

**A STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIZO SOCIETY
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED PLAYS**

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**A STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIZO SOCIETY WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED PLAYS**

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Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled ‘**A Study of Social Stratification in Mizo Society with Special Reference to Selected Plays**’ submitted by Lalrotluanga has been written under my supervision.

He has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the Ph.D regulations of Mizoram University. The thesis is the result of his own investigation. Neither the thesis as a whole nor any part of it was submitted to any other University for any research degree. It is also certified that the scholar has been admitted in the Department through an entrance followed by interview as per UGC regulation 2019.

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DECLARATION

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

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The world around us is made up of human beings split into distinct social segments based on caste, ethnic, and racial characteristics on the one hand, and social strata, status groups, and social classes based on economic and political dimensions of the individual or groups on the other. According to these standards, there are disparities between people in terms of rulers and subjects, the affluent and the poor, the upper class and the commoner, and so on. Consequently, inequality, characterized by an uneven distribution of valuable resources, exists in every community. All cultures place value on three different types of resources – power, which is the capacity to force one's will on others; prestige, which is the regard of others and property, which is one's possessions. In both a complex and a basic society, these resources are allocated among individual or groups in an uneven manner. A social hierarchy thus develops when people are ranked according to the attributes they have been given and the accomplishments they have made. Listed statuses are arranged in a hierarchy from highest to lowest. Hence, the term ‘social stratification’ emerges which refers to the division of persons or groups of individuals into stratified layers that can be regarded of as how the earth’s crust is arranged vertically into several layers or strata.

Geology, the science that examines how rocks form into layers or strata, is where the concept of stratification originates. This is used in social sciences to describe how people are arranged within a society in terms of strata. It is a system of ordered statuses used to organize a society's members into hierarchical ranks. The basis for the ranks is determined by a number of factors, including property, wealth, income, work, ethnicity and age. Status hierarchies often have a diamond shape with narrow ends because the attributes that are most and least valued are likely to be relatively uncommon. The hierarchy places the more preferred group or strata at the top and the less favoured at the bottom. In this manner, a

hierarchy of power over economic resources is established from a set of ranked statuses that are determined by assessments of social value. These separate strata are viewed as being rated inequitably and distinctively in a hierarchically related manner, with particular social processes including differentiation, appraisal, ranking, and rewarding.

People in the hierarchy might claim varying degrees of authority, reputation, and wealth depending on their level or stratum. According to Talcott Parsons, social stratification is, “The differential ranking of the human individuals who compose a given social system and their treatment as superior and inferior relative to one another in certain socially important respects” (69). Therefore, according to Parsons, social stratification is a general feature of human civilization and is consequently influenced by its guiding moral principles. As a result, social stratification distinguishes the rights and advantages of each stratum within society and represents the social hierarchy that exists within it. It connects individuals of one stratum together via mutual existence and common interests, and it excludes members of other strata from its fold. According to Melvin Tumin, societal stratification is, “the arrangement of a social group or society into a hierarchy of positions that are unequal with regard to power, property, social evaluation and psychic gratification” (12).

In a line, the way in which the term strata or stratification as used by the geologists differs from how it is used in society. The social use of the notion of stratification frequently involves some evaluation of the upper and lower levels, which are rated as better or worse according to a scale of values, in contrast to how it is used in earth science. The idea of societal stratification frequently includes concepts like relative moral value, equality and inequality, and the severity of justice and injustice. The concept of superiority and inferiority serves as the foundation for relationships between different social strata. The superiority and inferiority of individuals or organizations is based on their control over various assets, commodities, and services, which in turn determines their superiority or inferiority. Members of social strata are groups of individuals who are extremely aware of and

concerned about their places in society, unlike the layers of the rocks. Their positions in terms of prestige, power, and class affect how conscious they are of their situations. It undoubtedly causes a sense of superiority and inferiority, which has an impact on their role connection.

Members of the same socio-economic strata have a certain set of sociocultural characteristics. They are fundamentally identical in their ideas and ideals, which is the one thing that sets them apart from the other layers. Because of the organized disparity that exists between them, superiority and inferiority consciousness is justified. The society creates and institutionalizes contrast between various strata. Through its legal rules, society gives its members' differences a sense of legitimacy, which makes it much easier for such differences to persist.

Understanding the underlying principles of social stratification as well as the relationships between the various strata is necessary for explaining social strata. The foundation of social strata entails certain standards according to which people are unfairly allotted valuable assets, services, and abilities. Second, it is important to illustrate how people keep their unique identities by adhering to various symbolic and non-symbolic characteristics. The structure of social co-relationships between different strata should be examined in the context of how structurally unequal positions and attributes influenced the way people lived their lives and their chances for success, as well as how changes in these positions led to changes in their social relationships.

The most important pioneering contributions to the study of social stratification were made by Karl Marx and Max Weber. Weber made the most significant early contributions to the study of social stratification as:

Marxism sees progress as coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes. This view history as class struggle rather than as, for instance, a succession of dynasties, or as a gradual progress towards the attainment of national identity and sovereignty) regards it as

motored by the competition for economic, social and political advantage (*Nagarajan 151*).

While Weber focused on the prestige aspects of stratification, Marx stressed the significance of the economic underpinnings of social divisions and proposed a two-fold categorization of classes, i.e., bourgeoisie and proletariat. Social stratification in most nations can be broken down into categories based on gender, class, ethnicity and race, disabilities, etc.

Social stratification is dynamic instead of static. It is a result of history as well. Varied societies had different ways for allocating power and privileges at various points throughout history. Throughout different eras of history, multiple distribution systems have existed within the same culture. This has led to periodic changes in the system of social stratification. Despite its apparent stability, it undergoes constant change as a result of births, deaths, and age-related shifts in membership. It must be organized and motivated in some way so as to be absorbed into the positioning system. As a result, social stratification takes on diverse forms depending on the society. Social stratification thus assumes different forms in different societies on different criteria. Karl Marx defines the term more accurately,

In a class society, ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class. In a classless society ideology is the relay whereby and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is lived to the profit of all men (226).

Karl Marx stated that the forces and relations of production (or economic base) constitute the underlying framework of society, upon which the superstructure of society rests. He further argues that the ruling classes have the authority to oppress and exploit the subject classes for their own interests and financial gain because they control the forces of production and possess the means of production. The superstructures are tools of the dominant class and frequently work for the goals of just that group of people, who monopolise the economic infrastructure through

holding sway over the means and relations of production. The "have-nots" erroneously believe that a superstructure is to their benefit, but in truth, any superstructure just minimises their awareness of the real world. Marx believed that collective ownership of the forces of production would eventually eliminate the class system in society and put an end to the exploitation and oppression of the majority by a few.

Numerous biological, social, cultural, economic, and political needs exist in society. In society, not all needs are regarded as being equal. There are some necessities that take priority over others. The patterns and ideals of a certain society are taken into consideration while determining the significance of demands. To meet these needs, many roles exist. The function that a person plays for the good of his society determines his position. A higher social value is given to the role that is seen as being more crucial in addressing social needs. These people enjoy power, perks, and reputation as a result of the society.

1.2.Origin and aspects of social stratification

As long as human civilization, social stratification has existed. When humans transitioned from hunting, fishing, and gathering society to sedentary, agricultural civilizations with surplus economies, a range of jobs emerged that were crucial to the society's smooth operation. Such occupations inevitably started to be classified hierarchically according to how important they were to a community. In practically every known culture, stratification systems have evolved and grown, but no academic really understands why, when, or how they existed. One could counter that social disparity exists in all civilizations, whether they are basic or complicated, ancient or modern, and that they all have some type of institutionalized inequality or social stratification. In the sense that the values, norms, principles, and beliefs of the society serve to legitimise, justify, and stabilise stratification structures, they are institutionalized. Even in the most basic cultures, where money or property differences are essentially non-existent, there remain disparities between people depending on age groups, gender, and other factors. According to sociologist Reece McGee, "All human societies, even the simplest, have levels (strata) of social rank as

one of the mechanisms influencing how their members relate to one another the many aggregates within a society are presumed to form in stable ordered layers” (79).

The concept and idea of social stratification can be found in the Bible, Greek social theory, Indian and Chinese foundational social and religious scriptures, and the Bible of other monotheistic religions. Up till the present, the concept has endured. Hebrew prophets who decried the excess of the powerful and wealthy made some of the earliest recorded ideas and judgments regarding societal injustice. Additionally, we can infer that the idea of social stratification predates Greek philosophy. In fact, Greek philosophers are where the study of inequality first emerged. Plato imagined a world ruled by monarchs who were philosophers. His view of society was based on class. Despite the fact that Plato's ethical concern for fairness led him to support equality of opportunity for those of equal ability, he also recognised the inequality in ability and proposed a stratified society with three levels: the guardians, the auxiliaries, and the workers. He separated the guardians further into groups that rule and those that do not rule. There were to be distinct and specific functions allocated to each of these primary levels.

According to Plato, there are classes in society, and each person's position is defined by his or her inherent talents, abilities, and physical prowess. According to Aristotle, there was a natural rank order among men because they were inherently unequal. But if we carefully consider the case Plato and Aristotle made, we may say that they were discussing natural inequalities rather than social disparities.

Aristotle proposes a three-class social structure. He believed that a sizable middle class guided by ethical rationalism would be the most effective at governing countries. He claims in his politics that

Now in all the states there are three elements: one class is very rich, another very poor, and a third is a mean. it is admitted that moderation and the mean are the best, and therefore, it will clearly be best to possess the gifts of the fortune in moderation; for in that condition of life men are most ready to

follow rational principle. But he who greatly excels in beauty, strength, birth or wealth or on the other is very poor, or very weak, or very much disgrace, finds it difficult to follow rational principle. Of these two, the one sort grows into violent and great criminals, the other into rogues and petty rascals (190).

Although the notion and origin of social stratification are difficult to define and trace explicitly, it will be desirable and vital to examine and analyse some of its key characteristics as observed by sociologists in order to comprehend social stratification more fully.

Social stratification is a long-standing trend. Historical and archaeological evidence show that social stratification existed in early communities. In particular, rank, authority, and resources disparities existed implicitly in historic groups. Inequalities are most clearly demonstrated in tribal communities in terms of age, sex, physical ability, and birth and descend group membership. Age-set and age-grade systems in early communities, as well as the hierarchy of offices, established the nature and form of stratification that existed there, according to social historians.

Social stratification is a global phenomenon, societies are naturally divided into different strata. All communities had stratification, in one form or another. The nature and causes of stratification may differ from one community to the next, but there is no denying that it occurs everywhere. According to Tumin “The nation of the world constitutes a worldwide system of stratification: the 'haves' versus the have-nots”. Additionally, stratification exists within every country, even all the so-called socialist nations. Despite the fact that it is crucial to distinguish. It is crucial to recognise that some sort of socially structured and approved inequality exists everywhere, even in systems where stratification is predominantly based on age and sex.

The social patterning of social stratification being socially defined, it should not be analysed from biological context. Social stratification being an established form of social inequality explains how different social ranks are bestowed with

varied types of skill, services and goods and how they are intrinsically existent in every society.

In contemporary complex cultures, social class is one of the most prominent and crucial underpinnings of social stratification. The majority of the time, a person's class determines his position. We can suppose that classes are the categories into which a society is split in general. Based on a set of predetermined criteria, these groups are rated. Classes are thus social groups that hold specific high and low positions in a particular society. Income, wealth, occupation, success standards, and a person's ability all play a role in determining social class.

Stratification has a wide range of effects. According to Tumin, the effects of disparities in wealth, status, and power can be organised under the following four primary headings – 1) Life chances 2) Institutional patterns of conduct 3) Life styles and Values 4) Attitudes and Ideologies. He continues, "to the extent that persons in different stratified positions experience different living opportunities, engage in various institutional activities, demonstrate various life styles, and affirm various values, attitudes, and ideologies, the stratification structure is undoubtedly the most important aspect of a community.

J.J. Rousseau offered the first sociological explanation for how inequality began. He believed that the issue of inequality was fundamental. He believed in the cause of the corrupting influence of civilisation. The social structure itself corrupted our way of life, our inherent nature as humans, and our pursuit of happiness. He asserted that society developed as a result of human choice and that it is conceivable for a naturally occurring man to live alone. But according to Rousseau's analysis of inequality, historical or social man is inherently bad due to the very circumstances of social existence; that is, he is driven to act selfishly and against the interests of other beings. He will be more evil in a culture that values civilization. He describes biologically based disparities as -

Natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength and the qualities of the mind or the

soul. By comparison, socially created inequality consists of the different privileges which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others, such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience (*T.B. Botomore 15*).

In his view, social disparity justifies the inherent distinctions between people in a society. Rousseau distinguished between the concepts of natural inequality and social inequality. Additionally, he believes that socially created inequalities form the main foundation for the creation of the system of social stratification and that biologically based inequalities between males are modest and very negligible. Although persons who take advantage of different chances, rewards, and benefits may have different physical qualities or biological traits, in his opinion, these inherent distinctions have little bearing on their social standing and location. Rousseau rejects all of the prior assumptions, arguing that there is no reason to believe that power, potential, and wisdom should always remain with the rulers rather than the ruled.

In other words, the idea of the establishment of individual property ownership is what gave rise to the issue of inequality. This argument put out by Rousseau was so compelling that it was backed and endorsed by many academics from the 18th and 19th century and went uncontested for a very long time.

1.3. Social Stratification dimensions

The term Social stratification describes the uneven allocation of wealth, status, and power. These three share a fundamental similarity in that both riches and power can be utilized to demand respect. Nonetheless, Max Weber emphasized that although these three methods of ranking cannot always be distinguished in practice, it is still important to take them into consideration (*Weber 24*). Therefore, the different ways of considering the dimensions of social stratification includes power, authority, class, status groups, property, prestige and socio-economic status.

The idea of power is the first important stratificational factor. It is recognised as the foundation for practically all other dimensions, as well as for the many social

stratification forms and types. In fact, it has been noted that social stratification cannot be clearly understood without consideration of power. Power is therefore a crucial and significant aspect of the stratification system. All other types of social stratification are impacted by it.

According to Tumin, "Perception, the most general meaning of power is the ability to secure one's ends or desires, even against the opposition of others. He further argues that there are five sources of power, that can be obtained from the ownership and control of goods and services, talents, skills and coercive constraint as well as from role-specific authority" (71). Weber defines power as "The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (152). Parsons, on the contrary, characterized power as a useful social capacity for advancing a society, that is, power is a universalized social system capacity that is used to advance common objectives. So, we can continue to say that power is the ability to bring about change in social structures. In almost all social systems, some roles are given more power than others, which results in a tiered structure of power.

The ranking of individuals based on the prestige attained from the functions they perform in a society is referred to as status. It is a high, middle, or low ranked position, and the rank is decided by the function associated with or related to the status. In other terms, social status is a measurement of honour and distinction. In terms of stratification, status denotes the placement of individuals in high and low places according to particular institutionalised standards. In fact, practically all communities have a tendency toward norms and values, and they assign roles and positions to its various members in accordance with those values and standards. Power, wealth, position, family background, and other variables can all contribute to status inequality. These elements make up the social judgement of status axioms. For instance, individuals who are politically and economically superior than the poor Brahmin may be considered to be ritually superior. People who work in the same field may hold different statuses depending on their level of achievement.

In addition to economic and vocational equality, status distinction can also be recognised in relation to disparities in lifestyle, personality, and education. The standards by which status is established and defined might vary from one society to another. A person can get social rank in one of two different ways: either through accomplishment or ascription. The relative weight that ascriptive and accomplishment criteria of status are given in different societies varies. For example, the Indian caste system involved a hierarchy that was nearly entirely based on ascription, but most industrial cultures place a great deal of value on achievement. In addition to the factors already mentioned, the following factors are crucial to social stratification: Income or fortune, professional renown, education, adherence to religion and ritual purity, status within one's family and ethnic group, and position within one's local community.

Those who share the same economic status are referred to as being in the same class, regardless of whether they are aware of this. Classes, in Marx's view, serve as the foundation for social stratification. He made 'Class' the focal point of both his analysis of society and his social change theory. Numerous non-Marxist or anti-Marxist opinions on the topic have emerged, despite the fact that the majority of modern sociologists disagree with many, if not the majority, of Marx's assumptions concerning stratification in response to Marx's initial thesis. Marx divided society into two classes according to their place within the social framework. In light of this, he suggests that all stratified civilizations always have two main classes. The "haves"—those who own the means of production—and the "have nots"—those who own nothing but their labour and, as a result, do not own control over the means of production. The "haves," who make up a small minority, seen to be the governing elite, while the majority of the "have nots" are seen as the subject class.

Honor, or prestige, is a special kind of social standing that is contingent upon the respect accorded by others. Respect from others is a valuable resource worldwide. Some communities honor the smart and humble, others the immodest and antagonistic. In modern industrial societies, prestige is largely based on occupational status, although income is also important. On the other hand, those whose jobs

involve little training, dirty labour, or having to follow orders without questioning receive the lowest scores.

Socioeconomic status is based on the income, occupational rank, and education which is used as a measure of another concept called social class. The socioeconomic status is one condensed metric that social scientists have developed to quantify social rank, which takes into consideration all three aspects of social stratifications: power, prestige, and property.

