleep. Quite a number of us fled to Zokhawsang while people from there had

> moved to Lunghret; and people from Lunghret fled to Lenchim, and inhabitants of the latter would flee to different areas. It seemed no one felt safe in their own village (Rebeki 5).

Rebeki said that his grandfather's family belonged to Salvation Army, a Christian denomination whose members wear military-like uniforms. Out of fear of the Indian army, and of hope that it would protect them from the army, they would always wear their uniform (5).

2) Need of Independence from India

One of the most significant Rambuai syndromes that was seen in *Silaimu Ngaihawm* and in many other novels was that, during Rambuai, the Indian government and its army did not only attack the freedom fighters but the Mizos as a whole. This gave rise to the desire to secede from India. It also encouraged many people to join MNF as volunteers. These people were either witnesses of the army's atrocities, or children and friends of people who suffered in the hands of the army.

Zikpuii-pa's *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* described how many Mizo students studying in Shillong returned to Mizoram and joined the MNF in order to help their people. Besides, the protagonist Chhuanvawra's lover Ngurthansangi was raped by the army and held as a hostage. Chhuanvawra was filled with so much anger and hatred that he even wanted to bomb the city of Shillong (Zikpuii-pa 73). Although he never had the desire to secede from India, Rambuai changed his perspective and he then strongly protested against the Indian government.

Whenever there were shootings, "inhabitants of the nearest villages would suffer persecution, beatings, imprisonment and even have their houses burnt. All

Mizos, irrespective of age and status, had been victims of this catastrophe during those dark times" (Dokhuma, *Rinawmin* 40). "In all the places they (Indian army) went, they would rob the people and plunder their property. It was hard to refute the notion that the army hated all Mizos. It seemed like they wanted to annihilate the Mizos so that they would never rise up again" (56).

Rebeki argued that the trauma caused by Rambuai was so grave that the emotional sufferings of the Mizos could not be forgotten. Hence, independence was still desirable for them. In this regard, she wrote: "The hardships endured by people during Rambuai are clearly remembered by those who had witnessed it. It was especially atrocious for us women. For these reasons, we anticipate becoming 'independent'; we are immensely angered by the rapes that our women had suffered" (Rebeki 7).

Rebeki spoke of one incident when the Indian army herded people together in a playground in Zemabawk. She remembered the terrified screams of a woman whose younger sister was taken by the army in their camp with the intention to rape her. She described the incident as follows:

> As we went outdoors, they drove us towards the playground near our house. There were already several people there (this playground is now known as Zemabawk bazar). Meanwhile, the army were still checking houses in Tlangveng area. While we were gathered there, one woman ran towards us, shrieking terrifyingly. She shouted 'Help me, Help me, my sister is being taken to the camp by the army.' Her expression clearly showed that she was scared and panicking, and we felt sorry for her….Among the crowd, there was a newly-wed couple. One of the men from Sikh Regiment grabbed the newly wedded wife by her hand, and began pulling her. She held on to her husband's arms tightly while the Sikh kept pulling

> her. Her husband did not dare to help her; the crowd, too, just stood there and watched them in silence. Rape, in which men are not victims, is the cause of our hatred towards Indians. It is for this reason that several women went underground and raised their voices in support of independence (8).

The Christian Peace Committee worked as emissaries between the MNF and the Indian government in order to bring peace in the region. One of the issues that they intended to notify the Indian government of was a request to put an end to the torching of houses. The committee believed that 'when people lose their land and property, they would rather fight till death than yield to their adversary' (Lalngurauva 129). When the army, 'beat and brutally tortured many people they had captured, it did not hurt only the people they abused, but also their friends and family; this instilled a desire to take revenge' (130).

3) Stress caused by the death of freedom of expression

The death of freedom of expression was an affliction endured by the society during that period. It was equally frightening to offend India and the MNF. In *Silaimu Ngaihawm,* Ramliani told her lover Sanglura, "When I observe how we live today, love finds no place, and everyone is filled with hatred and suspicion. Even with our neighbours, we can no longer have friendly relationships" (Dokhuma, *Silaimu* 34).

In the novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah,* Mizoram Rambuai began while Chhuanvawra was studying in Shillong. He came back to Mizoram for a vacation, and when he reached his village, he noticed that it was used as a Grouping Centre. What was once a congenial place for lively conversations then lost its essence, and

peace and intimacy no longer existed. It was equally frightening to say offensive things about the army and the MNF; so everyone was extremely careful. He spoke of that time thus:

> Everyone hates the army, but they never dare to talk it. This is the case not only in our village, but in every other villages as well. Earlier, I used to express my opinions without any inhibitions. Those were the times when there was peace. While we enjoyed freedom and peace, we did not value it. But once those are gone, we realize how difficult it is to live without them (Zikpuii-pa 120).

4) People expressed their wounds through songs and writings to counter those responsible for the rambuai

The most significant manifestation of Rambuai trauma is in literature. Through songs and prose, people voiced their wounds and the sufferings they had to endure during Rambuai. Even people who did not experienced Rambuai can still learn about it by reading and listening to tales of witnesses.

A novel *Nghilh Har Kan Tuar* exemplified the aforementioned statement because its author Mafeli was born after the signing of the 1986 peace accord. Many were hurt by what Laldenga and his fellow MNF did because they felt it was a pointless fight. In this novel, Mafeli highlighted how Laldenga accelerated Rambuai. "A.Thanglura told Laldenga that 'Independence can be achieved only by two means. One is through guns and the other, upon a table.' But he responded by saying that he knew ten ways to attain independence. 'He starts his list with shooting. But, none of those means have proven successful'" (Mafeli 16).

A resident of Chhinga Veng in Aizawl, Thangchuanga was a staunch supporter of Mizo Union. But his youngest child, Zaikima, supported the volunteers. Thangchuanga invited a Mizo Union councillor to caution his son and requested him to say this to Zaikima, "When we think about the hardships we had to face all because of this Laldenga, it is easy to wish that they slaughter them all. It is obvious that we will never attain the independence that they fight for. He incited groups of youngsters inspiring them to do things that are utterly unnecessary" (Dokhuma, *Silaimu* 39). Many people accuse the MNF of depriving them of peace and solidarity saying, "You have destroyed the harmony in our village" (35).