1.4. The nature of social stratification in Mizo society

The Mizo village is usually built on top of a high hill or ridge. Life in a village was simple in Pre-colonial Mizo society. The dwellings were built in two rows, facing each other. The structure was made of wood, the walls and floor were made of bamboo, and the roof was covered with straw. The size of the houses varied depending on the household. Each residence had a big balcony with hollow basins cut out of tree trunks where rice was husked with long pestles made of wood. Inside the house, massive mud hearths were fitted over which a large square bamboo structure was suspended. Trays of grain and herbs were dried on this part of the house. Except for the front door, there were no windows or ventilations in the houses except for the chief. The chief's residence was built at the village's center.

Mizo society exhibits a distinct social hierarchy and governance system reminiscent of traditional societies, where tribes are led by kings. The presence of kings in Mizo society dates back to ancient times. Prior to the establishment of Sailo chiefs as designated leaders, the ruler was often determined by the strength and might of individuals. This authority was dispersed across different villages, with the strong and powerful assuming leadership roles. Towns could have two kings, and they were organized into distinct territories. Typically, individuals perceived as courageous and capable of safeguarding their nation would ascend to the position of chief.

Prior to the Mizo settlement in Mizoram, specifically in the Chin Hills of Burma (Myanmar), the Chhakchhuak clan established themselves beyond the *Tiau* River, known as *Seipuihur*. Within this context, the *Hnamte* clan, lacking a chief, sought leadership across *Seipuihur*. However, there was reluctance among individuals to assume the role of *Hnamte* chief. Consequently, the descendants of Zahmuaka, a *Lusei* slave, were appointed to this position. They marked the inaugural lineage of *Hnamte* chiefs, paving the way for successive generations. Notably, the Sailo chiefs, who proclaimed their residence among the celestial bodies, including stars and the moon, trace their ancestry back to the *Paihte*, who, in turn, are descendants of Zahmuaka (*Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* 125).

Mizo kingship exhibited a divergence from the principles of majority-elected democracy, as rulership often involved a hereditary component with descendants of chiefs assuming leadership roles. In cases where dissatisfaction arose with a reigning king, individuals had the option to align themselves with another ruler. Chiefs, in their governance, prioritized the well-being of their subjects, refraining from adopting an authoritarian stance or declaring a hierarchical superiority. Chieftainship in Mizoram predominantly followed an inheritance model, typically passing to the youngest son of the chief. The eldest son commonly established a new village within his father's territory, subsequently assuming the role of chief. This transition was facilitated by the accompaniment of close friends and relatives. The absence of written legal codes in Mizo chieftainship meant that proclamations by chiefs held the force of law, with disobedience or rebellion being rarely attempted due to the perceived authority. Chiefs who effectively managed administrative affairs and demonstrated a commitment to the welfare of the people were highly esteemed. Each village maintained its distinct set of rules and laws, with no rigid adherence to a standardized governance framework. The variance in ruling approaches among chiefs emerged as a significant aspect, contributing to the diversity in governance styles across different regions.

The current study aims to emphasize that social inequality, based on power, rank, and prestige, has been a longstanding aspect of Mizo society. A comprehensive examination of traditional Mizo society reveals the presence of rank distinctions and social inequality. Through the analysis of empirical information and secondary sources, traditional Mizo society can be categorized into three strata. The upper strata consists of individuals holding positions such as *Lal* (Village Chief), *Upa* (Elders), *Puithiam* (Village Priest), *Thangchhuahpa*, *Ramhual*, *Zalen*, and *Pasaltha*. The middle strata include *Thirdeng*, *Hnamchawm*, and *Tlangau*, while the lower strata encompass Widow, Orphans, *Tukluh Bawi*, *Chemsen Bawi*, and *Pem*. Notably, the role of the Village chief stands out as distinctive and unique within the upper strata. Grading criteria for these strata involve factors such as political power, wealth and property, socio-religious status, age, gender, kinship relationships, and bravery.

1.5.The Social Structure of Mizo Society

Chiefs (*Lal*): The *Lal*, or Chief, served as the paramount legal authority and administrative leader in the traditional Mizo village. Each village operated independently, governed by its own chief, with a majority belonging to the *Sailo* clan. The chief occupied the highest position in the upper strata of the hierarchical societal system, holding a prestigious role in the community. He essentially possessed ownership of all assets within the village, including the village land or *Ram*, and had the authority to requisition property from the villagers. The chief exercised direct control over the village government and assumed various responsibilities, encompassing judicial matters, administration, oversight of the *Zawlbuk* (bachelor dormitory), approval of religious affairs and festivals, allocation of jhum plots to villagers, and management of diplomatic and war-related issues. Due to the reverence and esteem associated with the chiefly position, the chief enjoyed specific rights and privileges. These included the entitlement to collect various dues from the villagers.

Fathang – a due of rice (paddy due) mainly two baskets or *phur* paid after each harvest from every family who cultivated within the chief's *ram*. The quantity of *fathang* paid varies depending on the village.

Sa Chhiah – a share of every animal shot or caught by any of the locals. The chief's share is the animal's right front leg.

Khuai Chhiah – a honey due paid by honey gatherers who are obliged to bring the gathered honey to the chief who would take his share according to the quantity of the honey. All the bee-hives or wild honey found/gathered within the chief's territory was considered as his sole property.

Chi chhiah – salt due paid by each villager who obtains salt from a salt spring (located within the chief's territory) and pays one-tenth of the total salt obtained.

Se chhiah - any villager who gave away or sold his domestic mithun or *Sial* to someone residing in another village is required to pay the *sechhiah* tax, which is paid to the chief in the form of a pig.

Lal Insak - refers to the chief's exaction of unpaid labour from the villagers for the building of his home. On the site that the chief himself designated, the people voluntarily worked to construct a house for him whenever it was thought necessary.

The chief, aided by his council of elders or the *Upa*, makes all decisions on internal village government in conformity with the customary laws or *Mizo Dan*. Nobody can contest the validity of the chief's final decision. The chief, however, generally does not disregard the welfare or well-being of his people. As the people are accustomed to moving from village to village, this tradition provides a highly beneficial check on the abuse of authority. "A chief who disregards custom and oppresses the villages would quickly lose the majority of his subjects. Thus, the traditional Mizo chieftainship may be regarded as monolithic administration (undivided and unitary), owing to the chief's status as the perfect autocrat and the administration of his village based on centralized autarchy" (*Social Stratification in Mizo Society* 109). When the chief dies, his eldest son takes his place, but if the eldest son is inept, he is not permitted to succeed, and the second son takes his place

instead. Chiefs' households are huge because they frequently have multiple concubines in addition to their true wife.

The offspring of the genuine wife are only legitimate and are referred to as *Chhungpuifa*, whilst the children of concubines or *Hmei* are illegitimate and referred to as *Hmeifa*. In addition to these offspring, chiefs frequently have one or two children as a consequence of more or less covert partnerships with village females. 'These offsprings are known as *Sawn* or bastard and are considered to be of lower status than the children of concubines. If the chief has no legal sons, his village is ruled by his eldest *Hmeifa* (*N.E Parry*, 48)

Clan endogamy is a tradition used by Mizo chiefs to preserve their honor, reputation, and social standing. The practice of hypogamy and hypergamy was forbidden. Since all chiefs' clans avoided matrimony with the commoner clan or the *Hnamchawm*, marriage connections are forged only within the chief's clan or between several chiefs' clans. In most cases, a love connection between a lady of the chiefs' clan and a young man of *Hnamchawm* resulted in the young man being executed by the chief clan.

Lalkhawnbawl/Lal Upa: The council members of the chief serve as arbitrators and counsellors for the village, actively participating in state affairs, particularly in administration. Referred to as *Lal Khawnbawl*, they hold a distinct and significant position within the community. In times of conflicts, the chief consults them, akin to the role of Cabinet Ministers under a Chief Minister in a government. The extent of power wielded by the chief is contingent upon his personal character. Among the council members, the chief adviser plays a pivotal role. The appointment of *Khawnbawl* is perceived as a result of the trust and support the people place in the chief.

The amount of power exercised by the chief himself depended on his personal character. The chief adviser was one of the council members. The selection of *khawnbawl* was believed to be due to the confidence and support people had

in the chief. Slowly the appointment of the Upa became hereditary (*Mizo Ethos Changes and Challenges 16*).

The chief's value is contingent upon the wisdom of the *Lal Upa*. A chief endowed with wisdom and discernment earns profound respect and admiration from the community. A wise chief is often characterized by having a capable advisor, the *Lal Upa*, who aids in governing with truth and dignity. The allocation of *Lal Upa* positions in a village is not fixed but is determined by the chief based on the village's size and the availability of wise individuals. The number of appointed *Lal Upa* correlates with the abundance of wise and esteemed men in the area. More wise and respectable individuals result in the chief appointing a higher number of *Lal Upa*. Regarding the allocation of land for jhum cultivation, individuals don't always have the freedom to choose their plots. If a family is large with many capable workers, they might be given the opportunity to select. The chief bestows a high status upon those with significant family size and workforce. During consultations between the chief and *Khawnbawl Upa*, there is a designated place in the house known as *bahzar*, a raised platform at the corner, where they consistently sit. In ancient times, disputes were settled in an area of land in front of the chief's house called *Lal Mual*, allowing everyone to hear. In cases of scandalous or discreditable disputes, a larger audience would gather to listen. The houses of *Lal Khawnbawl* are situated along *Lal Mual* to enhance efficiency in village affairs. They reside close to the chief's house to facilitate easy gathering when needed or in case of emergencies. As a result, they are referred to as *Mual Kil Mitha* or sitting courtiers.

Lal Khawnbawl predominantly reside in the chief's house, dedicating much of their time to discussions and socializing, even in the absence of pressing matters. These gatherings involve shared activities such as drinking and conversations pertaining to village affairs, improvements, customs, traditions, and other significant topics requiring their input and wisdom. Their readiness to leave the village at the chief's behest is a crucial aspect of their role. Given their functionality and utility to the chief, *Lal Khawnbawl* accrues considerable benefits. They garner respect from the community, and their opinions hold substantial weight. Enjoying a high status,

they serve indefinitely, contingent on the chief's preference. In matters of land distribution for cultivation, their involvement is prioritized, with the selection of the best plots near the village. Subsequently, *Upa* members follow suit, and the remaining land is allocated to larger families and those favoured for their efficiency.

Thangchhuahpa: *Thangchhuahpa* holds a prominent status in traditional Mizo society, ranking just below the Lal or chief. The wife of a *Thangchhuahpa* is also given the same status and is referred to as *Thangchhuahnu*. This title is conferred upon a man who distinguishes himself by either hosting a series of public feasts or demonstrating prowess in hunting.

There are two types of *Thangchhuah*: *Inlama Thangchhuah*, achieved through hosting feasts, and *Ramlama Thangchhuah*, attained through hunting various animals. For *Ramlama Thangchhuah*, the individual must hunt specific animals, including a stag, Bear, Barking Deer, Elephant, Wild Mithun (*Tumpang/Sele*), wild boar, flying lemur (*Mulukawlh*), Hawk (*Muvanlai*), and viper (*Rulngan*), enhancing his honor. To qualify for *Inlama Thangchhuah*, the candidate must organize a *Khuangchawi* feast lasting at least seven days, involving the slaughter of two mithuns and a pig to feed the entire village. Rice beer (*Zu*) must be abundantly available throughout the feasts. Three such feasts must be hosted during the individual's lifetime. After the third feast, the *Sechhun* event requires the sacrifice of a mithun with specific chants and rituals. Upon completing these ceremonies, *Thangchhuahpa* is entitled to various privileges, including wearing a specially designed turban/shawl called *Thangchhuah Puan*, opening windows in his house's side wall, installing partition walls and a veranda *Vanlung*, and having a direct passage to paradise (*Pialral*) after death. Similarly, a man granted *Thangchhuahpa* status through *Ramlama Thangchhuah* enjoys certain perks in society, with a direct pass to *Pialral* after death. However, unlike *Inlama Thangchhuah*, he is not entitled to wear *Thangchhuah Puan* or make structural modifications to his house. On special occasions, a reserved seat next to the chief symbolizes respect from the community. Achieving *Thangchhuah* status requires wealth, economic stability, or bravery and skill in valorous deeds.

Ramhual: The chief selects individuals as *Ramhual* to gain favour and choose favourable land for cultivation, subjecting them to a higher tax known as *Lal Fathang*. *Ramhual* typically pays double the tax compared to regular individuals. The selection criteria favour large families with effective and efficient working members. Additionally, the chief has the authority to appoint any family as *Ramhual* based on personal preference. However, if the chief favours a newly arrived large family over dedicated, long-standing residents, discontent arises among *Upa* and other *Ramhual*, referred to as *Thleng Tlawr Zuan*. Even with the chief's highest authority, strong suggestions and visible disapproval from advisors can influence decisions. The tax, known as *Fathang*, varies across villages, and *Ramhual* contributes a higher amount compared to common residents. While less fortunate individuals in some villages pay about two *Dawrawn*, *Ramhual* pays four or five *Dawrawn*.

Zalen: The title of *Zalen* holds prestige, although individuals with this title lack influence in administrative matters like *Ramhual*. Nevertheless, they have the privilege of selecting desirable land after *Ramhual*, placing them in an esteemed position. Similar to *Ramhual*, they contribute a higher tax than ordinary residents and seek favour from the chief. Both *Ramhual* and *Zalen* are recipients of the chief's favour and are expected to render services to the chief in return. When the chief requires pork or chicken for meals with visitors, they are obligated to offer their domesticated animals as a gesture of gratitude. Additionally, they are expected to accompany the chief's children when needed.

Hautla: The presence of individuals with the title *Hautla* is not universal across all villages; however, in certain villages, chiefs select them to enjoy a slightly elevated status compared to common residents. Their role involves choosing land after *Zalen* but before commoners. The customs related to *Hautla* can vary among villages. Given that Mizo society was primarily governed by chiefs, the distribution of villages with or without *Hautla* is considered roughly equal in number.

Thirdeng: *Thirdeng* occupies a crucial role in Mizo society, with one appointed in each village by the chief, known as *Lal Thirdeng*. This position demands specialized skills in tool and equipment fabrication, making it a full-time commitment. *Lal Thirdeng* is not involved in farming, community activities, or hunting due to the dedication required for tool production. Given the indispensable nature of their work, *Thirdeng* receives a share of successful hunting's good meat parts. They play a vital role in the community, as every household requires their services. A specific tax, *Khawlai Buh*, is imposed on the *Thirdeng* of each village, and while they have the authority to exempt individuals, those exempted are expected to assist in collecting raw materials for tool production. Various tools, including *Tuthlawh*, *Hreipui*, and *Chem*, are crafted by *Thirdeng*, with some providing raw materials and coal for tool creation. The strategic location of the *Thirdeng's* house ensures accessibility while preventing random disturbances. Although mostly frequented by men, priority is given to women or widowed women when they need assistance. The *Pum* or forge serves as a gathering place for male community members, facilitating informal information transmission. The term "Pum ti ti" refers to unverified interpersonal information shared in these discussions. The number of blacksmiths in a village depends on its size, with larger villages having more to meet population needs. *Lal Thirdeng* is often appointed by the chief, and if no one within the village possesses the required skills, a blacksmith from another village is invited. The prestige associated with the role is reflected in the tax privileges, known as *Khawlai Sa* and *Khawlai Buh*.

The significant position of blacksmiths often supersedes their personal identity, with houses and farmlands commonly referred to as the blacksmiths. Even children's names, such as Dengrikhuma, Dengdailoa, and Denghnuna, reflect their parent's forging profession (*Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*, 134).

Hnamchawm: In the traditional Mizo village, the *Hnamchawm* constitutes the middle categories of society, encompassing the majority of the population. This term broadly refers to individuals outside the ruling chief's clan. Within the *Hnamchawm*, there is a further categorization based on material possessions, distinguishing

between the *Mitha* (the haves) and *Mi thalo* (the have nots). Notably, individuals belonging to the top strata, including the chief, his relatives, and other eminent figures like *Upa*, *Ramhual*, *Zalens*, *Hautla*, *Puithiam*, *Thirdeng*, and *Thangchhuahpa*, along with their relatives, are primarily considered *Hnamchawm*. The *Tlangau* (Village Crier) also falls within the *Hnamchawm* category, playing a crucial role in Mizo society. However, the position is deemed low in the hierarchical order under the chief in terms of village authorities.

Tlangau: The *Tlangau* functions as town criers in Mizo society, responsible for disseminating public announcements and proclamations. Despite the significance of their role, they do not inherently occupy a high social status, as the position is considered open to anyone and lacks prestige. Their primary duty involves conveying important information from the chief to the community, akin to a modern-day peon. The *Tlangau's* responsibilities include loudly proclaiming announcements through the streets, often facing harassment from children. While not a sought-after position, integrity and the ability to keep secrets are crucial qualities for a *Tlangau*, given their knowledge of important affairs around the chief. Chiefs typically favour loyal town criers. The *Tlangau* serves as a communication channel for various matters, including the search for lost individuals, community services, and other affairs of the chief. Due to the time spent around the chief, the *Tlangau* receives a salary in the form of approximately 15 kilograms of rice, known as *Buh Kho Khat*, collected from each household in the village. The *Tlangau* has the authority to exempt specific individuals, such as close relatives, widows, or impoverished families, from the tax collected for their salary. Despite not holding a prestigious status, the *Tlangau* plays a crucial role in the Mizo community.

Khawchhiar: The role of a *Khawchhiar* as a Secretary to the chief emerged during the British regime in Mizoram and has become a prestigious position even in villages with chiefs. This position requires an individual with educational background and is considered highly esteemed due to the intelligence and education necessary for the role. Typically, individuals with higher education are invited to fill this position. The *Khawchhiar* functions as the chief's Secretary,

recording important dates, events, and affairs in the village, including births and deaths. Like blacksmiths, individuals in this role are often referred to by the name of their position. Excellent and capable Secretaries contribute to the positive reputation of the village. The *Khawchhiar* plays a crucial role in preserving the village's history by meticulously recording significant events. This position is exclusive to educated individuals, and their presence is sought after by the chief throughout various activities. Beyond serving the chief, a wise Secretary may also become one of the village elders. When government servants visit the village, the *Khawchhiar* serves as the primary point of communication and interaction. Their responsibilities extend to knowing details about each family in the village, making them well-acquainted with the community. The *Khawchhiar* is considered the go-to person for the chief in matters such as rice distribution, effectively becoming both the Information Officer for the chief and the community (*Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* 135).

Zawlbuk: In every Mizo village, a *Zawlbuk*, or a dorm for bachelors, was a prominent institution, typically situated close to the chief's house at the village center. The chief, based on the effectiveness of *Val Upa*, would appoint him to lead the *Zawlbuk*. The *Zawlbuk* served multifaceted purposes, functioning as a training ground for individuals to develop discipline, obedience, diligence, and hunting skills. Additionally, it served as a lodging for travelers, a gathering place for chiefs, and a resource during crises like extinguishing village fires or repelling enemy attacks. The *Zawlbuk* played a crucial role in instilling the *Tlawmngaihna*, the code of ethics and proper behavior among the Mizo. As an institution, it demonstrated an awareness of individual rights and needs, ensuring a harmonious balance between generations and serving as a potent social control mechanism in the Mizo community. According to V.S. Lalrinawma, "The practical life activities advised during the *Zawlbuk* stay trained individuals to play significant and effective roles in their society" (*Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges* 42).

1.6. Status and Position of Mizo *Pasaltha* (Warrior)

In the Mizo community, warriors hold a significant and esteemed position, second only to the chief and elders. This prominence stems from historical contexts where inter-village warfare was prevalent. During times of conflict, warriors assumed the crucial role of protectors and guardians for women, children, and the elderly, earning them respect and high status within the community. Mizo highly value individuals, who excel in hunting, demonstrate courage, resilience, diligence, courtesy, and a willingness to sacrifice for their friends. Those who prove themselves to possess these qualities are honored with the title of a warrior.

The title of a warrior among the Mizo is reserved for individuals with a high degree of courage and fearlessness, making them deeply admired and cherished. This admiration is rooted in the necessity for a considerable level of valor and bravery in their living conditions for survival. Professor C Nunthara explains how “Mizo instill a sense of fearlessness, bravery, and boldness from a young age. In ancient times, the degree of bravery was measured by how a man faced dangers, whether from wild animals or enemies during warfare” (*Mizo Pasaltha, Socio- Cultural Perspectives* 43).

Warriors in the Mizo community are esteemed for their qualities of courtesy, selflessness, sacrificial readiness, prudence, and astuteness. They are expected to exhibit effective approaches and successful tactics in confronting enemies. A warrior's life is anticipated to serve as an exemplary model, leaving behind a legacy of living principles and wisdom for future generations, a value accorded paramount importance. The primary objective of warriors is to defend the community members. In times of inter-village conflicts or warfare, warriors take immediate action, forming the initial line of defense against enemy attacks. To enhance preparedness and effectiveness during emergencies, all bachelors in the village sleep in a designated area called *Zawlbuk*. When perceiving the proximity of enemies, they remain vigilant day and night, safeguarding the village and preparing for potential attacks. Mizo ancestors hold profound admiration for three specific categories of individuals:

warriors, village elders, and those recognized with *Nopui* for their fearlessness and courage.

1.7. Short introduction to the writers of plays to be studied

Lalthangfala Sailo:

Lalthangfala Sailo, born on July 16, 1933, in *Lungdar* village, is the son of the chief of *Lungdar*. Furthermore, he is the grandson of Khamliana, the chief of *Lungleng* village, and his mother, Thanseii Sailo, is the daughter of the chief of *Phulpui*. His educational journey includes passing the sixth grade in 1949, completing the tenth grade in 1954, and graduating from St. Xavier's College in Calcutta in 1959. Subsequently, he commenced his career as a teacher at St. Paul's High School, *Aizawl*, in the same year. Lalthangfala Sailo furthered his studies, obtaining a master's degree. Throughout his career, he held various positions such as Lecturer, Principal, and Deputy Registrar at NEHU-MC University. In 1962, he married Lalhrimi Sailo, and the couple has three sons and one daughter. Currently, Lalthangfala Sailo resides in *Chaltlang*, *Aizawl*, with his wife and children.

Professional Positions already held by Lalthangfala Sailo :

- (1) Lecturer, U.C.C. Barapani, Meghalaya 1966-72
- (2) Lecturer St. Edmunds College, Shillong. 1972-73
- (3) Principal, Govt. Champhai College, 1973-85
- (4) Dy. Registrar, NEHU, Mizoram Campus, Aizawl 1985-96

Retired August 1996

State level committee:

- (1) President, Mizo Academy of Letters 1987 - 2017
- (2) Member, Mizoram Publication Board 1997-2011

(3) Vice President, Art and Culture Society of Mizoram 1995 - 2009

(4) Vice President, State Council for Child Welfare Mizoram 2004 - 2008.

(5) President, Mizoram Law College governing body 2011 - 2013

Regional level:

Committee Member at Executive and General Council of North-East Cultural Zone and programme Committee.

National level : (1) He has been a member of General Council, Sahitya Akademi,

(National Academy of Letters) for Mizoram during the years 1999
2003 and 2008-2012.

(2) He has been a member representing Sahitya Akademi at General
Council, Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Music,
Dance and Drama), New Delhi during 1999-2013.

Contributions in the Academic Field:

(1) He has been a member in Mizo Language Committee, Gauhati
University.

(2) He has been a member in the following list under Former member
of North Eastern Hill University

(3) Academic Council

(4) Executive Council

(5) Chairman and member of Board of Under Graduate Studies

(3) He has been a member of Finance Committee and hold other various positions under Mizoram Board of School Education

(4) He has been a member of Gauhati University Text Book Committee during 1972 – 73.

Positions held towards the development of the society:

1) Asst. Secretary, Mizo Students Association Hrs, Aizawl 1959

(2) President, Mizo Students Association, Gauhati Branch 1960

(3) President, Mizo Students Association, Shillong Branch 1973

(4) President, Mizo Cultural Club, Shillong 1972-73

(5) President, Teachers Association, Champhai 1973-85

(6) President, Mizo Cultural Club, Champhai 1976-85

(7) President, Games & Sports Association, Champhai 1980-81

Positions held in Church:

(1) Member of Presbyterian Church of India.

(2) He has been a member of the Church's Committee member for 15 years

(3) Secretary for B.S.I. Aizawl North & North II Branch for fifteen years

(4) Member, Bicentennial committee, B.S.I. Aizawl Auxiliary
Literary works

Lalthangfala Sailo's literary contributions have been disseminated through both Radio (Akashvani) and Television (Doordarshan) on numerous occasions. Commencing his writing endeavors during his school days, he has published works

in various literary journals. In addition to essays and articles, he has authored several seminar papers that garner attention at both national and state levels. His writings encompass a diverse array of themes, addressing topics such as national unity, advocacy for community peace, and the promotion of linguistic harmony. Lalthangfala Sailo's literary endeavors extend to advocating against terrorism and emphasizing the significance of journalists. In one of his speeches on India Independence Day, he expounds upon the lives and remarkable contributions of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He delves into their efforts towards national unification and their substantial contributions to the cause of nationalism.

Lalthangfala Sailo has authored more than fifty poems, each exploring diverse themes including love, gentleness, ethical living, fate, and the beauty of nature. His poetic compositions serve as reflections of the lifestyle and cultural nuances prevalent in North-East India. These works have been integrated into academic texts affiliated with institutions such as Gauhati University, North-Eastern Hill University, Manipur University, Mizoram University, and Mizoram Board of School Education.

His first work in drama called 'Sangi Inleng' (Sangi's Guests) was the first Mizo drama to be published in 1962. He wrote more than ten dramas such as -

- (a) *Sangi Inleng*
- (b) *Liandova-te Unau*
- (c) *Thangliana Len*
- (d) *Kalkhama leh Lianphunga*
- (e) *Sual Man Thihna*
- (f) *Hmangaih Vangkhua leh a dangte*
- (g) *Khawnglung Run*
- (h) *Khuangleng Run*
- (I) *Lianchhiari*

National awards:

(1) In 2008 he was awarded the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (playwriting) 2007 by the President of India Pratibha Patil at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on the 26th February, 2008.

(2) He was awarded Padma Shri 2009 in Education and Literature field due to his immense contribution in literature. He was handed this award by the President of India at Raj Bhawan on 14th April 2007.

(3) He was awarded Bharat Adivasi Drama award in 2012.

(4) He was also awarded State Award called Pu Buanga Award in 2015.

Laltluangliana Khiangte:

Laltluangliana Khiangte, born on June 28, 1961, in *Saitual*, is the great-grandchild of the renowned Mizo historian Rev. Liangkhaia. He is the fifth child in a family of six siblings, born to Upa Tlanghmingthanga and Darngeni. An industrious and obedient individual, he currently resides in *Mission Veng* at *Aizawl* with his family.

Commencing his education at *Saitual* Primary School, Laltluangliana Khiangte consistently excelled academically. He secured the first rank in the Scholarship Examination in the state during the sixth grade in 1973 and attained the fourth rank in the state in the High School Leaving Certificate Examination in 1978. Continuing his educational journey, he completed P.U Science from St. Anthony's College in 1980 and graduated in English from St. Edmund's College in 1982.

Furthering his academic pursuits, Laltluangliana obtained a Master's degree in English from North-Eastern Hill University in 1984, earning a Second division. His commitment to scholarly pursuits led him to embark on a Ph.D. in Literature, which he successfully completed in 1991. Undeterred by academic achievements, he pursued Post-Doctoral Research in Folklore at the International University of Washington, receiving a Doctor of Literature (D.Litt.) in 1999.

Following the attainment of his Master's degree, Laltluangliana commenced his career as an English Lecturer at Hrangbana College and later at Aizawl College. Joining Pachhunga University College on September 26, 1985, as a Research Associate (Mizo Lecturer), he continued teaching at Hrangbana College and Aizawl College simultaneously.

In 1997, with the establishment of the first Mizo Department at NEHU (Mizoram Campus), Laltluangliana served as a Guest Lecturer and later as a Reader. On February 8, 1999, he became the first full-time Lecturer and eventually the Reader and Head of the Department. Additionally, he worked as an Academic Counselor in English at Indira Gandhi Open University for approximately three years and served as the NET Coordinator under UGC.

Elevated to the position of Professor on December 6, 2005, Laltluangliana assumed the role of Head of the Department at Mizoram University from its inception in 2001 to the present. Achieving the status of Senior Professor in 2018, his scholarly contributions span various subjects, encompassing literature, culture, folklore, socio-religious studies, sports, and social education.

Recognizing his substantial contributions to Mizo language and literature, Laltluangliana Khiangte received the *Padma Shri* (in Literature and Education) from the President of India in 2006. Additionally, in 2018, he was honored with the SNA Purushkar-2018 (Sangeet Natak Akademi Award) by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Prior to these accolades, he received two other National Awards, namely the Rashtriya Lok Bhasha Samman in 2003 and the Bharat Adivasi Samman in 2005, from organizations including the Ramnika Foundation and the All India Tribal Literary Forum.

International and National Awards

- 1) Awarded Ph.D in 1991(Drama), North Eastern Hill University
- 2) Awarded Rashtriya Lok Bhasha Samman in 2003
- 3) Awarded Bharat Adivasi Samman in 2005
- 4) Awarded Padma Shri in Literature & Education in 2006
- 5) Awarded National Integration Memento & Citation in 2010
- 6) Awarded Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) on 12th March, 2012

- 7) Awarded Bharat Adivasi Drama Award on 16th November, 2012
- 8) Awarded Theatre Festival Award on 5th September, 2015 Bharatiyam Salt Lake, Kolkata
- 9) Awarded Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (Puruskar on Playwrighting) in 2018

Recognitions, Awards, and Prizes

- 1) Awarded 1st Prize Incentive, State Level Drama Writing Competition in 1990
- 2) Awarded Book of the Year-1997 in Mizoram with cash incentive.
- 3) Awarded Khuangchera Award (Drama) in 2008
- 4) Awarded Mizo Drama Award-2023 by Mizo Drama Society on 27th March, 2023 at Aizawl

List of Long and Short Plays

- 1) Nu leh Pa Bum-Mahni inbum (Comedy-To deceive parents is to deceive self), Staged in Shillong & Aired in All India Radio (AIR)-Gauhati, 1983
- 2) Thupha Ka Rawn Chawi E (Comedy-Forgiveness is what I needed) Staged in Shillong, Aired in All India Radio (AIR)Gauhati, 1983
- 3) Thawmmawia (Comedy), Staged in Shillong, Aired in AIR, Gauhati, 1984
- 4) Faki Te Chhung (Comedy), Staged in Shillong & Aired in AIR programme, Guwahati, 1987
- 5) A lo Kal Lehna (Comedy-His second coming, in honor of Rev.J.M. Lloyd) Stage in Vanapa Hall, Aizawl, 1989
- 6) Duhawma leh Lalfaki (Comedy), Stage play, Aired in All India Radio (AIR) programme), 1990
- 7) Hnehzova leh Rimawii (Comedy) Prescribed for Class IX & X, Manipur Board, 1991
- 8) Chanchintha Meichher / The Gospel Torch, MA (Mizo & Cultural Studies) Show, 1993

- 9) Thawmvunga (Comedy-The patriot) Prescribed for M.A. (Mizo) MZU & B.A (Hon)-Manipur University & MZU, 1994
- 10) Lalnu Ropuiliani (Tragedy-Mizo / Indian freedom fighter)
- 11) Prescribed for degree MIL -Mizo, NEHU & MZU, B.A(Hons) Manipur Univ. Stage play & staged in Shillong,Guwahati & other places,1994
- 12) Zorama (Tragedy-Contemporary young man), Short play) in Mizo, 1997
- 13) Chharmawia (Comedy) Prescribed for degree MIL - Mizo, NEHU & MZU, New Delhi DDK film, 1997
- 14) Pasaltha Khuangchera (Tragedy) Prescribed for degree MIL -Mizo, NEHU & MZU; Stage play for different places including New Delhi & MZU, 1997
- 15) Tualvungi leh Zawipala, (Adaptation from folktale), Stage play, shown in different places, 1998
- 16) Balhla leh leh Mizo Tlangval, (Comedy-Banana and Mizo young man), Stage play, shown in many places. 2000
- 17) Duat Luat Vangin, Prescribed for Class X, MBSE (New Course; 2010) Stage play, 2001
- 18) Beidawnna Khur Atangin (Comedy), Stage play, staged in many places 2001
- 19) Buia Sai-Ip (Comedy) Prescribed for MA Mizo, MZU, Stage play, shown in many stages, 2001
- 20) Lalawmpuii (Dramatized), Stage play, shown in different stages, 2012
- 21) Milim Pathum, (Comedy), Stage play, shown in many stages, Aizawl, 2016
- 22) Mizo Lalzika leh Vanthangi (Tragedy) 2019, Stage play, prescribed for M.A.in MZU & ICFAI.
- 23) Mizo play in traditional tragedy form - Zawlpala (Hero) & Tualvungi (Heroine), 2019
- 24) Mizo play in traditional comedy form - Ralhneha (Hero) & Darmawii (Heroine), 2019
- 25) Mi-ngo Nukiri leh a Fapa Tlira Tragedy (History play),2022

26) Zoroma- A Contemporary Youth (Tragedy), LTL Publications (in English), 2023

Lalsangzuala:

Lalsangzuala, born on March 3, 1973, in *Tlungvel* village, is the son of Vanzika and Zairemi. His educational journey began with primary education in various schools, including Tlungvel Primary Sikul III, Khatla Primary School, and Dawrpui Primary School. Middle schooling was pursued at Dawrpui Middle School and Tlungvel Middle School II, followed by high schooling at Sawleng High School and Bungkawn High School. Continuing his academic pursuits, Lalsangzuala completed his PU degree from Government Aizawl College and T.Romana College. He further graduated from Pachhunga University College and obtained a Master's degree from Mizoram University. Subsequently, he entered the teaching profession, where he has been dedicatedly employed to the present day. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Lalsangzuala pursued higher academic achievements and completed a Master of Philosophy from Mizoram University in the year 2014.

One thousand copies of the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* was initially published in 2006 by the Mizoram Publication Board, alongside another play titled *Thangzawra* within the same book. The writing process commenced on December 24, 1997, with a considerable amount of time invested in its completion. A second edition of the book was published in 2019, this time with two thousand copies.