K.L. Rochama, a former Member of Legislative Assembly, who was elected in the Lunglei constituency in 1972, disclosed what happened in Hnahthial in 1974:

> One of the informants of the Indian government, Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (SIB), was killed during autumn of 1974 in the street of Hnahthial. Fortunately, that day, I left Lunglei to reach Aizawl. I came across his corpse lying on the porch of Pu Darngaia Hotel. No one dared to approach him! I met the Hnahthial Post Commander at his office. I begged him to spare the people from retribution. He listened carefully as I was a member of the Legislative Assembly. But, he had to carry out orders given by his superiors. This clearly explained life during that period. When unwanted incidences like that happened, the Indian government would shout out saying, "MNF shoots an important government agent." News like "Indian Army tortures innocent people" could never attract their attention (Rochama 213, 214).

In *Rinawmin* novel, Kapmawia died at the hands of the volunteers. His mother lamented saying, "Is it because of Laldenga that we have to suffer all these? What a tragedy for us that this person was ever born; it is so unfortunate for us, Mama" (Dokhuma, *Rinawmin* 142).

Rinmawia, Sanglura's friend in *Silaimu Ngaihawm* was one of the men who surrendered themselves. When one of the Party Councillors visited him, he spoke of Laldenga like this: "Their leader is as clever as a striped rooster (in Mizo it means a person who is sly), someone who claims he can talk his way out of anything. When his men live in poverty in forests, having no food or water, he lives in Pakistan watching Home Television while enjoying sweet tea…" (Dokhuma, *Silaimu* 71).

Nibedon put all the blame on Laldenga. "For the sake of a few dreamers like Laldenga, an entire population was about to pay the price" (Nibedon 106).

Thus, many vented their anger in the form of poetry and prose. For a lot of people, Rambuai and all the sufferings that came along with it could have been avoided. Because of this, many refrained from associating themselves with the MNF party and during state elections, they refused to vote for them.

5) Doubts in the Existence of God

When man faces problems that he cannot redeem himself from, he would look for a more powerful source to get him out. In times like that, he finds solace in religion and God. He calls on God, asking for help. When he feels that he does not receive the help he seeks, he would question the existence of God or his motives, or accuse him of refusing to provide for him. For instance, one Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel wrote, "For the first time I felt revolt rise up in me. Why should I bless His name? The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible, was silent. What had I to thank Him for?" (Wiesel 31) Another Holocaust survivor Martin Schiller, when he was interviewed by Yiddish Book Center, said inside the

Concentration Camp, they would often debate upon the topic of 'the existence of God' (Debating the Existence of God).

Doubt and faith on the existence of God and its related topics with reference to the Holocaust have resulted in many books and endless arguments. Some of these books are Morrison's book *Where Was God? Understanding the Holocaust in the Light of God's Suffering* (2014), Walter Ziffer's *Confronting the Silence: A Holocaust Survivor's Search For God* (2018), Menachem Z. Rosensaft's *God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes: Reflection of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors* (2014), Bakowska's *God, Faith and the Holocaust: Personal Reflection*, Reeve Robert Brenner's *The Faith and Doubts of Holocaust Survivors* (2014), Stephen R. Haynes and John K. Roth's edited book *The Death of God Movement and the Holocaust* (1999), Dan Cohn-Sherlock's *God and the Holocaust* (1996). This study became so popular that the term 'Holocaust Theology' came into existence. Alexander writes,

> If the trauma process unfolds inside the religious arena, its concern will be linked to trauma to theodicy. The Torah's story of Job, for example, asks: Why did God allow this evil? The answers to such questions will generate searching discussions about whether and how human beings strayed from divinely inspired ethics and sacred law, or whether the existence of evil means that God does not exist (Alexander 20).

Among the traumas induced by Rambuai, what hurts the Mizos is that the Indian Army insulted their religion. These people seized and occupied their holy places, and defiled them. Chawngsailova describes how the army defiled and torched a church in Maite village:

> In Maite village, all the villagers were rounded up and ordered to store all their paddy-grains and other properties inside their church building. After that, the church was burnt down to ashes, and the villagers were left empty handed. In fact, the Indian army despised *Christianity* as well. They used to call public meetings inside church buildings, tortured people and even raped women in the church (Chawngsailova 95).

A number of people chronicled how the army seized and defiled the churches. In a novel *Rinawmin*, Rozuala's father mentioned that their holy church was defiled by idol worshippers and women were raped in it (Dokhuma, *Rinawmin* 126). Thangzama recounts how the army built a Hindu temple in a churh's campus at Saitual Keifang (Thangzama, *Zoram* 15). J. Malsawma also says that the army used to surround and close in on the congregation during church services (Thanpuii pa 194).

C. Chhawnthanga, who was imprisoned in Burma during Rambuai, says they called on God to rescue them from the horrifying prison and alleviate their sufferings, but their lives did not get any better. One of the inmates lost his faith in God and suggested that they pray to Satan instead to rescue them from the gruesome prison. Chhawnthanga describes their situation as follows:

> Poorly treated in prison, and feeling anxious, we had no one to rely on or to look into our grievances. So, we would come together every morning and evening and pray together. After gathering and praying together for quite a long time, Pu Bata unexpectedly suggested, "Come on, let's pray to Satan to free us. We have been endlessly praying to God, but he does not want to rescue us, if we ask Satan, he might set us free (Chhawnthanga 176, 177).

In *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*, Chhuanvawra was extremely hurt because of the brutality of the Indian army who also raped his beloved, Ngurthansangi. He

confronted God, saying, “Oh God, you are so tolerant towards evil-doers. I myself will start living like them” (Zikpuii-pa 73).

GLOSSARY

Puma zai : A type of song having traditional Mizo verse form revived during 1908 by Liangkhaia, a young man from Lalzika's village. "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" (Lorrain 371).

Lengkhawm zai : The name of Mizo Christian songs that were composed mostly during 1919 – 1935.

Kakzawn : A measure; a conical heap (of unhusked rice, etc) the apex of which will be level with the bottom of the fork formed by the thumb and first finger of a man of average height standing with his arm raised vertically above his head. (Some calculate this as about two hundred maunds) (Lorrain 225).

Chhipzawn : A measure; a conical heap (of paddy, etc) the apex of which will be level with the crown of an ordinary-sized man's head when standing (Lorrain 81).

Riakmaw : Mizos have an old tale about the 'riakmaw' bird, called so because it used to fly from tree to tree seeking permission to shelter, but was repeatedly refused until it came across a 'thingthiang' tree that agreed to shelter it. In poetic terms, this birds denotes a homeless and sad being (Zama 75).

Phur – A measure used for rice etc. Nowadays, one phur is regarded as equivalent to three tins of kerosene oil. The dimension of a kerosene tin is length 240 mm x Width 238 mm x Height 355 mm.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Trauma is related to the mind; it is the negative impact of the past experience of a person, individually or collectively. Not all bad experiences would cause psychological trauma in a person. As trauma is a mental suffering, the problems experienced by a person may vary according to the environment he/she lives in and so the definition of trauma may differ from person to person.

The leading pioneer of trauma studies, Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma is,

> The event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. And thus, the traumatic symptom cannot be interpreted, simply, as a distortion of reality, nor as the lending of unconscious meaning to a reality it wishes to ignore, nor as the repression of what once was wished (Caruth 4, 5).

Judith Herman says, "The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep" (Herman 37).

The causes of trauma can be classified into two: trauma caused by nature and trauma that is man-made.

Trauma caused by nature includes flood, earthquake, tsunami, landslide, nuclear reactor breakdown or other incidents that are hard to be foreseen and are equally hard to prevent them from happening. Man-made traumas include war, rape,

torture, physical and verbal abuse, accident, and so on.

Trauma is transmissible. It can spread from one person to another, or from one generation to the next. It can be transmitted through literature, painting, and other records. According to Allison Landsberg, a memory acquired from 'seeing a film, visiting a museum, watching a television show, using a CD-ROM' is 'Prosthetic memory.' Charcot calls traumatic memories as 'parasites of the mind' (Smelser 41), while Sigmund Freud calls it as "indelible imprint" (ibid).

Besides classifying trauma as those caused by nature and those that are man-made, trauma can also be looked into as 'individual trauma' and 'collective trauma'.

Individual Trauma:

Individual trauma may be caused by a person's experience of violence, war, rape, torture, exploitation, physical or verbal abuse, violation of human rights, financial problem, mugging, physical injury or automobile accident, downfall of a person, discrimination based on gender, class, or race, and so on. The common symptoms of individual traumas are flashback, nightmare, hopelessness, confusion, mood swing, low concentration, low self-esteem and low self-confidence, anhedonia, an inability to feel love or joy, avoidance, isolation, insomnia, change in lifestyle, silence, intense fear, a feeling of insecurity, etc.

Collective Trauma:

Collective trauma is a trauma suffered by a large group of people and the causes may be war, disease, holocaust, terrorist activities, forced shifting of place, cultural assimilation, etc. Laurie Vickroy explains how trauma can damage society

when she says, “Traumatic experience can inspire not only a loss of self-confidence, but also a loss of confidence in the social and cultural structures that are supposed to create order and safety . . .” (Vickroy 13).

Trauma has been manifested in Mizo novel since its inception and the major conflict in *Hawilopari* by L. Biakliana is the struggle of an orphan amidst a cruel war. In *Hawilopari,* Hminga and Liana, the two protagonists, ran away from their stepmother because of the latter’s ill-treament meted out on them. Their stories revealed the low status of orphans in the then Mizo society, the disparity between the rich and the poor, and the terror wrought upon by war. In the story of *Lali,* the author vividly portrayed the low status of women in a traumatic manner.

In chapter 2, the thesis carefully examines the existence of class disparity in Mizo society, orphan’s trauma and women’s trauma from Lalzuithanga’s *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* and *Eng Dan Nge Ni*? and from James Dokhuma’s *Kham Kar Senhri*. In chapter 3, colonial traumas are studied from Lalzuithanga’s *Thlahrang,* Zikpuii-pa’s *C.C. Coy. No. 27* and James Dokhuma’s *Goodbye Lushai Brigade.* In chapter 4, Rambuai traumas are studied from the novel of Zikpuii-pa’s *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and James Dokhuma’s *Silaimu Ngaihawm.*

Maria Root opines that traumatic experience is often the result of low status instigated by discrimination based on gender, class or race (qtd. in Vickroy, *Voices* 132). This is evident in stories like Lalzuithanga’s *Eng Dan Nge Ni?* and *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* where characters such as Mani, Hrangchina, Phira and the others suffered traumatic experiences as a result of their low status in society.

If examine the cause of Hrangchina’s death, it can be understood that it was

the impact of his trauma. Firstly, not only was he not favoured, but he was loathed and despised in his own village because of his cultural dissension. Secondly, his failure to accomplish his dreams and aspirations played a significant role. As they failed to kill Phira, they missed the chance to enter their village with honour and earn the respect of the villagers. Instead they were received with repulsion. Moreover, it made the chief changed his perception about war and decided that it was better to surrender rather than rage war against their adversaries. Thirdly, he was badly defeated by Phira when they fought, which caused a heavy strain on him. He lived in constant fear of his rival Phira, which made his life miserable. While running away from the hands of Phira towards their village, he thought that Phira would follow him to hunt him down. He was afraid of meeting Phira face to face and wanted to avoid him. He visualized Phira trying to hunt him, following him and running near him, so he could not relax all the way. At last, he realized that unless Phira was dead, he would not be calm and safe, so he wanted Phira to die. Besides, he even refrained from entering the village; he contemplated moving on when he heard that Phira had travelled there. Because of his defeat against Phira, after their fight, Hrangchina's entire life was plagued by trauma, a trauma that reiterated the defeat.

The main reason why Phira and his lover Ngurthanpari could not get married was the class disparity between them. Ngurthanpari was the chief's daughter. She occupied a top status in hierarchy in Mizo administration and tradition. On the other hand, Phira was a widow's son, who belonged to the lower class in the society. In terms of heredity, Phira was a Hnamchawm, a commoner who did not belong to the chief's clan, and these Hnamchawms were generally poor. In Mizo history, marriage between a chief's clan and a Hnamchawm was rare. Sailo chiefs generally did not

allow their sons or daughter to marry other Mizo clans. This became one of the major problems between Phira and Ngurthanpari. In Mizo history, Sailo chief Lalsavunga's daughter, Laltheri, fell in love with Chalthanga, a commoner. When the chief and their relatives heard about the affair, they ensnared Chalthanga and killed him.