Duhmanga leh Dardini is classified as a historical play, unfolding a tragic love story between Duhmanga, the son of *Vantlang* village chief Hrangvunga, and Dardini, the daughter of widower Chawnmangi. The play is structured into five acts and eighteen scenes, with the narrative unfolding in locations such as *Vantlang* village, Sunthla, and Mualpui villages. In 2022, another play by the author, titled *Lalvunga*, was published, generating a thousand copies. This play delves into the intricate dynamics of scheming and conniving interactions between the courageous chief Lalvunga and Lianpuia, leading to eventual murder and death.

List of books he has published -

- 1) *Duhmanga leh Dardini*
- 2) *Thangzawra*
- 3) *Lalvunga*
- 4) *Hun Awmloh hunah*
- 5) *Lailen*
- 6) *Pasalthate Lu Nghahna*

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CHAPTER – 2

THE IMPACT OF SOCIETAL INFLUENCES ON INDIVIDUAL'S
LIFE IN LALTHANGFALA SAILO'S PLAYS *LIANDOVA-TE UNAU* AND
LIANCHHIARI

2.1. Summary of the play *Liandova-te Unau*

Lalthangfala's play *Liandova-te Unau* transitioned from a historical story to a published book in 1969, facilitating its adaptation for stage performances. The play is structured into six Acts, with varying scene compositions: Act 1 comprises three scenes, Act 2 has a single scene, Act 3 includes three scenes, Act 4 consists of two scenes, and Act 5 encompasses four scenes. The play features a total of eleven characters.

The play unfolds at *Zokhua Charchhawn Veng*, focusing on Liandova's dying father. His imminent death prompts his wife, children, and neighbour Pi Fangi to attend to him. Following the father's demise, Liandova's mother pledges to care for the children in a mourning song, relieving Pi Fangi. However, the mother breaks her promise, forming a romantic alliance with widowed traveler Thangsei. They plan to elope, convincing the siblings that their father needs to be called from the far eastern part. Once they depart, Pi Fangi, discerning their true intentions, urges the siblings to pursue their mother. When they catch up, the mother instructs Liandova to push his little brother into the river to join them. Liandova, opting to preserve his brother's life, chooses to remain with him.

Liandova and his brother, Tuaisiala, endure poverty and toil as rice field caretakers. They once safeguard Thangmanga's field from wild boar invasions. While sleeping after setting a fire, a deer approaches Tuaisiala, startling it into a tree, where Liandova fatally strikes it. However, Thangmanga claims all the valuable parts of the meat.

In the forest, Liandova and his brother Tuaisiala join other hunters. Tuaisiala, in a casual remark, notes that the tree they tread upon has eyes, revealing

it to be a massive python upon inspection. After slaying the python, they are allocated only its abdominal section, rejected by the others who initially spotted the python. The brothers, discontented, wash the given portion in the river. Liandova, feeling unjust, weeps persistently. Tuaisiala continues to clean and dissect the portion, inadvertently discovering numerous treasures such as necklaces and brass items. Fearing others' potential confiscation, they maintain secrecy. When playing the brass drum, they conceal the valuable items, substituting with empty cans to mislead curious onlookers.

Pi Fangi, an orphan herself, takes compassion on the impoverished brothers, providing them with sustenance. They previously served as rice caretakers for Thangmanga. When Thangmanga's daughter delivers their field-tending wages, it comprises only rice husks mixed with rat feces. Despite the unsatisfactory payment, they refrain from voicing complaints. Ralthawma's sibling offers meat, but instead, they receive pieces of wood coated with animal blood, reflecting the extent of societal disdain towards them. Lacking a machete for vegetation clearance, Liandova improvises a rope swing along a frequented farming path. Those who swing there lend their machetes to Liandova, enabling him and Tuaisiala to cultivate a small plot in the forest to fulfill their basic needs.

In a prosperous village, chief Lersia and his subordinates conspire to travel incognito to understand the actual living conditions of others. Tuaisiala informs his brother about travelers in their village, with one lacking proper accommodation. Assuming the traveler to be similarly impoverished, Liandova urges Tuaisiala to invite him home. To their surprise, the guest is one of the wealthiest chiefs. Moved by pity, he plans to elevate Liandova and Tuaisiala from poverty, pledging to provide them with cattle and assistance during rice threshing. Pi Fangi offers guidance on selecting the best cattle from Lersia's herd and imparts essential details for the upcoming rice threshing, expressing a genuine desire for the brothers to experience a measure of Lersia's prosperity.

Liandova and Tuaisiala fulfill their promise and visit Lersia's village. Following Pi Fangi's counsel, Liandova selects the best cattle from Lersia's herd, despite its seemingly meager appearance, causing a slight disappointment for Tuaisiala. Reluctant to bring the chosen cattle into their village, they keep it

discreetly outside. During the harvest, Lersia fulfills his promise, assisting the brothers and providing an unprecedented quantity of rice for their village. This transition elevates Liandova and Tuaisiala from orphans and extreme poverty to becoming among the wealthiest individuals in their community.

While Tuaichawngi, the chief's daughter, is weaving clothes, Pi Fangi informs her about the substantial wealth of Liandova and his brother. She discreetly shares details of their numerous necklaces, brass goods, successful rice cultivation, and cattle-raising endeavors. Advising Tuaichawngi to choose Liandova as her husband, Pi Fangi plants the idea. On the day of Tuaichawngi's husband selection, men vying for her hand gather in the chief's courtyard in their finest attire. Tuaichawngi, choosing Liandova, places her necklace on him. Unaware of Liandova's wealth, Tuaichawngi's father reacts angrily, severing her finger. He demands a substantial bridal price in the form of numerous cattle, necklaces, and brass items. Threatening to kill Liandova if the demands are unmet, the chief remains unaware of the true extent of their wealth.

Despite skepticism from the chief's elders regarding Liandova's ability to fulfill the substantial bridal demands, he surprises everyone by successfully paying the bride price. Liandova's wealth surpasses even that of the chief, leading those who previously mistreated him to feel ashamed. Pi Fangi finds contentment in the brothers' newfound prosperity, and her compassionate actions toward the impoverished orphans are acknowledged and honored.

2.2. Determination of social status by economic position from *Liandovate Unau* play

The primary occupation of the Mizo is agriculture, specifically practicing shifting cultivation, also known as slash-and-burn agriculture. This traditional farming method involves clearing land by cutting and burning vegetation. After cultivation for several years, the land is left fallow for natural regeneration. The community constantly moves to new plots, and those who finish constructing houses first assist those lagging behind. Since agriculture is the core livelihood, there are no businessmen or alternative jobs sustaining their lives, resulting in a relatively equal

economic status. Mutual assistance is prevalent in cultivation and other aspects of life, even for those unable to work due to illness or various reasons. C. Lianthanga describes the Mizo society's beauty in times of need, emphasizing the chief and elders' role in tending to the frail or ill. They organize seed planting for them and request those with plenty to share rice with the needy. The society operates with a collective mindset, with individuals working diligently to avoid envy and willingly providing assistance to those in need.

Contrary to the prevalent depiction in Mizo literature, *Liandova-te Unau* portrays a distinct societal scenario. Following Liandova's father's death, his mother abandons the family in pursuit of a new husband, leaving the siblings destitute and scorned by the community. This contrasts with the usual image of the Mizo community, which is known for mutual support and upliftment in times of need. Despite the generally helpful nature of the Mizo society, the imperfection of human nature sometimes manifests in the mistreatment and disdain toward the poor and unfortunate. Consequently, there exists a common drive within the community to strive for success and encourage one another to avoid poverty and mistreatment.

In the past, Mizo exhibited a degree of status-consciousness within the bounds of their cultural norms. There was a proclivity for comparing and competing with others based on material possessions, accomplishments, and overall lifestyle. Mothers, concerned for their daughters, feared the possibility of not having the cherished traditional wrap-around or clothing when seeking marriage. Fathers, in turn, advised their sons to rely solely on themselves and emphasized the necessity of hard work for sustenance. The alternative, seeking mercy and compassion from wealthier individuals, was deemed a shameful course of action (*Hmanlai Mizo Nun* 34).

The Mizo society of that time displayed a tendency to stigmatize or marginalize individuals facing economic disadvantages or an inability to sustain themselves. This phenomenon indicates a form of social bias where individuals may be unfairly judged based on their financial status or capacity to earn a living. In Act I, Scene one of the play *Liandova-te Unau*, Liandova's father, on his deathbed,

expresses deep concern for his wife and children due to their weakened and frail state. Liandova, being only a child along with his sibling, is apprehensive about navigating life without the guidance of a father figure, given their youth and inability to support themselves.

Liandova: Ka pa tang fan fan rawh aw, kan la te si, I tel lo chuan kan awm thei lovang.

Liandova Pa: Taite, Lungngai mah ta che, thi mah ila I nu a awm a lawm. I nu hovin in awm ang a, tumah in awt bik lovang.

Liandova: Ka nu hovin rei tak kan awm thei dan em ni? Ka nuin rei tak min awmpui peih dawn em ni?

Liandova Pa: (chau takin) Peih e a. I nu chuan ka hmangaih che u ang tho hian a hmangaih che u asin.

Liandova: Father please stay strong, we are still very young, we will not survive without you.

Liandova's Father: Beloved do not worry about anything, your mother is still here. You will live with your mother and you will not envy anyone.

Liandova: Will we be able to stay with her for a long time? Will she be willing to stay with us?

Liandova's Father: (Feebly) Of course she will. Your mother loves you just the way I love you (6).

Liandova, despite his youth, fears the prospect of living without his father due to the anticipated decline in their prosperity. Recognizing their limitations in efficiently constructing houses and cultivating land, he foresees a heightened struggle to meet their needs, making them notably poorer. His father, acknowledging this reality, advises him, "With your mother, you will not envy those around you,"

indicating that although they may face challenges, the presence of their mother mitigates the extent of their struggles. The outset of the play highlights that, in the Mizo society of that time, individuals unable to work efficiently and those in the economically disadvantaged segment lived in impoverished conditions, often envying those in better circumstances, existing on the societal margins.

In the historical context of Mizo society, the challenges faced by Liandova, his brother, and their mother stem from a lack of necessary manpower. This deficiency hampers their ability to lead self-sufficient lives, consequently impacting their socio-economic circumstances and daily living conditions. The absence of sufficient manpower poses difficulties in initiating cultivation activities, a labour-intensive process exacerbated by the need for constant assistance from the community. Despite the customary practice of communal support during illness or adversity, the family's constant reliance proves burdensome, particularly in the initial stages of crop cultivation. The labour-intensive task of clearing densely forested areas further compounds their predicament, requiring significant effort and manpower, resources the family conspicuously lacks. This condition leads to societal disdain, as the community perceives them as incapable. Despite Liandova's youth, his understanding of community dynamics is evident through his profound lamentations upon realizing his father's imminent demise, a sentiment echoed in Pi Fangi's lamentation.

Liandova: Tuaisial heti mai hi kan ni tak si a, a va manganthlak em. Ka pa, mi ngaithiam ang che aw, I fate hi kalsan tham kan la nih loh vang a ni e. Ka pa, I tel lo chuan thiante pawh engtinng kan hmuh ngam ang a, engnge ei pawh kan ei ang. Ka pa a la hun lo asin maw, I fate hi kalsan tham kan la ni lo ka pa.

Liandova: Tuaisial, this is the state of our existence, and I am in despair. Father, please forgive me; we are still so young that we are not fit to be left alone. Father, how will I have the courage to face my friends without you, and what will we even eat? My dearest

father, it is not time yet; your children are not fit to be left alone,
dear father (7).

Liandova understands that, without his father, obtaining sustenance becomes a challenge. Despite his youth, he comprehends the potential social stigma from his friends. He recognizes that the absence of their family's stronghold and foundation will lead to devaluation, disparagement, and disdain from society. This sentiment is evident in Pi Fangi's lament as -

Liandova pa ka lung ava chhe em

Aw, Tuaiduhlaite en kham hma,

Liandoa pa mual I liam

Mi zuapate 'n par tinreng

Tuai duhleng tan an hawn ang

Liandoapa tel ve lo

Hmana ka zuapa iang a

Tuai duhleng chawi lian lova,

Liandopa, mual I liam

An riang hluan ang hrai chawi loh,

Keimah ianga tulpui loh,

Liando te an nih chuan.

Liandova's father oh how I am deeply sorrowed

Before your children are grown

That you will have to die

Other fathers will bring flowers
 For their children
 But not you anymore
 Just like my father before
 Who dies without seeing his children grow up
 That you have to die now
 They will be lonely without a father
 Just like me without a father
 This becomes their plight (8).

In Mizo society, the role of a father holds significant importance, encompassing diverse responsibilities. Fathers serve as the cornerstone of the family, bearing the weight of tasks such as house building and fulfilling various family needs. Their presence commands respect within the community, emphasizing the vital role fathers play in both familial and societal contexts.

Individuals without fathers, labeled as *Sawn*, often face ridicule and bullying, derogatorily referred to as *Pa nei lo* or those without a father. Mistakes made by such individuals are met with disdain as *Zilh loh fa*, signifying children lacking proper guidance. In this scenario, there is a lack of support for those without fathers, leading to a clear understanding within families of the potential challenges they may encounter if the father is absent or deceased. This understanding is shared by the mother as well.

*Liandova Nu: (Tap chungin) Liandova pa, min va phat hma ve.
 Liandova pa, mawh tinreng maw min phurh tir a, phur tinreng maw
 ka kova i ngah? Liandova pa,*

Aw ka koh ka koh min chhhawn lo,

I nuthai koh min chhawn lo,

Liandoa pa, min chhawn lo

Hraileng chawite riang hluan tur,

Ngai ngam lovin keimah hian,

Liando te ka tulpui ang

Ka tulpui ang ka tulpui ang

Liando Tuaisial tulpui ang

Neihchhawng ten lian rawh se.

Liandova's mother: (Crying) Liandova's father why do you leave me so early. Liandova's father, why should you leave all the responsibilities to me? Liandova's father,

Oh you do not respond

You do not respond to my calling

Liandova's father you do not respond to me anymore

Your children will be desolated

But I will not let that happen

I will be with them

Liandova and Tuaisiala I will provide for them

They will grow up in abundance (9).

Pi Fangi finds profound solace in the mother's lament. Recognizing the dire implications of betrayal and abandonment, she values the melancholy notes of the mother's lament. Expressing satisfaction upon hearing the lament, Pi Fangi assures the mother of her commitment to caring for the brothers. She elaborates on the sleepless nights spent worrying about the brothers' plight, emphasizing that the mother's lament has brought peace. Conveying her dedication to looking after the children, Pi Fangi envisions their growth and foresees the potential for the mother to achieve greatness through them someday.

The fathers of the Mizo household in the olden days command great respect and hold a high status. The house and land are under his ownership, and significant household assets like necklaces, valuable brass items, mithun, and guns cannot be transacted without his approval (*Hmanlai Mizo Nun* 43).

Those esteemed and looked up to typically belong to the affluent segment of the community, harvesting substantial quantities of rice or crops, possessing well-appointed houses, and abundant land with numerous guns and mithuns. The acquisition and management of such wealth fall under the father's authority. This status, determined by wealth, can only be achieved through a strong and industrious man in the family, possessing wisdom and knowledge. The death of the father renders it challenging for the mother and children to fulfill the void left by his absence. The demise of Liandova's father highlights the poignancy of a father's death and the difficulty in attaining a high societal status without paternal presence.

Tuaisiala: Ka pi, tap chungin hla sa leh rawh

Liandova: (tapin)Tuaisial, ka lungchhiat I ti zual a ni. Ka pa, I fate hi kalsan tham kan nih lohna ava lang chiang tak em. Engtinngan kan awm ang le? Ka pa, khaw eng pawh kan hmu ngam dawn em ni? Ka pa ka pa...

Tuaisiala: Grandmother, please lament again

Liandova: (crying) Tuaisial you only add our sorrow. Father, your children are not fit to be left alone at all. How will we live now? Father, will we be able to face the day? Father father... (7)

In the First scene of Act II, Liandova and Tuaisiala function as field caretakers in Thangmanga's field. Their hunger remains unaddressed, as Thangmanga withholds food due to the absence of advocates or protectors for Liandova and his brother. The plight of orphans is inherently grim in many societies, marked by mistreatment and disdain, a reality vividly depicted in Thangmanga's treatment of the brothers in the play. Despite their role as field caretakers, Thangmanga denies them their salary, offering only husks mixed with rat feces instead of rice. This starkly underscores the low societal status of orphans within the then-Mizo community. When expressing their hunger to Thangmanga, he rebukes them, stating, "Do not dare to dig up the tuber from the ground, or I will assault you. You people do not even deserve the stem part of pumpkin vine. Take that and eat that" (21). Thangmanga forces them to roast and consume the stem part of a pumpkin vine, exemplifying the societal marginalization faced by orphans.

While tending to Thangmanga's field, an opportune incident occurs where a deer dies from hitting a tree. Lacking a knife, Liandova and Tuaisiala approach Lianthiaua, who tends to the adjacent field, seeking assistance. Regrettably, Lianthiaua exhibits a profound disregard for the brothers. Despite the brothers' discovery of the deer, he adamantly refuses to allocate them the quality parts of the meat, appropriating all the desirable portions for himself. The absence of a protective father figure renders Liandova and Tuaisiala vulnerable to oppression. Conversations during this interaction highlight the condescension and belittlement experienced by parentless children in the face of mistreatment.