Another major trauma in the novel *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* was the war between villages caused by Mizo chiefs' yearning to become great. Besides, warriors also fought their enemies to strengthen their position in society. They earned the respect and admiration of their folks when they were dreaded by their enemies. In the novel of *Phira leh Ngurthanpari*, Lalbuta's village and Lalhuapa's village battled for ownership of a land called 'Lungsen ram'. They risked their lives in order to protect their territory as well as to annex the territory of their neighbouring lands. The severest clash amongst Mizos in Mizo history was the battle fought between the North and South. The bone of contention was Buanhmun land, which both chiefs of the North and the South, Lalpuithanga and Vuttaia, attempted to occupy.

In most of Lalzuithanga's novels, the protagonists and their beloved were rarely married. The reason for this might be the memories of the World War or the personal experience of Lalzuithanga. He belonged to Second World War era. In many of his novels, it can be seen reflections of the Second World War and his works were haunted by World War memories. Balaev says, "Novel demonstrates the way that an experience disrupts the individual conceptualizations of self and connections to family and community, but the values attributed to the traumatic experience are also shaped by cultural forces created within the world of novel" (Balaev 18).

In Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, Sethe, a character who escaped slavery, wanted to kill her children because she wanted to protect them from the brutal life of slavery. She killed one of the girls, named Beloved, the eponymous character of the novel. Her sympathy for her children convinced her to believe that it was better for her children to die rather than succumb to slavery. She does not want them to endure the hardships that she herself had undergone which included living a poverty-stricken life filled with mental, verbal, and physical abuse as well as becoming a sexual slave.

In Lalzuithanga's *Eng Dan Nge Ni?*, there was a character named Mani who bore a traumatic experience over the system of inheritance of the Mizos and the position of women in a family. She brooded over the inequality between men and women in the society. She was deeply saddened by the then gender discrepancy in Mizo customs and traditions. She realized that she had no possession in her own home and did not even have a right to inherit any property from her father. Regardless of the immense labour she put in or the income that she earned, she was aware that she had no authority over her own earnings simply because she was a woman. She was convinced that she was merely a tool for reproduction. Regardless of place or time, she knew that her main purpose in life was to gratify the needs of men. She sadly contemplated Mizo inheritance law and asked herself "What kind of a law is this? What is it? Is it the devil's law?"

After Zosapthara had instructed the Mizos about the importance of mothers in his treatise "Ka nausenin tu nge mi kawl?", Biakliana and Lalzuithanga delineated the miserable plight and status of Mizo women in their novels *Lali* and *Eng Dan Nge Ni?* respectively. Nowadays, inequality between men and women in terms of status

does not seem to be too apparent as compared to earlier times. “The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014” is an act that was passed recently. This act is especially advantageous for Mizo women as it gives them the right to inherit property.

In James Dokhuma’s novel, *Kham Kar Senhri,* the protagonist Remthanga suffered from individual trauma and the root of his trauma was the treatment of orphans in Mizo society. Remthanga grew up in his uncle’s house and since his real parents were no longer alive, he spent his childhood as a diffident orphan. He loathed himself and felt that no one sympathised with him. He did not have the courage to eat and relish his hunger most of the time. He had a feeling of self-pity and self-compassion and he felt uncomfortable in each and every situation. He blamed his orphanage and poverty for his inability to have a girlfriend.

A prominent Mizo poet, Hrawva in his poem “Rairahtea Hla”, called himself Rairahtea, the central figure in the poem. He confessed his impoverished upbringing under the care of his paternal uncle. As a poor orphan child, no one showed him kindness and he had no one to look after him or care for his needs. While dogs and goats had their own shelter and their kind to look after them, he had no place to call his home and, therefore, slept in a sty with the pigs.

Through his novel *Thlahrang,* Lalzuithanga brilliantly described how the Mizos were being hegemonized by the British. As fear of ghosts governed the thoughts of the Mizos, the British were able to influence the Mizos so much so that the Mizos were unable to understand reality and the intentions of the colonisers. They failed to realize the gravity of their situation and, therefore, silently suffered the

harsh implications of colonisation. The colonisers devalued the colonized and seized power and authority from them. It is evident in *Thlahrang* that Mizo chiefs and elders had lost their administrative dominion. The ideals and morals voiced by the Mizos were denounced by the British.

Kawla was gravely inflicted by colonial hangover. He justified the Bawrhsap's decision to imprison Tawia for 10 years although there was no evidence to prove his crime. He believed in the goodwill of the Bawrhsap and that his decision was for the welfare of his people. When he compared Tawia's case to his, he even felt he deserved an execution.

It is plausible that Lalzuithanga gave the title *Thlahrang* for a purpose to show how common people could be driven away by pre-existing ideas. In the story, many people believed that what they saw and heard were the activities of *thlahrang* (ghost). They lived under fear, and most people did not use scientific method or rational thinking over their experience. Ringi, Kawli and Thawnga, all saw the ghost in the same night and they, without any rational thinking, believed it to be supernatural. Ringi and Kawli became unconscious as soon as they saw the ghost and Thawnga ran away from the scene.

During the time the British colonized the land, the colonized people did not know that they were being colonized because their outlook was clouded by admiration and respect of the colonizers. Common people unintentionally and unknowingly accepted the superiority of the colonizers. It is believable that Lalzuithanga's knew the then situation of Mizoram and people's attitudes towards colonization. He used ghost to symbolize the colonizer; he also used ghost to show

how people were afraid of the colonizers just as they were afraid of *thlahrang* (ghost).

Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27* is also a novel that depicts, through the life of the protagonist Ralkapzauva, how Mizo society and Western society led by the colonial people wrestled the lives of Mizo people.

Ralkapzauva, a boy from Dolura's village, tried to attend a higher level of schooling after he passed lower primary level in his hometown at the age of twelve. During the time, education was backward in Lushai hills; the colonizers were not interested in introducing higher studies in the land. After Ralkapzauva and his father saw the Babu at Paikhai Bangla, Ralkapzauva's heart was intensely touched by the authority of Babu that he asked his father about the authority of Babu. He then discovered that Sap was more powerful than Babu. Ralkapzauva wanted to become Sap, if possible. He studied High School at Shillong and passed Matric in first division. He applied for the King's Commissioned Officer post and was recruited for that after an interview. He received the Best Cadet award during their training. But the more he achieved, and the farther he reached, the more he strayed away from his community. In the end, he realized that his respectful designation and status created a big gap between him and his neighbours. He felt lonesome amongst his community. He said, "I do not know what is joyful in this world" (Zikpuii-pa 98).

Goodbye Lushai Brigade is a narrative that is based on the assimilation of Mizos by foreign army during the Second World War. It portrays the self-proclaimed supremacy of the whites. It also depicts how the European missionaries, despite their endeavour to preach and convert the Mizos to Christianity, despised the latter and

considered them as inferior based on culture and heritage. In the novel, Mark Martin fell in love with a Mizo damsel Lallawmi and wanted to marry her. However, his fellow army officers and missionaries tried to dissuade him from marrying a Mizo. So, they carried out several plans to obstruct the union. The main reason behind their objection to their marriage was because they felt that the Mizos, whom they considered primitive, were not fit to associate with them. They wanted to protect their status by maintaining their distance. They also felt that if intermarriage took place, the Mizos would deem themselves equal to the whites; that would make it more difficult for the former to oppress them. The kind of trauma seen in *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* is the result of colonial oppression.

In Zikpuii-pa's *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and James Dokhuma's *Silaimu Ngaihawm*, the traumatic experiences encountered individually and collectively by the Mizos are shown. For a lot of people who suffered the atrocities of the Rambuai, social life before the troubled years was more desirable for a number of reasons.

Compared to the era before Rambuai, Zopui village had undergone tremendous changes. People lost faith and trust in their fellow beings. Amity and goodwill no longer existed. They lived their lives in fear and suspicion of other people. The beauty of nature failed to allure them. The flowers that bloomed beside Ngurthansangi's home were no longer as beautiful as they used to be in the days before Rambuai. Folks who once sang merrily before Rambuai were now gone. Every person bore a heavy burden; so, no one had the capacity to console others as the suffering they had to endure was, for each person, too much to bear. Zopui village and Hualtu village in Zikpuii-pa and James Dokhuma's novels respectively,

showed the crisis faced by villagers. Those days, the hardships endured by women were more intense. In Zikpuii-pa's novel, Ngurthansangi was raped and she had to marry a non-Mizo without her consent. Moreover, she was sold to a brothel and was forced into prostitution. Ramliani in Dokhuma's novel spent her last days grieving. She eventually died because her lover was brutally killed.

Victims and witnesses of Rambuai atrocities continue to feel hatred and contempt towards non-Mizo Indians. They rebuke the people who they deemed were responsible for the onslaught of Rambuai. Freedom and independence promised to them have failed to materialize. Many, therefore, feel that they had gone through such catastrophe for no reason at all, and they are immensely hurt by the broken promises of their leaders; among them are Khawvelthanga and Mizo Union Councillor in *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and *Silaimu Ngaihawm* respectively.

When the army first captured Chhuanvawra, the protagonist of *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*, he was fearless and courageous. However, as a consequence of the torture he suffered in jail, he lost his self-confidence. By the time he was eventually released, he was utterly frightened of being recaptured.

Rambuai has greatly altered the conception of God and the religious beliefs of the people. Some people question the existence of God and some lose their faith in Him. Others doubt providence and feel that God is indifferent towards their sufferings and do not bother to save them from their crisis. In *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah*, Chhuanvawra was extremely hurt because of the brutality of the Indian army who raped his beloved Ngurthansangi. He confronted God, saying, "Oh God, you are so tolerant towards evil-doers; I myself will start living like them" (Zikpuii-pa

73).

In addition to the devastation they suffered from the vicious hands of the Indian army, a lot of Mizo lamented the lack of support they received from their fellow Indians. They realized that they had no one to rely on in times of trouble and there was no one who showed them any support from both within and outside India. This instilled in them the need to fight for independence at all costs. In the 2019 India Lok Sabha election, TBC Lalvenchhunga, a candidate of a political party, PRISM (People's Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram), contested in the election. He stated that if he was elected, he would take measures to secede from India by pushing the "Right to Cessation" bill. Besides, many people who were affected by Rambuai used literature as a medium to express their anger and traumatic experiences and both *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and *Silaimu Ngaihawm* novels are among them.

Although the term trauma has been used for a very long time, its application in literary studies is relatively recent. Cathy Caruth's treatise on trauma titled *Trauma Explorations in Memory*, published in 1995, is considered as a text that introduces trauma studies in literature because its publication ushers in a number of scholars to pursue this kind of study. Although there can be myriad definitions and characteristics of the term 'trauma', it can be best understood as a suffering caused by past experiences.

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YEAR	TITLE	JOURNAL/BOOKS
2015	V. Thangzama hla 'Tho la, ding ta che' bihchianna'. (491 – 506)	Mizo Studies Vol. IV No.4 October – December 2015, ISSN – 2319-6041
2016	Mizo thawnthua Mizo leh hnamdang inkawpna (pages 86 – 95)	Mizo Studies Vol.V January – March 2016. ISSN – 2319-6041
2017	R. Zuala Thawnthu Tawite Ziarang (740 – 749)	Mizo Studies July – September 2017. ISSN – 2319-6041
2017	Trauma study in Lalzuithanga's Phira leh Ngurthanpari (pages 127-133)	Rereading of Mizo literature with special reference to under graduate course. Govt. Hnahthial College, 2017. ISBN 978-81-932919-6-2
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A CRITICAL STUDY OF TRAUMA IN SELECTED MIZO NOVELS

(Abstract)

There can be myriad definitions and characteristics of the term 'trauma', it can be best understood as a suffering caused by past experiences. Trauma studies can be approached from various disciplines such as literature, psychology and neurology, and a number of scholars have been doing research from these diverse fields. The research is mainly concerned with the study of trauma in Mizo novels. People suffering from trauma use literature as a medium of emotional healing as well as a tool to express their inner turmoil. Although the title of this thesis is novel, it studies short story and novella as well.