Liandova: Ka pu Thiaua chu sa chan I hneh sawh hle mai

Lianthiaua: Sakhi te chu chaw bel so hmaa chan zawh hman vek a lawm.

Tuaisiala: Ka pu Thiau tah hian zai rawh

Lianthiaua: I bengchheng tei vet e, (a chan zo ta a) A kawchhung saw chu naktukah luiah in su dawn nia. Insem ang u le. Hei hi ka lo kal hah man(a bawp a la a) Hei hi ka chem hman man (a dar pahnih a la a) Hei hi ka mit kham man (a bawp leh lam a la leh a) A dang hi insem ang u le

(An han in sem a, Liandova-te Unau chuan a sa tha reng reng chan an nei ve lova)

Liandova: Ka Pu Thiaua chu, I va ngah bik ve.

Lianthiaua: Ka chem neih vangin sa in nei ve thei chauh a ni a. A vaiin ka la vek lova, in nihlawh khawp alawm. A kawchhung lah avaiin in nei vek a, in chang tha khawp a lawm.

Liandova: Pu Thiau you have such great skill in cutting

Lianthiaua: Deer can be all cut up before rice is cooked and ready to be eaten

Tuaisiala: Pu Thiau cut up here

Lianthiaua: You are just so noisy (he finishes cutting) you will wash the belly part tomorrow. Let's divide it up between us. This is the price for coming over here (takes one of the deer's hind legs). This is for using my knife (takes the shoulder parts). This is for my tired eyes for helping you (takes another one of the deer's hind legs). Let's divide the remaining parts

(As they are dividing Liandova and his brother do not get any of the good parts of the deer)

Liandova: Pu Thiau it seems that you have so much more

Lianthiaua: You can eat the meat only because I have the knife. You should be grateful that I do not take all of it. You get all the belly parts you get such good parts (25).

In scenes one and two of Act III, the vivid portrayal of societal challenges faced by orphans in the Mizo community is evident. Liandova and Tuaisiala accompany the bachelors on a hunting expedition in the wilderness. Tuaisiala asserts that one of the trees they traverse has eyes. Despite Liandova's attempts to dissuade him from sharing this information, Tuaisiala insists on informing the others. Subsequently, they backtrack to verify the claim, demonstrating a readiness even to harm Tuaisiala if his assertion proves false. This approach reflects a refusal to treat Tuaisiala as a mere child prone to uttering irrelevant statements, emphasizing a lack of consideration for his age and circumstances as orphans.

Val Upa: Tuaisial, hei kan thingluang kan na hmun chu kan thleng ta a. I mit varman vangin mi hei zozai hi kan kir leh a ni a. Kan thingluang kan hian mit a neih loh vaih chuan kan vaw nek ang che.

Tlangval: Haite (Theihai) leh naupang chu ren tur a ni hleinem. Kan siam leh mai ang chu. Mit a neih loh chuan kan vaw hlum anga, luiah khuan kan paih ang e.

Youth Commander: Tuaisial, we have reached the place where you say you witness wood having eyes. Because of your keen eyes all of us have gone far back to this place. If what you say is not true we will surely beat you up.

Bachelor: Unripe mangoes and children need not be spared. We can easily make them again. If the wood does not have eyes we will beat you to death and throw your body in the river (29).

The conversation between *Val Upa* and a bachelor unmistakably reveals that parentless children lacking advocates to shield them from mistreatment are subjected to unkind treatment, with a seeming indifference to the possibility of their demise.

This interaction underscores the observable plight of orphans, depicting their existence as pitiable.

The perceived wooden surface, which Tuaisial claims to have eyes, reveals itself to be a large python. The hunters proceed to kill and distribute the python among themselves, yet once again, Liandova and his brother are denied access to the desirable portions. Only the belly segment is allocated to them, deemed unfit for consumption. One of the hunters instructs Liandova to wash the python's belly at the river bottom to avoid the odor, adding a threat of stone-throwing if the stench reaches them (32). Liandova experiences profound dismay, recognizing that, as orphans, they are consistently denied access to the prime portions of their hunts. He echoes Pi Fangi's earlier assertion that, even in successful hunts, the favourable parts are withheld from them (33). This portrayal in the play underscores the prevalent societal disdain and contempt toward those deemed lowly and impoverished in Mizo society.

Fortunately, within the belly portion of the python, the brothers discover an abundance of precious treasures, including necklaces and brass items. Fearing potential confiscation, they distance themselves from the hunters and, upon returning home, discreetly conceal their newfound treasures to prevent others from taking them. Bereft of a father and abandoned by their mother, Liandova and his brother grapple with a bleak and harrowing plight. Their sole source of compassion and support is their neighbour, Pi Fangi, who, being an orphan herself due to her father's early demise, comprehends the daily hardships and injustices they endure. Liandova encapsulates the community's perception and treatment of them, stating, "They are afraid that we will have good things. These necklaces and brass items that we have, if they come to know about it they will surely snatch them away from us" (39). Eager to play their brass instrument yet apprehensive about potential confiscation, they resort to a ruse by hanging empty cans alongside it. This deceptive tactic ensures that, in the presence of others, only the empty cans are visible, safeguarding their brass treasures. This ingenious stratagem leads to the creation of one of the most

popular Mizo folk songs, which continues to be sung in festivals and celebrations today.

Liando te unau unau,

Dar enge in tum in tum?

Dar zengmah kan tum love,

Liando bur chhe te kan tum kan tum, tiin.

Liando and your brother

What kind of brass instrument do you play

We do not play any brass instrument

Just an old worn out can

In scene two of Act V, the introduction of a distinguished and prosperous chief from another village unfolds. Upon his visit to the village where Liandova resides, the chief, despite his elevated status, deliberately adorns himself in rags, assuming the appearance of a destitute individual. Consequently, no one extends hospitality to him, leaving him isolated even as evening descends. This scenario unequivocally illustrates the pervasive tendency of people to treat others based on perceived economic conditions. The community, perceiving him as impoverished due to his attire, responds with unkindness and contempt. Observing the chief alone, without any invitations extended to him, Tuaisiala and Liandova decide to invite him to stay in their home, presuming him to be a fellow destitute individual.

Tuaisiala: Ka u, awmtual kan chhem a, mikhual an lo kal teuh mai a. Pakhat chu lianpui mai a ni a, a phar a ni awm e, a paw hruih mai a ni. A thiante chu mitha pui pui an ni a, kan awmtual aina an lo theln veleh ka pu kan inah rawn thleng rawh an rawn ti huai huai a, an thlenin turten an hruai zo vek a. A ni erawh chu tuman an sawm duh lova, amahin awmtual bulah a thu reng mai.

Liandova: Tuaisial kan retheih anpui a nih chu kan ina thleng turin han sawm rawh. Ka pu ei leh bar tur zawng kan neilo na a, kan meilum tal zuk ai rawh han ti rawh khai.

Tuaisiala: Brother, as I was playing with my friends many visitors are coming. One guy is a big guy, but he looks like he has leprosy because his skin looks rough and dry. His friends look like they are coming from wealthy families and as soon as they reach they are taken home as their guests. But the big guy do not have any invitees and he is left all alone.

Liandova: Tuaisial go and invite him as he is a poor man just like us. Tell him that we do not have any food to eat but at least ask him to sit by our fire with us (48).

The individual whom the brothers initially perceive as a poor man reveals himself to be the esteemed and prosperous chief Lersia. Consequently, their invitation proves fortuitous as Lersia bestows upon them considerable wealth, elevating their status to surpass that of most individuals in the village. In his benevolence, Lersia presents them with a mithun, a highly esteemed animal among the Mizo, known for its capacity to give birth annually. Additionally, he provides them with a substantial quantity of rice and cultivated crops.

During that era, individuals sought partners of comparable societal standing when contemplating marriage. Those of noble lineage preferred to wed individuals from outside their villages. In cases where marrying outside the village was not feasible, individuals of noble standing often chose spouses from within the village, focusing on those who were affluent or were children of village elders. The offspring of chiefs were strictly prohibited from marrying commoners. According to Vanlalringa Bawihlung,

The sons and daughters of chiefs typically married counterparts of their own status. A man of humble means was deemed ineligible to marry a chief's daughter. Consequently, any attempt by such an indigent individual to court

or marry the chief's daughter could be perceived as a breach of traditional practices under the *Sailo* chieftainship. In this context, the act of killing such a poor man who sought the affections of the chief's daughter might not be considered as an act of cruelty within the traditional society (*State Formation in Mizo Society* 35).

Liandova and his brother achieve prosperity through the assistance of Lersia. Secretly, they amassed a substantial number of mithuns and valuable items such as necklaces and brass artifacts, along with a significant quantity of rice, unbeknownst to their chief and fellow villagers. This accumulation elevates them to a distinguished position known as *Thangchhuah* in Mizo society, typically reserved for the wealthiest individuals. The narrative utilizes Pi Fangi as a conduit to illustrate the brothers' wealth. In Act six, scene one, while the chief's daughter Tuaichawngi is weaving clothes, Pi Fangi approaches her, divulging the extensive wealth possessed by Liandova and his brother—highlighting their abundance of necklaces, brass items, mithuns, and rice. Pi Fangi attempts to persuade Tuaichawngi to marry Liandova, emphasizing the notion that even items considered most precious can lose their luster without proper care. The revelation prompts Tuaichawngi's immediate desire to marry Liandova, underscoring how societal status is significantly influenced by one's wealth.

Pi Fangi: A nih leh Liandovate dar tum ri I hre tawh ngai em?

Tuaichawngi: Hre tawh ngai e. Mahse miin an va en hian an bur chhe vuak ri leh kawngkhar thli chhem rik mai mai a lo ni thin an ti a lawm.

Pi Fangi: Tuaichawng lal fanu meuh tlang bumna zingah I telve a ni maw? Bur chhia mai mail eh kawngkhar thli chhem ri te chu engtinng e dar angina a rik theih ngai ni? Chu chu alawm mi rethei bera kan ngaih te pawh mi neinung ber an ni thei ka tihna. An dar tum ri pawh chiang taka ngaithla te tan chuan dar aw khat main i lovin dar bu kim buai a sin ni. Kan khuaah hian thi leh dar

Liandova-te unau tluka ngah an awm lo reng reng ang. Ka tawng in huat thu ni lul suh se I nu leh I pa ro, thi leh dar zawng zawng pawh hian han zat rual a ni hleinem. Sihzawl huai kiu thin an tih zawng zawng te khu Liandova-te se kiu vek an ni a sin. Lersia sepui hmingthang 'Kumchhir Sial' an tih thin hi Lersian Liandovate apui chhuah a lawm. Tunah chuan Liandova sial zawng zawng chu I pa se huangah hian a leng tawh lovang. Chuang zawng chu I nei duh em?

Tuaichawngi: Duh mah ila, engtinng e ka neih theih ang?

Pi Fangi: Liandova hi nei la, I ta vek a ni mai ang

Tuaichawngi: Ka pa te pawn an phal dawn em ni.

Pi Fangi: Sawtiang sum ngah lutuk ina lawi tur chuan fate phal lo tunge awm ang? Tunah hre lo mah se an hriat hunah an lawm zawk ngawt ang.

Pi Fangi: Tell me, do you ever hear Liandova play on his brass instrument?

Tuaichawngi: Yes I do. But whenever people go there to see what they are playing they will always say that what they hear is only the sound of empty cans and the sound of doors swinging due to wind.

Pi Fangi: Tuaichawng, how could a chief's daughter like you be deceived by such a ruse? The sounds produced by empty cans and swinging doors bear no resemblance to authentic brass instruments. This reinforces the notion that those perceived as the most destitute may, in fact, be the wealthiest. A careful listen would reveal that the sound emanates not from a single but from multiple sets of brass instruments. In our village, none possesses a greater abundance of necklaces or brass instruments than Liandova and his brother. Regrettably, even your father does not possess the volume of treasures that Liandova has amassed. All the esteemed mithuns

observed at watering spots in our vicinity belong to Liandova, with Lersia presenting them his renowned mithun, known as *Kumchhir Sial*. The entirety of Liandova's mithuns exceeds the capacity of your father's storage space. Would you desire to possess all of that?

Tuaichawngi: Even if I want them how will I have them?

Pi Fangi: Marry Liandova and they are all yours.

Tuaichawngi: Will my father agree to that?

Pi Fangi: How will anyone not allow their daughter to marry into such a wealthy family? Even if they are ignorant of it now, when they come to know the truth they will be happy (62-63).

When the time arrives for Tuaichawngi to select a husband, almost all the eligible bachelors from the village assemble in the hope of being chosen. However, Liandova refrains from participating, believing that the chief's daughter would never choose him. Others share this sentiment, not expecting to see him present due to his perceived low status in society. This situation starkly illustrates the prevalent notion that those who are poor and of humble standing are often deprived of opportunities for good things. It underscores the prevailing social attitude towards the parentless and those without a father in the then *Mizo* community, a phenomenon not unique to Mizo society but prevalent across various societies worldwide. Talcott Parsons, in his work *An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification in Essays in Sociological Theory* defines, "social stratification as the differential ranking of human individuals within a given social system and their treatment as superior or inferior in certain socially significant aspects relative to one another" (69).

Tuaichawngi is unable to choose a husband yet because the one she desires is not yet present. She informs her father that not every bachelor in their village has arrived. The mistreatment and disdain faced by the poorest of the poor are vividly portrayed in the play through the town crier. Although town criers in the Mizo

community generally hold a low status, the town crier in this play belittles Liandova. The role of town criers is described by James Dokhuma as follows,

Since ancient times, town criers are present in villages with chiefs. However, they are never in a respectable position. Since it is a job that can be done even by those who do not have skills, they are often called 'just' a town crier. They are often compared to peons of the present time" (*Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* 134).

Even in the play, the town crier does not hold a high status, yet he looks down on Liandova.

Tuaichawngi: Ka pa an la kim lo

Lal: Thangkung, an kim tawh a ni lawm ni

Thangkunga: Kim tawh e Liandova chauh lo chu an kim thap tawh a ni

Tlangau: Liandova chuan keini teh lul hi mi thlang chuang hlei lawng e a tia , a lo kal lo a ni. Kawtah sawn an aw a. Ani, fahrah lu baw tel lo pawn kan ti thei lawm ni (66).

Tuaichawngi: Father not everyone is here yet.

Chief: Thangkung they have all arrived haven't they?

Thangkunga: Yes they have all arrived except Liandova.

Town Crier: Liandova says that she will never choose someone like us. He is just outside there. We can do away without an orphan like him (66).

In the historical Mizo society, individuals with wealth and affluence held a prominent and elevated status. Tuaichawngi's choice of Liandova as her husband is influenced by Pi Fangi, who reveals his wealth in secret, even though Tuaichawngi

does not have a close acquaintance with Pi Fangi. The rich and affluent were not overlooked, even by the chief's daughter. Initially unaware of Liandova's wealth, Tuaichawngi's father reacts angrily, symbolized by cutting off her finger. His first sentence when he realises that his daughter has chosen whom he considers to be a poor man as her husband is that, "Tuaichawng out of all the sons of wealthy men you choose an orphan who only affords to lick tubers. You do not need to be a whole person to marry such person, where is my knife" (he takes his knife and cut off Tuaichawngi's index finger) (68). His initial response suggests a societal perception that the poor are only suitable for marriage to disabled individuals. However, Liandova successfully fulfills all the bride prices demanded for Tuaichawngi, including numerous necklaces, brass instruments, and mithuns. Despite initial skepticism, they ultimately accept him as their son-in-law due to his wealth. This underscores the societal inclination to regard the rich and wealthy with admiration, and the acceptance of Liandova based on his newfound wealth reflects the societal judgment of individuals based on their lifestyle.

Lalnu: Liandova-te thi leh dar ngahzia chu, Latui (Khawl la) kha zozai kha engahnge Tuaichawngi hian a hman ka lo ti thin a. Kawr tet awzawng an lo thuui lova, thi hruiah an lo chat a ni a. Tunah pawh sawn mi paliin an chhhat a, an rawn lam leh tep tawh ang.

Lalpa: Khawi hmana khuang leh dar tum ka phal loh kha han tum tawh teh u

Thangkunga: Tlangau, lal makpa Liandova chu zu chhimah zu ko rawh. Ka zu bel kha han pu nghal ang che.

Chief's Wife: Liandova possesses an extensive collection of necklaces and brass instruments. The utilization of threads for practical purposes, such as mending old clothes, is notably absent. Instead, the threads are exclusively employed in the creation of necklaces. Currently, four individuals are actively engaged in the continuous

production of additional necklaces, and they are anticipated to request more threads shortly.

Chief: Come now and take out the drums and Brass instrument I have been reserving.

Thangkunga: Town crier, go and ask Liandova to come to my place to drink wine. Bring the wine pot as well while you're at it (75).

2.3. The plight of women as a result of their position in Mizo society

British superintendant Major Anthony Gilchrist McCall comments on the social customs of the Mizo as -

It is well remember that these customs have ruled for years and years, observed through countless generations, and have been fashioned to meet the needs of the society for ever threatened from without by ruthless enemies and from within by the ravages of nature coupled with the failures common to most mankind. An assessment of their conception and vitality should provide some clue to the genius of these people, a conception of their culture (*Lusai Chrysalis* 95).