'Trauma' in Greek means 'a wound' or 'an injury'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines it as "any wound or external bodily injury, or a psychological or emotional injury, caused by some outside force or stress" (101). The leading pioneer of trauma studies, Cathy Caruth's defines trauma thus:

> The event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. And thus, the traumatic symptom cannot be interpreted, simply, as a distortion of reality, nor as the lending of unconscious meaning to a reality it wishes to ignore, nor as the repression of what once was wished (Caruth, *Trauma* 4,5).

Judith Herman says, "The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep" (Herman 37).

The causes of trauma can be classified into two: trauma caused by nature and trauma

that is man-made. Trauma caused by nature includes flood, earthquake, tsunami, landslide, nuclear reactor breakdown or other incidents that are hard to be foreseen and are equally hard to prevent them from happening. Man-made traumas include war, rape, torture, physical and verbal abuse, accident, and so on.

Trauma is transmissible. It can spread from one person to another, or from one generation to the next. It can be transmitted through literature, painting, and other records. According to Allison Landsberg, a memory acquired from 'seeing a film, visiting a museum, watching a television show, using a CD-ROM' is 'Prosthetic memory.' Charcot calls traumatic memories 'parasites of the mind' (Smelser 41), while Sigmund Freud calls it 'indelible imprint' (ibid).

Trauma can be classified into as 'individual trauma' and 'collective trauma'. Individual trauma may be caused by a person's experience of violence, war, rape, torture, exploitation, physical or verbal abuse, violation of human rights, financial problem, mugging, physical injury or automobile accident, downfall of a person, discrimination based on gender, class, or race, and so on. The common symptoms of individual traumas are flashback, nightmare, hopelessness, confusion, mood swing, low concentration, low self-esteem and low self-confidence, anhedonia, an inability to feel love or joy, avoidance, isolation, insomnia, change in lifestyle, silence, intense fear, a feeling of insecurity, etc.

Collective trauma is a trauma suffered by a large group of people and the causes may be war, disease, holocaust, terrorist activities, forced shifting of place, cultural assimilation, etc. Laurie Vickroy explains how trauma can damage society when she says, "Traumatic experience can inspire not only a loss of self-confidence, but also a loss of confidence in the social and cultural structures that are supposed to create order and safety . . ." (Vickroy 13).

With the development in communication and advancement in weapons and other

defense systems including invention of chemical gasses and nuclear weapons, wars become more and more traumatic for human beings. Nazi mass killings of Jewish people during the World War II are terrifying and traumatic, not only for the Jews but also for the world. Recognition of the trauma literature become condolences to victims; and the creative writings of trauma literature is an escape for victims of trauma. Elie Wiesel claims, "If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony" (Wiesel 9).

A study of trauma in literature has its roots in the twentieth century. In 1941, Abram Kardiner published a book *Traumatic Neuroses of War*; it was a book based on a research done on World War I and World War II consequences traumatic syndrome. In 1995, Cathy Caruth published *Trauma Explorations in Memory*; some of the articles in the book were published in 1991 in *American Imago* journal, volume 1 and 4. In 1996, Kali Tal wrote *World of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*.

Elissa Marder in "*Trauma and Literary Studies: Some 'Enabling Questions'"* traced the beginning of trauma in literary studies. She regarded the origin of trauma studies in literature was,

> . . . due to the path breaking work by Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, two prominent members of the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory . . .. In 1995, Cathy Caruth edited and wrote a critical introduction to an interdisciplinary collection of essays titled *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* In 1996, she went on to publish a full-length study of trauma, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Since the publication of these two works, Cathy Caruth has been recognized as a leading pioneer of trauma theory, and her work has become an indispensable and invaluable point of reference for much—if not all—of the work that has come after it. Shoshana Felman's initial engagement with trauma began with her important 1992

book (written in collaboration with psychoanalyst Dori Laub) *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*,

Etymologically, the word 'novel' comes from an Italian word 'novella' which means 'a little new thing' (Novel). According to M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham,

> The term 'novel' is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of fiction written in prose. As an extended narrative, the novel is distinguished from the short story and from the work of middle length called the novelette; its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes (Abrams 196).

The selected novels in this research are Lalzuithanga's *Phira leh Ngurthanpari, Thlahrang, Eng Dan Nge N*i? Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27., Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah,* and James Dokhuma's *Kham Kar Senhri, Goodbye Lushai Brigade* and *Silaimu Ngaihawm.*

Trauma has been manifested in Mizo novel since its inception and the major conflict in *Hawilopari* by L. Biakliana is the struggle of an orphan amidst a cruel war. In *Hawilopari,* Hminga and Liana, the two protagonists, ran away from their stepmother because of the latter's ill-treament meted out on them. Their stories revealed the low status of orphans in the then Mizo society, the disparity between the rich and the poor, and the terror wrought upon by war. The research studies orphan's trauma, women's trauma and class disparity from Lalzuithanga's and James Dokhuma's novel.

Mizos came under the British rule sometime between 1889 and 1890, and remained under them up till India's independence in 1947. The authorities of Mizo chiefs are

overthrown and the white people took control in every important situation. Besides the oppressions, the Mizos undergo tremendous changes especially from the colonial period; it changes their outlook, their values and introduces education. The colonizers were trying to keep their distance from the Mizos because they fear that if they are too intimate with their subjects, it might compromise their dominance and the respect the Mizos had for them. For this reason, the British Army Officer Mark Martin and Mizo lady Lallawmi of *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* novel cannot marry. Lalzuithanga's novel *Thlahrang** is his counter expression of the characters of the colonizers and the colonial trauma that is tolerated by the Mizos. In Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27* the research studies how the Mizo society and Western society led by the colonial people wrestle in the lives of Mizo people, especially through the life of the protagonist Ralkapzauva and how it is traumatic for him.

*Rambuai** that lasted over twenty years (1966 – 1986) has produced many literary writings. During that time, for the Mizo people, it was like living between a hammer and an anvil; for they were fearful and terrified of both the MNF and the India armies. There were famine, fear, loss of confidence and morality, identity crises, and numerous deaths. After Rambuai ended in 1986, its sting still haunted Mizo literature; Zikpuii-pa's novel *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and James Dokhuma's novel *Silaimu Ngaihawm* reflect the traumas that the Rambuai brought to Mizo people.

The Thesis is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter – 1 : Introduction and Literary Trauma Theory

This chapter contains an introduction of the Mizo, their culture, historical background and a brief introduction of Mizo literature. It also deals with the theory of trauma and its evolution in literature as a branch of study. To give a brief description of Mizo culture is necessary for better understanding of Mizo literature and Mizo trauma that are being studied

in this research. This chapter introduces the life and works of the selected three novelists Lalzuithanga, James Dokhuma and Zikpui-pa. It also gives the summary of the select eight novels such as *Phira leh Ngurthanpari, Thlahrang, Eng Dan Nge Ni*?, *Kham Kar Senhri, Goodbye Lushai Brigade, Silaimu Ngaihawm, Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and *C.C. Coy. No. 27.* The chapter also introduces the Colonial Period and the advent of Christianity, the two World Wars, the Mizo Union and Independence India, Mizo National Front Independent Movement, Mizo Literature and novel for better understanding of the research.

Chapter – 2 : A Critical Study of Class Struggle, Orphan's Trauma and Women's Trauma in Mizo Novels

In chapter 2, the thesis carefully examines the existence of class disparity in Mizo society, orphan's trauma and women's trauma from Lalzuithanga's *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* and *Eng Dan Nge Ni*? and from James Dokhuma's *Kham Kar Senhri*.

Social customs, beliefs, creeds, and pre-existing notions can be traumatic for an individual or for a collection of people. Alexander said ". . . trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (Alexander 2).

In *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* novel, Hrangchina's life was one trauma-filled life. Besides all his good qualities, he had to endure numerous hardships and he is the victim of class disparity in traditional Mizo society. He felt elated with their success. He imagined that, back home from the raid, they would be given a rousing welcome, and, since he was the leader, he would be exalted by their Chief and everyone in the village. His status in the society would be higher and his voice would be reckoned with more. But Hrangchina's Chief Lalbuta wanted to surrender Lungsen tlang, the land they had been fighting over, because he was afraid of losing members of his village while Hrangchina wanted to carry on the war so

as to be its key player. For this reason was misunderstanding between the chief and him, he was blamed, maligned and ostracized.

Hrangchina was badly defeated by Phira when they fought, which caused a heavy strain on him. He lived in constant fear of his rival Phira. His entire life was plagued by trauma, a trauma that reiterated the defeat.

After the two lovers Phira and Ngurthanpari parted. Then on, Ngurthanpari would eat and drink nothing and lived almost like a mentally retarded person. She began to have nightmares that would only end after she met Phira. In this novel, the symptoms of Ngurthanpari's trauma are silence, flashback and nightmares.

In Lalzuithanga's *Eng Dan Nge Ni?*, (What kind of a law is this?) there was a character named Mani who bore a traumatic experience over the system of inheritance of the Mizos and the position of women in a family. She brooded over the inequality between men and women in the society. The author romanticizes and sentimentalizes the life story of Mani in a very compassionate manner.

In James Dokhuma's novel, *Kham Kar Senhri*, the protagonist Remthanga suffered from individual trauma and the root of his trauma was the treatment of orphans in Mizo society. He is an orphan whose plight alters his outlook in life. He had a feeling of self-pity and self-compassion and he felt uncomfortable in each and every situation. He blamed his orphanage and poverty for his inability to have a girlfriend.

Chapter – 3 : A Critical Study of Colonial trauma in Selected Mizo novels

This chapter deals with the study of colonial trauma from three Mizo novels: Lalzuithanga's *Thlahrang,* James Dokhuma's *Goodbye Lushai Brigade,* and Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27.*

The *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* defines colonialism as "control by one power over a dependent area or people" (288). Ania Loomba says, "Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Loomba 8). The British administrators followed by the Christian Missionaries occupied Mizo villages from 1889 – 1890 up till the time India got independence from the British rule in 1947. This British colonial period has brought many changes in Mizo society.

Lalzuithanga's *Thlahrang* was a novel written during the British colonial period. The colonial hangover was found in the character of Kawla, but he committed suicide at the end. It is plausible that Lalzuithanga gave the title *Thlahrang* for a purpose to show how common people could be driven away by pre-existing ideas. As it can be seen in the story, many people believed that what they saw and heard were the activities of *thlahrang* (ghost). Ringi, Kawli and Thawnga, all saw the ghost in the same night and they, without any rational thinking, believed it to be supernatural. Ringi and Kawli became unconscious as soon as they saw the ghost and Thawnga ran away from the scene.

The colonized people did not know that they were being colonized because their outlook was clouded by admiration and respect of the colonizers. Common people unintentionally and unknowingly accepted the superiority of the colonizers. It is believable that Lalzuithanga's knew the then situation of Mizoram and people's attitudes towards colonization. He used ghost to symbolize the colonizer; he also used ghost to show how people were afraid of the colonizers just as they were afraid of *thlahrang* (ghost).

James Dokhuma's *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* is a narrative that is based on the assimilation of Mizos by foreign army during the Second World War. It portrays the self-proclaimed supremacy of the whites. It also depicts how the European missionaries, despite their endeavour to preach and convert the Mizos to Christianity, despised the latter and

considered them as inferior based on culture and heritage. In the novel, Mark Martin fell in love with a Mizo damsel Lallawmi and wanted to marry her. However, his fellow army officers and missionaries tried to dissuade him from marrying a Mizo. So, they carried out several plans to obstruct the union. The main reason behind their objection to their marriage was because they felt that the Mizos, whom they considered primitive, were not fit to associate with them. They wanted to protect their status by maintaining their distance. They also felt that if intermarriage took place, the Mizos would deem themselves equal to the whites; that would make it more difficult for the former to oppress them. The kind of trauma seen in *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* is the result of colonial oppression.