The status of women in Mizo society was relatively low. Traditionally, women in societies require protection, care, and consideration. During childhood, fathers assume the role of protectors for their daughters. Following marriage, husbands assume the responsibility of being their protectors. In old age, it becomes the duty of their sons to fulfill the role of protectors for their mothers.

In the historical Mizo society, agriculture demanded substantial manpower, and the labour-intensive nature of cultivation tasks placed men in a pivotal role as providers for their families. The strenuous agricultural activities made it challenging for women to participate, resulting in their perceived lower status. Men were highly respected due to their crucial contribution to sustaining households through intensive agricultural work. In the context of marriage, individuals sought partners who were healthy and capable of vigorous labour, further reinforcing the elevated status of

men. In cases of divorce, women faced greater challenges than men. Despite their efforts in building a home, women were limited in what they could take with them when divorcing. The status of women was intricately tied to the status of the men they married, determining their dignity and position in society. The quote "Widow could remarry, but did not often do so if they had children..." emphasizes the societal norms regarding widowed women, highlighting their paramount position in a son's house if they chose not to remarry" (*Women in Mizo Society* 14).

The comprehensive examination of the status of women in Mizo society can be elucidated through the life of Liandova's mother in the play. Following the demise of Liandova's father, the mother assumes a pivotal role as the primary caregiver in the family, and the family's welfare is contingent on her efforts. Anticipating the challenges of widowhood, Liandova's mother expresses profound sorrow as she contemplates the burdens she will bear alone: "Liandova's father, why would you leave me so soon, putting all the burdens of the family on me and me alone" (8). Aware of the societal treatment of widows and the difficulties in sustaining livelihood, she laments the anticipated hardships and the scornful treatment she and her children might face. The prospect of her children being taunted with labels such as *Hmeithai Fa* (son of a widow), *Daikil Kawmkar a Mi* (one belonging to the slum), *Fahrah Lubawk* (big-headed orphan) distresses her. Realizing the potential mistreatment of her children and the pitiable conditions they might endure if she remarries, she resolves not to marry another man after her husband's death. She unequivocally states, "I will live with them, I will live with them, Liando and Tuaisial, I will take care of them" (9).

Liandova's mother, however, breached her commitment to care for her sons by entering into marriage with another man named Thangseia. Initially, it may appear that Liandova's mother is unjust to her children, and one might anticipate societal condemnation. Yet, considering the plight of women in that society and their treatment, it becomes evident that women endure significant hardships. Undertaking the responsibility of providing for the family as a frail and delicate widow presents a formidable and overwhelming challenge for Liandova's mother. Given the societal

norms and the treatment of women, it becomes apparent that women, particularly widows, face considerable suffering. Liandova's mother, lacking close relatives for support, finds herself in a challenging position, with her only blood relative residing at a considerable distance. Raising young children without the ability to contribute to fieldwork for sustenance becomes a formidable task. Furthermore, the societal contempt and disdain toward widowed families exacerbate the challenges, painting a bleak future for Liandova's mother.

In Act 1, Scene two, it becomes apparent that Liandova's mother recognizes the limitations of being the sole provider for her family. She acknowledges that sustaining the family on her own would lead to a life marked by envy, as she would be unable to fulfill the needs and desires of her family independently. Consequently, she expresses a desire to marry a man named Thangseia. Additionally, she considers it advantageous for Liandova and Tuaisiala to reside with their maternal uncle in the eastern part. From another perspective, Liandova's mother appears to opt for marriage as a means to escape a life characterized by societal disdain and contempt.

Liandova Nu: Irawn thleng ta maw? Eng chanchin nge kan neih dawn tak

Thangseia: Chanchin dang a awm dawn em ni? Kan tum ang khan kan kal mai dawn a ni lawm ni. Amaherawh chu, I fate hi eng tin nge kan tih ang?

Liandova Nu: A pa te chhak khuaah khian an awm a, anrawn hruai mai ang chu. Han hruai ve dawn ila, Tuaisiala hi a aa si a, a thlasik mau puah phawng phawng mai a ni a, in ngeih lohna leh mualphona zakhua a siam chhuak ang tih hlauhawm tak mai a ni. An pa hnenah khan zawng ka tulpui ang ka ti tak na a, han tulpui the reng ma hila, retheihin tawpintai a awm dawn si lova. He tia nang nena kan induh tak siah chuan, an tan pawh chhak khuaa an pa te hnena an awm chu changkan hma na leh baihvai rei lohna a ni zawk anga tulpui loh tha ka ti zawk a ni.

Liandova's Mother: You have reached? What are we going to do now?

Thangseia: What will we do differently? We will go as we have intended. But what about your children?

Liandova's Mother: Her uncle resides in the eastern part, and I am confident they will come to retrieve them. Tuaisiala, being still in his youthful folly, tends to voice his thoughts without restraint, potentially causing unnecessary conflicts. He is poised to become a source of embarrassment for us. Despite the promise I made to their father regarding their care, sustaining them on my own would condemn them to a life of perpetual poverty. Since our paths have crossed, it is more prudent for them to reside with their uncle, as it appears to be the sole avenue for them to lead a dignified life (10).

The situation suggests that Liandova's mother isn't truly inclined to abandon her children, but the strain of inadequate provision for them compels her to consider marriage with another man. She possesses a keen awareness of the lowly status of the impoverished in society, prompting her to take any available measures to improve their living conditions.

To escape the clutches of poverty, Liandova's mother marries another man named Thangseia, leaving her children neglected. Initially, observers of the play might assign blame to Liandova's mother, but upon closer examination, it becomes evident that Thangseia is at fault for leaving Liandova and his brother behind. Thangseia, hailing from a distant village, pursues Liandova's mother, who, as a widow, finds it challenging to secure another husband from her own village. Faced with the opportunity for a better life with Thangseia, she opts for marriage rather than enduring poverty. Despite this, societal blame and fault are placed on the mother. The plight of women with low status is profound. In 1919, two female missionaries, Chapman and Clark, recorded their observations of the status of women in Mizo society when they first arrived in Mizoram.

A woman had no rights at all. Body, mind, and spirit, she belonged from her birth to death to her father, her brother, her husband. Her men folk could treat her as they like 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. She was not allowed to wear anything new. Her clothes had first to be worn by her men folk. The women did most of the work of the village (*Mizo Miracle 13-14*).

If Thangseia truly loved Liandova's mother, he should have treated her children as his own. When they plan to abandon Liandova and Tuaisiala and run away, it becomes apparent that Thangseia is the mastermind behind the scheme. He shows a complete disregard for the plight of the two young children who still require guidance and care. If Thangseia genuinely wished to marry their mother, he should have embraced them as part of the family, providing care and support. However, his actions reveal that Thangseia is merely pursuing a romantic interest in the mother, devoid of any genuine concern for her children. If he had expressed a willingness to care for them, Liandova's mother would have readily accepted, as evidenced by her lamentation when Liandova's father passed away. Considering the social standing and the challenges faced by the brothers, their situation appears unfortunate, especially when their mother chooses another man over them. This choice reflects the harsh reality faced by women in society, causing panic and despair as they contemplate how society will treat them as poor widows. Liandova's mother faces condemnation from all sides. The conversation between Thangseia and Lianpuii's father near a river, as they attempt to escape from the brothers, further emphasizes this narrative.

Thangseia: Ifaten an rawn um che a nih chu

Liandova Nu: I kal thuai ang u, lui hi kan thuai ang u khai, kan kan hmain mi rawn um phak dah ang e.

Thangseia: Eng tin nge kan tih ang? Lui pawh kan ila kan kan lai min rawn nang hman tho dawn a lawm. I bihruksan mai ang u.

Thangseia: Your children are running after you

Liandova's Mother: Let's walk faster and cross the river quickly, or else they might reach us before crossing it.

Thangseia: What shall we do? Even if we cross the river they will still reach us in the middle of it. We should hide (14-15).

What is evidently clear in this situation is that Thangseia seeks to evade his responsibility of caring for his wife's children. It is apparent that he lacks any love or concern for the children's well-being. He is satisfied with the prospect of marrying their mother and shows no care for the potential hardships the brothers might face. Thangseia even suggests hiding from them, displaying his lack of compassion. This instance reveals Thangseia's character, as he conceals his cruel nature and intentions behind Liandova's mother. However, his actions are not accepted by his friend Lianpuii's father, who disapproves of their attempt to abandon the children.

Lianpuii Pa: Kei chu ka kal thei ta lo tawp mai. Liamdova te unau ka han inchan hian ka hnuk a ulh tlat a ni. Kan lo nghak tur a ni.

Thangseia: Kan hruaitu ber I kal theih loh tawp mai chuan kan va bahlah nasa dawn em. Inphatsan loh hun berah ka ruat vein en. Min rawn umpha pawh nise, nang kan kaipa ber chuan rem siam dan te min zawnsak ang a, hnar pawh I lo hnar kir ang chu tih ka lo beisei nen.

Lianpuii Pa: Ka rem siam in duh chuan hruai ve ula a ni mai a lawm. Hetiang khawpa thil tih duh chuan fanauva hmuilingil pawh in besei ngam em ni?.

Lianpuii Father: I cannot go on any further. When I put myself in the children's shoes I feel like crying. We should wait for them.

Thangseia: You are our guide and leader but if you cannot go on we would be greatly hindered in our plan. I do not consider this a bad

time for betrayal. Even though they might reach us, you as our guide is supposed to make plan to let them return, and even reject them if you have to.

Lianpuii's Father: If you expect me to make plan take them along with you. If you can do such cruel thing do you expect to have blessings in your future generation? (15).

In the then Mizo community, women are seldom involved in crucial family decisions. When Tuaichawngi chooses Liandova as her husband, her father reacts with intense anger, going to the extent of disallowing his daughter to marry someone he deems as poor. Consequently, he mutilates her finger, unable to bear the thought of her facing humiliation and disdain due to her perceived impoverished husband. This highlights the mistreatment faced by women and their societal devaluation. V.S. Lalrinawma provides insights into the status of women, stating -

The status of tribal women in North East India was based on the cultural heritage of individual tribe. The position of women was no less important in a Mizo family than that of the man. The traits like respect, liberty, lack of inhibitions for women was not mainly been borrowed from the non tribals. The position of women in the Mizo family as well as in the social life was subordinate to man. When unmarried, the women was dominated by her father, brother(s) and mother, and when married by her father in law, husband and mother in law. They did not have any legal claim on the family property except a small share at the time of marriage which they carried with them to their husband house (*Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges* 32).

Due to the historically low status of women, they endure a significant portion of their lives under male oppression, resulting in a diminished societal standing. In the case of Tuaichaw, when Pi Fangi reveals the true wealth of Liandova, she recognizes him as someone she can depend on in the future. However, the decision is not solely within her control.

Unlike that of the son, the fate of the daughters was distinctly dependent on the decisions of their parents. Daughters were not given the liberty to choose the course of their lives for themselves even with regard to marriage (*Status of Mizo Women* 146).

Despite Pi Fangi's suggestion to marry Liandova and inherit his wealth, Tuaichaw expresses doubt, stating, "But I won't be able to marry him easily, will my family agree to that?" (63). This illustrates that women often face numerous difficulties and obstacles to marry someone they genuinely like, as their decisions are subject to family approval.

2.4. Summary of the play *Lianchhiari*:

In Lalthangfala Sailo's play *Lianchhiari*, there are a total of seventeen characters distributed across four Acts. The first Act comprises two scenes, the second Act has three scenes, the third Act consists of five scenes, and the final Act, the fourth Act, includes five scenes. The protagonist, Lianchhiari, is the daughter of *Dungtlang* chief Tluangzachhawna and Cherhlunchhungi. Known for her exceptional beauty, Lianchhiari harbors admiration for a commoner in their village named Chawngfianga. However, being the chief's daughter, Chawngfianga hesitates to pursue her. Despite her remarkable beauty, Lianchhiari is rarely courted by other bachelors due to her status. The narrative unfolds around a significant element—a large banyan tree situated in the middle of the field cultivated by Lianchhiari's father. The presence of this tree becomes a challenge, prompting her father to offer Lianchhiari's hand in marriage to anyone capable of cutting down its branches.

Lianchhiari lends her support to the proposal, and Chawngfianga successfully completes the task of cutting down the branches of the banyan tree. Upon finishing, Chawngfianga attempts to descend, but Lianchhiari obstructs his way. Despite his request for her to move aside, she refuses. Eventually, unable to hold on any longer, Chawngfianga jumps down near her, and the hem of his shirt touches her, causing her to fall. Concerned, Chawngfianga immediately asks if she is okay and extends his hand to help her up. After dinner, as they prepare to return home, Lianchhiari

feigns a stomach ache and insists that Chawngfianga carry her on his back. He complies, but she then requests to be carried on his front side. Despite her further request to be lowered while being carried on his front, Chawngfianga, respecting her status as the chief's daughter, refrains from taking advantage of the situation and safely transports her home.

Later, Lianchhiari's father is able to hold *Khuangchawi* feast signifying the attainment of a respectable status through specific accomplishments. The celebration is marked by revelry, with drinking and festivities. On that night, Chawngfianga and Lianchhiari share a bed for the first time, sleeping in the area designated for goats. When Lianchhiari's mother arrives, she mistakes her daughter's white thigh for a young goat and kicks them, exclaiming "goat, goat, goat" Upon realizing her mistake, she acknowledges her daughter with a simple "Oh, it is you" and leaves them undisturbed.

Now that their affair is public knowledge, and everyone is aware of it, Lianchhiari's father is on the verge of canceling the *Khuangchawi* feast. Guests are also departing from their premises. In response, Lianchhiari composes a song.

Kan va tih luattuk a,

Lengin ka zir sual e,

Ka pa Vanhnuai thang tur

A than ni bang kir e

Because I have done much

I have made a mistake,

My father who should be reputable

Could not be anymore

Later, they plan to marry, and Chawngfianga sends Mangmuaia to request Lianchhiari's father for her hand in marriage. Despite Lianchhiari's father's willingness to accept an axe as the bride price, Mangmuaia, motivated by jealousy, deceives Chawngfianga, falsely claiming that Lianchhiari's family is upset with him. Furthermore, he instills fear in Chawngfianga, stating, "Chawngfiang, my brother, Lianchhiar's father is a greedy man. I am scared that you might even die because of it." Meanwhile, Lianchhiar's father, suspicious of Mangmuaia's credibility, insists that Chawngfianga should come and discuss the matter directly. However, Mangmuaia lies to Chawngfianga again, asserting, "Just as I am afraid of, they are really trying to take your life now. So run away to *Chhingzawl* village." Consequently, Chawngfianga follows the cunning and jealous advice of Mangmuaia and flees to *Chhingzawl* village. Upon learning of Chawngfianga's departure, Lianchhiari is overcome with sadness and disappointment. As time goes on, the truth slowly reveals itself. But it is already late. Lianchhiari's father asks Chawngfianga's family to return to their village. But at Chhingzawl village Chawngfianga already built a house of his own in his own land and even got married. Lianchhiari's father exiles Mangmuaia from their village. Even though they love each other so much and wants to spend time with each other, Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga could not live happily ever after.

2.5. Social reality reflected in Lianchhiari's play

The play *Lianchhiari* is rooted in a true event from Mizo history and continues to be a perennial favourite among the people, remaining one of the most renowned stories. This dramatic work serves as a reflection of Mizo society, providing a profound glimpse into their way of life. In that historical context, Mizo were known for their migratory lifestyle, often moving from village to village in search of improved and sustainable livelihoods. With farming and cultivation being their primary means of sustenance, Mizo practiced migratory agriculture, characterized by shifting cultivation. This involved a constant cycle of moving to new areas for cultivation, allowing previously used lands to regenerate. The nomadic nature of their agricultural practices dictated that they would not settle in one place for an

extended period, ensuring the cultivation of diverse areas to yield ample food and crops.

The Mizo practiced inter-village invasion and incursion, strategically selecting plots of land that were not easily accessible to enemies. Living in larger villages with a higher population provided safety against external threats, as a larger number of people made the village less vulnerable to adversaries. However, the downside of residing in a large village was the scarcity of suitable land for cultivation, making livelihoods more challenging, as depicted in the play. The first scene of the first Act introduces the village of *Selesih Sangsarih*, showcasing the downfall and division of one of the biggest and mighty Mizo villages. In the past, Mizo engaged in invasions and raids against other villages, making it difficult for weaker chiefs to prosper. Some Mizo chiefs proposed merging their villages into a larger unit, leading to Selesih village becoming a combined entity of seven chiefs. This united village comprised seven thousand houses and twenty bachelor's dormitories *Zawlbuk*. The villagers, due to their vast number, struggled to know each other well. Their collective shouting would cause a kind of hornbill called *Kawlhawk* to fall down from dizziness. The shouting, initiated by some from one end of the village, would inspire others to join, growing louder and louder until the bird, confused and disoriented, would forget how to fly and simply fall down.

Heading to their fields, the villagers are so numerous that those at the front walking in ankle-deep mud find the terrain dry and smoky by the time it reaches those at the end. Their vast numbers lead to a lack of awareness among the villagers, with some unaware of activities such as mithun slaughtering for *Khuangchawi* or even a house on fire. The communication gap is evident, as news takes time to reach different parts of the village, resulting in delayed awareness and response.

Identifying as *Selesih*, a village comprising seven thousand houses, the residents exude confidence in their impregnability, dissuading potential invaders. They pride themselves and consider themselves invincible, saying “We are self-sufficient enough”. Prominent historical figures within Mizo lore, including the aesthetically pleasing Lianchia, the nimble Aihniara, the adept singer Buizova, the proficient land

settler Chula, and the aesthetically unpleasing Saichawmkhupa, contribute to the village's renown. Over time, population growth leads to a shortage of arable land, necessitating their separation despite overall satisfaction. In the realms of language, customs, traditions, and broader Mizo culture, the erstwhile formidable Selesih village assumes a foundational role.

From the point of view of Pu Kawlha who experiences real-life situation of Selesih Sangsarih, he states –

Our village boasts an immense size, encompassing an extensive area of seven thousand "fing" or plots designated for cultivation (one "fing" equals one plot of land for cultivation). Despite the cultivation plots being distributed from the village's periphery, those situated farthest away must endure a day-long journey to reach their fields. The lengthy commute poses challenges for transporting crops and rice back from the fields. Approximately two to three hundred households are compelled to spend nights throughout the year in their respective fields due to this geographical dispersion. The substantial population further contributes to a lack of familiarity among villagers, resulting in a perception of each other as strangers from different villages (122).

The *Selesih Sangsarih* village, being among the pioneering large towns, exerts a significant influence on Mizo customs and traditions. The collaboration of seven chiefs in establishing the town results in the formulation of numerous laws and customs. As a conglomeration of seven distinct villages, the town establishes an extensive set of rules and regulations to facilitate harmonious coexistence. This influential village plays a pivotal role in shaping Mizo customs related to marriages and various cultural traditions. The establishment of specific rules governing the conduct of the people encompasses a range of guidelines aimed at fostering order and societal cohesion and some of them are as under-

- 1) Homicide is strictly prohibited, and perpetrators may face severe consequences, including harsh punishments issued by the chief, with the act believed to bring bad omens.
- 2) Engaging in fornication is considered illegal, and those involved are believed to be susceptible to tiger attacks.
- 3) Theft of others' belongings is prohibited, and those who steal may face repercussions, including punishments from the chief corresponding to the nature of the stolen items.
- 4) Illegally shifting landmarks due to greed is forbidden, with consequences believed to include the death of the family's patriarch.
- 5) Mistreatment of handicapped or differently-abled individuals is illegal, with the notion that such actions may lead to becoming handicapped later in life.
- 6) Self-centered individuals who neglect consideration for others are predicted to face negative outcomes in their lives.
- 7) It is deemed preferable to engage in conflict with seven other villages than with immediate neighbours.
- 8) Artful speech is likened to acquiring valuable assets like mithun.
- 9) Longevity is associated with generous behavior, while misers may face unfavourable circumstances.
- 10) Respect for and adherence to the words of older individuals is emphasized as a cultural norm.

With a well rounded set of customs and rules, Selesih Sangsarih village continues to prosper for a long time. They are also proud of the status they have come to built and have. Besides being a great village the people in it are also significant ones.

Upa II (Village Elder II): Membership in *Sangsarih* village is esteemed, garnering respect even from residents of smaller villages. The village's legacy is anticipated to endure in the hearts of future generations. The inhabitants pride themselves on maintaining a positive reputation, with a notable absence of theft among them. Mutual support is evident, as wealthier individuals readily assist those in need. *Sangsarih* is portrayed as an exemplary village, characterized by cooperation and generosity. The village's significance and commendable qualities make it deserving of remembrance (144).

At the invitation of *Selesih* chief Pu Kawlha, Lianchhiari's father migrated from the eastern side of the *Tiau* River to assume the role of *Dungtlang* chief. The first scene of Act two highlights the construction of the chief's house, a significant undertaking in Mizo society. It is customary to prioritize the construction of the chief's residence when the community undergoes relocation. During such transitions, individuals displaying strength and a strong work ethic are highly regarded. Lianchhiari's father acknowledges these qualities in Chawngfianga, praising him as a diligent and motivated person. In the chief's words, "It is clear from the way he works that he is a diligent and motivated person... I never thought that such kind of person will be able to exist ever, so take out the best rice beer, and serve in Chief's Cup first to the most altruistic, hospitable and working the hardest" (123). The chief's commendation of Chawngfianga during the ceremony underscores the importance of men who exhibit strength, courage, selflessness, and a willingness to sacrifice in contributing to the community's sense of safety.

The chiefs heavily relied on the bachelors, elders, youth commanders, and hunters within their villages. The virtue of selflessness, referred to as *Tlawmngaihna*, (An ideal of life in which a man could not be outdone in doing good to others. When a man is *Tlawmngai*, one cannot defeat him in doing good to others, and that self-sacrifice sometime demands life itself. *Zozam Par 6*) held great significance, with parents actively encouraging their children to embody this quality and be a blessing to others. Mealtime interactions reinforced these values, as individuals would offer encouragement or correction to one another. This cultural emphasis on self-reliance

and mutual support extended to their behavior outside the home, as individuals sought to avoid being perceived as constantly in need of help. Their guiding principle was encapsulated in the mantra, "Instead of eating what your friends have already made, be the one who gives what you make to your friends."

The bachelors in Mizo society seldom act independently, placing significant value on the guidance of their elders. Whether engaged in work or hunting expeditions, they carefully heed the advice of their elders, with youth commanders, known as *Val Upa*, leading and influencing their actions. Functioning as a protective fortress for the community, bachelors play a crucial role in defending against wild animals and potential attacks from enemies, earning them profound respect and a high status within the community. This respect extends to interactions with women, who consistently address bachelors with good manners, recognizing them as integral to the societal backbone. The play *Lianchhiari* vividly illustrates the societal dependence on bachelors, as reflected in Lianchhiari's monologue, which portrays bachelors as figures deserving admiration and honor-

Bachelors, you play a vital role in helping us complete the construction of our house, undertaking the strenuous tasks. Please, frequent our abode. You are the foundation of our family, indispensable to our existence. In your absence, there would be no one to carry out the wisdom of our elders. You serve as our everything—the leaders in our fields, protectors against wild animals and adversaries, the backbone of our community in times of joy or sorrow. The chief's house and the bachelor's dormitory are open to you, accessible whenever you please. Feel free to enter our homes at your convenience (126-127).

From the portrayal in Lianchhiari's play, we catch a glimpse of the *Khuangchawi*, a significant ritual in *Mizo* society during that period. This religious ceremony is accompanied by a feast for the community. It's crucial to note that conducting *Khuangchawi* requires substantial wealth and cannot be undertaken by an ordinary individual or any chief. The ceremony is reserved for those with significant financial means.

Khuangchawi holds a paramount position in Mizo culture, symbolizing an individual's journey towards *Pialral*. Those who have performed *Khuangchawi* are distinguished by their privilege to wear striped clothing and turbans, don king's crown feathers in their headdress, and even have windows in their houses. This elevated status grants them respectability and position within the community, leading to preferential treatment compared to others (*Mizo Ethos Changes and Challenges* 113).

During Lianchhiari's father's *Khuangchawi* feast, both men and women partake in the celebration, reveling in the consumption of rice beer. On that night, Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga engage in a sexual encounter while resting in the area where the goats are kept. Lianchhiari's mother, seeing her daughter's thigh while fetching wood, mistakes them for young goats and kicks her, exclaiming "goat, goat, goat." Upon realizing her error, she acknowledges her daughter and returns inside the house. Instead of keeping the affair discreet, Lianchhiari's mother publicly announces their liaison to the community. The revelation of their affair jeopardizes the holding of the *Khuangchawi* feast, causing guests to depart. Faced with these challenges, Lianchhiari composes a song in response to the unfolding events

Kan va tih luattuk a,

Lengin ka zir sual e,

Ka pa Vanhnuai thang tur

A than ni bang kir e.

Because I have done much

I have made a mistake,

My father who should be reputable

Could not be anymore.

The relationship between Chawngfianga and Lianchhiari highlights the Mizo practice of bride price. Despite being a commoner, Chawngfianga, admired by Lianchhiari for his courage and virtues, is chosen by her parents to be her husband. However, as Chawngfianga does not come from a wealthy family, a significant reduction in the bride price is considered due to his qualities. Dr. Sangkima addresses this reduction and provides insights into the practice as

Marriage among the Mizo was a civil contract, soluble at the will of both parties concerned. The system or form of marriage right from its inception was 'marriage by purchase'. The price originally varies from clan to clan. However, if both the two families mutually agreed, the price may not be required to pay at all. The price was determined in terms of *sial* (mithun) which was of three kinds *Sepui ngal kal* (grown up mithun), *Tlai sial* (young mithun) and *Puisawn sial* (a newly born mithun). For instance, price of a *Sailo* girl was ten *Sial*, *Ralte khelte*, *Tlai sial*. In early period, the settlement of price was crucial because though prices were determined in terms of *Sial*, they were usually paid in certain articles or goods which were considered as equivalent to *Sial*. It sometimes prevented the marriage. Long time ago, when Lianchhiari of *Chuauhang* clan was about to marry a commoner, Chawngfianga, a *Hnamte* clan, her father, a chief knowing the pecuniary position of Chawngfianga, understandably agreed that he should accept a broken axe as an equivalent of *Tlai sial* (*Mizo: Society and Social Change* 26)

In matters of marriage, Mizo exercised great caution in selecting partners, with chief's daughters rarely marrying commoners. Similarly, commoner bachelors seldom considered the possibility of marrying a chief's daughter. However, the opinions of chiefs varied significantly in Mizo society, leading to potential issues arising from affairs between commoners and chiefs' children. Despite this, in the case of Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga, class differences do not pose a problem. Lianchhiari's mother expresses her desire for him to be her son-in-law, praising his agility and strength, stating, "Chawngfianga is agile and strong, I have never seen a

man as good as him" (139). Contrary to the popular opinion that class differences create obstacles in Mizo community marriages, Lianchhiari's father asserts that this is not universally true.

I too desire him as my son-in-law. Observing his actions during the construction of our house, I already consider him to be a commendable man. His proficiency in felling banyan branches from the lower part of our fields has gained my acceptance. Approaching our daughter with humility, he states, "We are the lowly kind." Even among other bachelors visiting our house, he conducts himself with modesty and good manners. However, when it's time to work, he assumes a leadership role and begins working promptly. As he woos our precious daughter, it would be towards the end of the year when the climate is ideally pleasant. I suggest his parents send messengers to seek her hand in marriage, assuring them that they need not worry about the bride price (139-140).

The Mizo of that time tended to settle in villages of their preference, often migrating from one village to another. A common saying prevailed: "The poor and the lowly never settle anywhere." The choice of settlement often depended on the presence of a benevolent chief who cared for the well-being of all villagers, including the poorest among them. When families with a certain level of wealth contemplated migration, others in the community would endeavor to dissuade them, including the chiefs who preferred to retain such families in their villages. Instances abound where families contemplating migration were persuaded to stay by their fellow villagers. However, there were chiefs who, contrary to this norm, actively tried to attract wealthy individuals to settle in their villages, an act sometimes frowned upon. The influence of individuals like the cunning Mangmuaia, sent as a messenger by Chawngfianga's parents, led to Chawngfianga and his family relocating to another village based on lies. In Mizo societies of that era, instances occurred where people of lower economic standing would move to a different village if they anticipated conflicts with their chief, driven by a fear of troubles with the

leadership. In this context, Chawngfianga and his family's move to *Chhingzawl* village aligns with such patterns

In the context of moving to another village, individuals were expected to adhere to certain norms. If someone decided to relocate, they were not allowed to independently sell their house and crop fields; instead, these properties were to be under the control of their chief. However, if individuals were deemed troublesome to society and were expelled from their village by the chief, they had the liberty to sell their land as they saw fit. The process of moving away from a place laden with memories was not an easy one and often carried a nostalgic weight. The decision to move and the departure itself were emotional experiences, with tears often streaming down even from the head of the family (*Hmanlai Mizo Nun* 35).

Mangmuaia, the messenger sent by Chawngfianga's parents, wove a web of lies that compelled Chawngfianga and his family to relocate to another village, driven by the belief that their chief harbored animosity towards them. The departure of Chawngfianga and his family was a cause for grief not only for them but also for Lianchhiari and her family. Lianchhiari expressed the depth of their longing and sorrow for Chawngfianga and his family in a song she composed herself, capturing the emotional toll of their departure influenced by Mangmuaia's deceit –

Hmawng ang I pem tur chuan

Hrui ang min zat love,

Kei chuan phal lem ing e

Tuahtirh ka lungdi e.

That you would migrate

I am not thrilled about

For me I do not consent

My lover my partner (160).

2.6. The impact of socio-economic position on a man and women's love

Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga's love story remains a cherished tale among the Mizo, resonating even in contemporary times. Their narrative, featuring the poignant theme of a man and a woman deeply in love but unable to marry due to class and wealth disparities, has inspired numerous songs expressing their loneliness and yearning despite residing in different villages. Lalthangfala Sailo, through written form, immortalizes the story that was traditionally passed down orally. The play serves as a poignant reflection of the societal conditions and norms prevalent among the Mizo during that era. A closer analysis of the challenges faced by Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga, hindered by significant economic and social gaps, further illuminates the narrative.

Chawngfianga, being a commoner, hesitates to express his feelings for Lianchhiari, never envisioning the possibility of marrying her. In the second scene of Act two, he observes Lianchhiari weaving in her house but refrains from confessing his emotions. However, Lianchhiari, driven by a profound interest in Chawngfianga, takes the initiative despite societal norms. She invites him to her house, expressing her joy at his presence and openly sharing her feelings, stating, "Chawngfiang, come to our house. I am so glad that you are here. Come every day. I want to stay by your side dearly" (128). Despite her beauty and stature as the chief's daughter, their disparate economic conditions pose immediate challenges. While Chawngfianga reciprocates her feelings, he perceives her as beyond his reach, a sentiment evident in his expressed reservations,

*Chawngfianga: Kei michhe daililkara mi hi engtin nge ka lo len fo
ngam ang! Nang lal fanu I ni a, kei heti mai hi ka ni. Ka cho phak loh
lutuk I nih hi. Engati teh reng nge ni ngam leh ngam lo chungka ka lo
luhna chhan hi sawi a zahthlak ti ma hila kan sawi anga. Hmuh che
ka chak lutuk a, ka awm thei thlawt lova ka lo lut rawih mai a nih hi.*

*Lianchhiari: Aw Chawnga kei deuh hian a sin hmuh chak che. I
kianga awm hi ka kham thei mawlh lova, chuvang a lawm lo leng fo*

rawh ka tihna chhan... Mi inngaitlawm I ni a, mi chhe daikilkar I in ti a, mahse daikilkar I ni lo. Ka thinlunga lalber I ni a sin.

Chawngfianga: How can I, being among the poorest of the poor, dare to come often? You are the daughter of our chief, and I am just an ordinary person. You are clearly beyond my reach. Despite my deep sense of shame, let me explain why I come to you. The longing to see you is so intense that I can no longer contain myself, so I come to you simply to catch a glimpse.

Lianchhiari: Oh, Chawnga, it is I who longs to see you. I cannot take for granted the time you spend with me, which is why I invite you to come to our house often to see me. You are someone who is selfless; you consider yourself as the lowest, but you are not. You are the king of my heart (128).

It appears as if Lianchhiari's father also desires him as a potential son-in-law. Since the time Chawngfianga cut down branches of the banyan tree from their field, he is already convinced of his goodness and selflessness, and it seems as if he does not mind having him as their son-in-law. Even though Chawngfianga wants to marry Lianchhiari, her father can already see how society will perceive him, how he will not be able to afford the bride price because she is the chief's daughter, and they will not have any family wealth on their own. He realizes how they have already been a burden to Chawngfianga and his family. Chawngfianga also dares not be too close to her due to their lower status. The only words he has the courage to say are, "Lianchhiar, it feels good to be with you. I want to be by your side calmly for the rest of our lives" (137). Lianchhiari answers, "If you want to spend the rest of your life with me, there seems to be a way. When my father sees the way you act before you go home, he is content with your performance, saying that he wants you as his son-in-law. And I also tell my father that if he wants you as his son-in-law, I will not rebel against it" (137). Despite Lianchhiari's encouraging words, he still dares not take any advances towards her, considering himself lower in status, not giving her any answers, and remaining silent on the topic of marriage.

In the first scene of the third Act, as Lianchhiari's family desires Chawngfianga as their son-in-law, they reach a decision to allow Chawngfianga to send a messenger proposing a wedding, despite him being only a commoner. While Chawngfianga could potentially be delighted by this proposal, the constraints of poverty and low social status hinder his ability to fully appreciate a favourable proposition before him. This is evident in his conversation with Lianchhiari,

Lianchhiari: Chawnga, ka nu leh pa te hian makpa atan an duh ber che a. Kei pawhin I hriat angina, chiang takin han sawi ila, pasal atan ka duh ber che a ni. Ka nu leh pa chuan ti hian thu min chah a "Chawnga nu leh pa ten an rem tih zawng a nih chuan, Chawnga nupui atan dil tur che in kan hnenah palai rawn tir rawh se. Man leh mual thuah pawh engmah harsatna kan siam lovang an ti a. Chanwga, tha I tih zawng a ni em?