Zikpuii-pa's *C.C. Coy. No. 27* is a novel that depicts how Mizo society and Western society, led by colonial people, wrestled with each other over the lives of Mizo people. This wrestling is neatly presented through the life of a protagonist, Ralkapzauva. After Ralkapzauva and his father saw the *Babu** at Paikhai Bangla, Ralkapzauva's heart was intensely touched by the authority of Babu that he asked his father about the authority of Babu. He then discovered that *Sap** was more powerful than Babu. Ralkapzauva wanted to become Sap, if possible. He studied High School at Shillong and passed Matric in first division. He applied for the King's Commissioned Officer post and was recruited for that after an interview. He received the Best Cadet award during their training. But the more he achieved, and the farther he reached, the more he strayed away from his community. In the end, he realized that his respectful designation and status created a big gap between him and his neighbours. He felt lonesome amongst his community. He said, "I do not know what is joyful in this world" (Zikpuii-pa 98).

Chapter – 4 : A Critical Study of Rambuai Trauma in Selected Mizo Novels

This chapter deals with the study of Rambuai trauma from the novel of Zikpuii-pa, *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah,* and James Dokhuma's *Silaimu Ngaihawm. Nunna Kawngṭhuam*

Puiah is a unique Rambuai novel for it reflects the physical and mental trauma caused by Rambuai. The novel opens from the pre-Rambuai era that is soft and calm as compared to the post-Rambuai era; place and landscape have different meanings depending on the protagonist's perception of trauma. Before Rambuai, flowers bloomed near Ngurthanpari's house (Zikpuii-pa 58) and a beautiful gate was formed using bougainvillea shrubs. After Rambuai, these flowers and bougainvillea shrubs withered away and lost their beauty (50). Zikpuii-pa made use of flowers and bougainvillea shrubs to represent the sufferings and pains of Rambuai. People lost faith and trust in their fellow beings. Amity and goodwill no longer existed. They lived their lives in fear and suspicion of other people. The beauty of nature failed to allure them. The flowers that bloomed beside Ngurthansangi's home were no longer as beautiful as they used to be in the days before Rambuai. Folks who once sang merrily before Rambuai were now gone.

In *Silaimu Ngaihawm*, the protagonist Lalramliani became despondent and died because she lost her boyfriend Sanglura in a battle between the MNF and the Indian Army during Rambuai. Before he died, Sanglura had given Ramliani a bullet as a remembrance. After he died, Ramliani cherished that bullet very much, but, at the same time, it made her depressed; it reminded her of the times they used to be together. Until Ramliani died in depression, she did not regain her normal self.

Chapter - 5 : Conclusion

Trauma has been manifested in Mizo novel since its inception and the major conflict in *Hawilopari* by L. Biakliana is the struggle of an orphan amidst a cruel war. Not all bad experiences would cause psychological trauma in a person. As trauma is a mental suffering, the problems experienced by a person may vary according to the environment he/she lives in and so the definition of trauma may differ from person to person.

Maria Root opines that traumatic experience is often the result of low status instigated by discrimination based on gender, class or race (qtd. in Vickroy, *Voices* 132). This is evident in Chapter 2 of this research.

In *Eng Dan Nge Ni*? the traumatic experiences in the past haunted Mani. It reminds her that she does not own all wealth she has collected from her husband's family. She knows that she could re-experience what she had experienced with Lalthanga. At last, she has lost hope, turns into a pessimistic woman.

In *Phira leh Ngurthanpari*, the main reasons why Phira and his lover Ngurthanpari could not get married is the class disparity between them. Phira's words of parting broke her heart intensely like the bold works of thunder lights. For this reason, she thinks that she does not have a good reason to live. The symptoms of her trauma are hopelessness, anhedonia and she begins to have flashbacks and nightmares.

The cause of Hrangchina's death is the impact of his trauma. He is loathed and despised in his own village because of his cultural dissension. His failure to accomplish his dreams and aspirations also plays a significant role. Besides, having been defeated makes his lives dominated by constant fear of his rival Phira, which made his life miserable.

In *Kham Kar Senhri* the protagonist Remthanga suffers from individual trauma and the root of his trauma is the treatment of orphans in Mizo society. The symptoms of his trauma are self-compassion, anhedonia and he feels uncomfortable in each and every situation.

The motive behind Lalzuithanga's *Thlahrang* is to show how common people could be driven away by the pre-existing ideas. In the story, the colonized people did not know that they were being colonized, because their outlook was clouded by the admiration and respect of the colonizers. It is believable that Lalzuithanga's knows the current situation of Mizoram

and some people's attitudes towards colonization. He uses ghost to symbolize the colonizer and how people were afraid of the colonizers as *thlahrang* which is fearful for the Mizos.

Throughout the novel *C.C. Coy. No. 27*, the two conflicting notions of traditional Mizo culture and the knowledge brought about by modern developments are both presented through Ralkapzauva's character. The Mizo society was once a society where people enjoy gathering together and mingle happily, work the same job but modernity has brought a huge disparity among the people that leads to the decline of unity, this in-turn causes isolation and loneliness among individuals.

Goodbye Lushai Brigade is a novel that is written to reconstruct the identities of the British colonizers who oppressed Mizo people. The novel shows the white-men's pride and how they keep distances from their oppressed people.

The Rambuai novels studied in this research denote the manner in which many people who were affected by Rambuai used literature as a medium to express their anger and traumatic experiences. Both *Nunna Kawngṭhuam Puiah* and *Silaimu Ngaihawm* are traumatic Rambuai novels. Rambuai novels characters are disturbed by the trauma that creates doubt and faith on the existence of God. The trauma resulting from the Rambuai further triggered an urgent need to become independent of and from India. Ultimately, victims and witnesses of Rambuai atrocities continued to feel hatred and contempt towards non-Mizo Indians. They also rebuked the people whom they deemed responsible for the onslaught of Rambuai. The freedom and independence was promised to them but it is vanished. Therefore, many people feel that they went through such catastrophe for no reason and they were immensely hurt by the broken promises of their leaders.

GLOSSARY

Babu: The Government servant, Official, this post could be held by Indians also.

Rambuai: The term is used for saying the period between 1966 – 1986 when the Mizo National Front fights for Independence from India, the period is regarded as one of the darkest history of Mizoram. The term *buai, Zoram buai, Mizoram buai, buai lai* are another term commonly used for saying the period.

Sap, Sappui or Bawrhsap: The Superintendent of Lushai Hills, the District Commissioner, the top official, only the white man is appointed as the Bawrhsap during the time.

Thlahrang: Thlahrang is a kind of human spirit; ghost; terrifying being; unusual thing.

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