Chawngfianga: Tha ti teh lul e! Mahse ka phu lo lutuk em che a, palai inleng rawn tirh chu kan ngam tak tak dawn em ni? Keini daikilkar michhe ina nang meuh lawi tura ka han ngaihtuah hian, kan rawn dil ngam tak tak dawn che em ni? Ka duh zia che chu I hri a, mahse kan inchhunga nang meuh I han lawi tur chu I nu leh pa leh in laina dang te pawhin an remti tak meuh ang maw? Kan chhungkaw tan thil zahthlak tak a thleng anga tlan bo mai mai te hi a ngaih phah mai ang tih pawh a hlauhawm lo maw.

Lianchhiari: Chawnga, you are my parents' preferred choice to be my husband. Likewise, you are my first choice as well. My parents request me to convey the following message to you: "If it is the wish of Chawnga's parents, let them request you as a bride for Chawnga by sending a messenger. We will not create problems, even in the matter of bride price." Chawnga, what do you think about this proposal?

Chawngfianga: Yes, it is perfect! However, you are too elevated for me. Will we gather the courage to genuinely send a messenger for

you? Just contemplating the idea of you coming to reside in our modest abode makes me wonder if I will summon the courage to seek your hand in marriage. While I ardently desire you, the prospect of someone as esteemed as you residing in our humble dwelling raises concerns about the acceptance of your parents and other relatives. I fear potential repercussions for our family, possibly forcing us to flee from our village (141-142).

As per Lianchhiari and her family's strategy, Chawngfianga sent Mangmuaia as their messenger. Tluangzachhawna, Lianchhiari's father, and his family warmly received him, expressing their desire for Chawngfianga to become their son-in-law, he says

Regarding the bride price, you need not worry about anything. Even if you do not have enough money, it will not create any problem for us regarding the marriage. Instead of mithun, we will accept flint rock, hand spindle and axe instead of mithun, and an axe and bamboo basket instead of guns. Ah! We will even accept his service in chopping down branches of Bunyan trees from our field instead of the mithun! Go in peace and convey this to Chawngfianga's parents. Since it is such a happy moment, let us drink at least one cup of rice beer, and then you will be on your way. Afterwards, you will go back quickly because Chawngfianga's parents will be glad to hear of our adjustments to let the marriage happen. Go and tell them fast. (150).

Despite the mutual affection between Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga, their marriage is thwarted by the jealousy and envy of others. The primary obstacle arises from the reluctance to accept Chawngfianga, once a commoner with low status, as the chief's son-in-law with an elevated social standing. Chawngfianga, choosing a representative he deems suitable, sends a messenger. However, the cunning Mangmuaia vehemently opposes the idea of a commoner marrying the chief's daughter and endeavors to obstruct the union. This opposition stems from a reluctance to allow a social elevation for a person of lower status. In hindsight, had

Chawngfianga and his family been aware, they would not have chosen Mangmuaia as their messenger.

As Mangmuaia returns home after serving as a messenger, his conversation with Thangzika reveals a profound jealousy towards Chawngfianga. They express deep sorrow over the prospect of a commoner marrying the chief's daughter, "Lianchhiari, finding it peculiar that she, renowned for her beauty and admiration, would now reside in Chawngfianga's house" (151). Motivated by their own desires for Lianchhiari, they contemplate ways to thwart the impending marriage, acknowledging their jealousy and reluctance to approach her for marriage themselves (151). Mangmuaia openly admits his jealousy of Chawngfianga and proposes hindering the marriage, shedding light on the impact of societal perceptions and status differences on romantic relationships (152). This conversation underscores the challenges couples face when societal expectations and individual aspirations clash, potentially leading to the dissolution of a romantic connection.

Mangmuaia deceives Chawngfianga and his family by falsely claiming that their chief intends to harm them, compelling them to hastily flee their village. Unaware of the falsehood, Chawngfianga's family, facing unexpected challenges, hastily departs for *Chhingzawl* village, leaving their own settlement behind. Chawngfianga's father rationalizes Mangmuaia's actions, believing that Mangmuaia speaks in the family's best interest, possibly unveiling the true sentiments of Lianchhiari and her family (155). The swift departure, even before dawn, reflects the authoritative control wielded by chiefs during that era and underscores the potential dire consequences of defying them, particularly in matters of love and marriage. The upheaval caused by a commoner's affection for a chief's daughter becomes evident in the abrupt disruption of their lives.

Upon discovering that Chawngfianga and his family have relocated to another village, Lianchhiari is engulfed in profound sorrow, oblivious to the fact that their messenger, Mangmuaia, is the instigator behind their separation. Lianchhiari's friend, Remsiami, astutely remarks, "Even messengers can carry false news, is it that they do so because of jealousy," insinuating the possibility that messengers, driven

by jealousy, might disseminate misinformation. This narrative poignantly illustrates the challenges faced by individuals of disparate social statuses, both commoners and chief's children, emphasizing the impact of societal disparities on their lives and relationships.

Lianchhiari experiences profound solitude as Chawngfianga and his family relocate to the village of Chhingzawl. In response, she consistently positions herself on the periphery of a stone, from where she observes the distant *Chhingzawl* village.

Tlangan ka zuk thlira

A lang lo zawlkhawpui,

Val tha hnima hliahtu

Kiang rawh aw thingrihnim.

As I look down from the mountain

The city cannot be seen

Of plants obstructing the view of good man

Go away oh *Thingrihnim* (Tree) (163).

Lianchhiari experiences profound solitude as Chawngfianga and his family relocate to the village of *Chhingzawl*. In response, she consistently positions herself on the periphery of a stone, from where she observes the distant *Chhingzawl* village

Mahriaka ram va tuan,

Lunglai ka mawl mang e,

I zun phur hniang hniang,

Chhawl thingnem hnuaiah e.

I zun ngaih lai takin,

Ramva hram tin ka chhawn,

Ril thang daih lai takin Zan mu ka chhing love.

Alone I go into the field

Feeling stupid

Drowning in my love for you

Under the leaves of the trees

I hear every cry of the animals beside me

For sleep evades me (163-164)

In Lianchhiari's song, the poignant experience of parting ways with a loved one becomes evident, solely driven by the jealousy of others -

Amin Lunglen an hril,

Dai thei hian ka ring lo,

Nang ngaih kumpui sulin,

Liam pui hian ka ring lo.

This loneliness

I do not think it will ever fade,

My longing for you,

Will not pass with time (164).

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CHAPTER – 3

EFFECT OF SURROUNDING EVENTS ON MIZO SOCIETY AND
INDIVIDUALS IN *THAWMVUNGA*, *KHUANGCHERA*, *LALZIKA LEH*
VANTHANGI

3.1. Summary of the Play *Thawmvunga*

Thawmvunga was a brave person, and the focus of the play is to depict the bravery and qualities of a *Pasaltha* in him. The first son born of the Sailo chief Lallula was Lalpuiliana, a young man of poor health, due to which his father Lallula did not expect him to live long, and thus searched for a suitable bride for him so that he would not die without a child. The only quality he wanted for his son's bride was bravery. It so happened that during those days lived a brave Pawih maiden Khuangtiali, who had no fear of the deep forest and had the courage to stay all by herself at the cultivation site to weed the plants. Lallula chose her to be Lalpuiliana's wife. He built a separate house for them. Lalpuiliana would go to lie with his wife every night, but would leave before daybreak each morning. Khuangtiali never got to see her husband's face, so she did not know how he looked. Without ever seeing her husband's face, Khuangtiali gave him two sons, the elder being Vanhnuaithangi, and the younger Lalsavunga, a famous chief known for his bravery. Not only was Lalsavunga brave, he had great admiration for the brave.

There was a young girl in the village who was immensely brave and stubborn. Her name was Tuantiali, and it was said that Tuantiali never waited for the water to fill in the hole at public water place. If there were fights among the girls who while waiting for water to fill in the hole, Tuantiali would cry if she was beaten by the others, but would resume fetching the water as soon as her tears were dried. When Lalsavunga heard about Tuantiali he wanted to have her as his wife and so, when she came of age, he took her in as his concubine. Tuantiali and Lalsavunga had two children, and the elder child was a girl. The younger one became known for his bravery, and he was called *Thawmvunga*. *Thawmvunga's* daughter was the mother

of the renowned Mizo beauty, Chhingpuii, who was killed in the war between the north and the south.

In the play *Thawmvunga*, the playwright concentrated on an incident that highlighted Thawmvunga's bravery, when he went to Lalpuithanga's house to retrieve his grandfather Vuttaia's gun that was seized by Lalpuithanga. This incident was the starting point of the war between the north and south. Vuttaia was the youngest sibling of Thawmvunga's grandfather Lalpuiliana, who achieved the coveted *Thangchhuah* by completing his kill of certain number of animals or hosted feasts for the entire village at Hualtu, built *Zau* or a great open space beside his house, and could be the only Mizo chief who could attain *Thangchhuah*, for only those who could complete *Thangchhuah* thrice could erect *Zau*.

The war between the north and south, known as *Chhim leh Hmar Indo* began following a dispute between Lalpuithanga and Vuttaia. During those times, the chief of the south, Lalpuithanga decided to enlarge his area and so he pushed towards *Hualtu* village where Vuttaia lived. From *Sailam* he crossed *Chhiahtlang* to settle at *Vancheng*. In the meantime, the chief of the north, Vuttaia was shifting from *Hualtu* to *Buanhmun*. He built *Bawk*, a temporary lodge at *Buanhmun* but Lalpuithanga occupied the *Bawk* before him. When Vuttaia heard of the news, he was deeply enraged, saying "We shall dwell together if that is so," and proceeded to occupy it as well. Lalpuithanga gave in and left *Buanhmun*, settling at *Vanchengte* instead. Vuttaia composed a song on Lalpuithanga's leaving

Buanhmun pai ang pawm tawh hnu

Chengte-ah lam ang let e,

Lalpuithang lem a.

Having captured Buanhmun as his own

Returns back to Chengte,

Useless Lalpuithanga.

Lalpuithanga was filled with resentment and the incident caused deeper enmity between Vuttaia and Lalpuithanga. All the chiefs of the south formed an alliance with Lalpuithanga, while the northern chiefs with Vuttaia. One day, Lalpuithanga seized a muzzle from Vuttaia's village, and demanded that they pay a price for it. Vuttaia was determined to retrieve the muzzle from the south. He summoned the brave Thawmvunga to accompany him. Lalpuithanga knew beforehand that they were coming for the muzzle, and had informed his village. They came up with a plan to scold Vuttaia, only to club him if he showed anger, and thus were ready to do so. When Vuttaia and Thawmvunga arrived, he repeated the song

Having captured Buanhmun as his own

Returns back to Chengte,

Useless Lalpuithanga.

And asked, "Is that what you say, *Vutdul*" This made Vuttaia nervous to which he replied, "We did not say useless *Lalpuithanglema*, we said where Lalpuithanga grew in strength and stature *Lalpuithanglenna*". Thawmvunga was enraged, he said, "E,e,e ka pu Vut, do not fear. We never said where Lalpuithanga grew in strength and stature *Lalpuithanglenna*, but *Lalpuithanglema*, one who keeps moving to and fro. I wish to dance, and I can not dance without my *Kawlhnam* sword." He began to dance with the *Kawlhnam* sword, swinging it above their heads and cutting off the fireshell. All the tall and short men became equal in height, and none at Lalpuithanga's village dared to hit him. Some made excuses, saying, "It is time to feed the pigs" and began to disperse.

Thawmvunga took the mullet that was placed standing on the wall, and while they tried to stop him, he began to swing his *Kawlhnam* sword and chop off their hands as if he was chopping off *Mauchang* bamboos. They left with the muzzle. As they were leaving, Lalpuithanga's side started to fire at them but it was said that they did not even turn back. The employment of firearms began the war between the disgruntled north and south that took place between 1856- 1959 approximately.

3.2. Heroic Displays Inspired by the Social System

In the earlier Mizo society, the most prestigious men were the chief and his council of elders or the *Khawnbawl Upa*, who were followed by the *Pasaltha* heroes and the braves. “What they value most is a brave man, a strong and diligent warrior. At the birth of a boy, they would announce him to be a brave hunter who would shoot an elephant. Such was the blessing of the elders. First and foremost, they desired the son to be a brave and skilled hunter” (*Mizo Ramchhuah Dan* 1). Since they were often warring against and raiding one another, they had great admiration for brave men who would protect them, therefore such men were highly esteemed. Since they were agrarian, they depended on their cultivation products for which they required hunters with good skills to help towards the control of wild animals that would otherwise consume their agricultural produce. Thus, their way of life directly dictated their value system.

The status of a *Pasaltha* was not attainable overnight, or based on a once/twice incident of good fortune, but rather, the status was esteemed due to the demands of the existing society. Since places of their frequent were often disturbed by the appearances of wild animals and enemies, which brought about fear and insecurity among the villagers, they were in dire need of trustworthy help to protect them and offer them comfort. As the saying goes, need and lack brings forth better and more convenient things, the need for security brought about the need for the brave *Pasaltha* in the society. Greatly respected and admired, the *Pasaltha* became not only their protector from man and wild, but their main resource of strength which they would boast about.

Despite their prominence in the welfare of the society, the *Pasaltha* did not possess much influence in religious matters; however, a *Pasaltha* skilled in killing of wild animals and enemies were said to be *Ram Lama Thangchhuah*, which indicated that such persons would be awaited on by the spirits of the enemies they had killed during their lifetime as their servants in the afterlife at *Pialral*, the village of the dead. To the earlier Mizo, achieving *Thangchhuah* was most desirable for it ensured certain privileges: to be a man of great significance during their lifetime, to enjoy

husked-rice at *Pialral*, and to have innumerable servants in the afterlife. To be in *Pialral* with an unlimited supply of husked-rice was their foremost desire, for which they spent their lives toiling for. In cases of sudden war and calamities, they were expected to lay down their lives without fear for the sake of their village, embracing the dual role of being a terror to the enemy and a pride to the village at the same time.

Zawlbuk, the boys' dormitory and the *Pasaltha* had close relationship with each other. At the *Zawlbuk*, all the bachelors and younger married men were expected to spend the night. This was an instructional dormitory where the *Val Upa* would instruct the younger men, narrate to them about wars and raiding expeditions, stories of brave men and the value of *Tlawmngaihna*, which motivated them towards bravery and upholding good qualities. It was also a training ground where the young men were taught the art of self-control, the importance of selflessness, respect for elders, the code and conduct in a Mizo society and practices, and it was an important place to instil the qualities deemed inherent in *Pasaltha*. The male children would gather firewood in the evening for the young men to light at night, and none of the boys were expected to relieve themselves of it, for it was an exercise on their faithfulness, and a building-block towards self-control for the days to come. The dormitory was an integral place to build unity among the young men, where in cases of the village being attacked by a wild animal or by enemies and raiding parties, they would easily be able to leave the dormitory together. In that way, *Zawlbuk* was an institution that fostered harmony where the young men were always ready to render their services as required. There was hardly a coward among the Mizo men who were brought up under the guidance at *Zawlbuk*.

The young men imbibed the ideal quality of selflessness by foregoing their own pleasures and safety, as they were taught practical social codes at *Zawlbuk*. Rather than prioritizing themselves, they prioritized the welfare of the society, for which they were highly regarded by the villagers.

In Act I Scene II of the play *Thawmvunga* there is a depiction of a deliberation on attacking the enemy by the young men in Vuttaia's village. Their

anger over their guns being seized by the young men of Lalpuithanga's village is reflected in the conversation. They desired to retrieve their guns at the earliest. In this particular scene, the prominent use of *Zawlbuk* as a place where the *Val upa* and the young men carefully plotted an attack is depicted.

*Zahnuna: Ngawi teh u, kan hlim viau na a, kan thawm thang velah
Lalpuithanga khuate an lo thinrim nasa hle a lo ni a. Rawlrara che
pawl insiamin, kan khaw silai pakhat an lo tantir ve thei hlauh mai a.
Eng tin nge ni ta ang?*

*Tlangvalho: Kan va thawk nghal mai tur a ni lawm ni?. Keini kan va
kal ang*

(Kal an in chuh nak nak reng a)

*Huaia: Hei tuna kan thil sawi hi tharum thawh nghalna chi niin ka
hre lo. Kan tlangvalho thin tawt lutuk te kha an han puak pawp pawp
mai a, mahse thiam takin, indona zakhua thlen lo tur kawng zawng,
kan zawn pawh a tul mai thei.*

Zahnuna: Listen here, though we're quite elated here, it appears that the village of Lalpuithanga is extremely displeased with us. They formed a band of army who captured one of our firearms. What should be done?

Tlangvalho: Shouldn't we move out at once? We shall proceed (They struggled with one another to go first)

Huaia: I do not think that the present matter is something that we should waste our energy on right now. The suffocation in our young men's hearts causes them to burst out, however, this matter requires better plan in order to avoid any chances of war (164-165).

What is revealed through the conversation between the young men and the *Upa-te* is the bravery of the young men who were willing to sacrifice their lives for

the welfare of their village and to attack those who terrorized them. In their readiness to be the one to go to face the enemies at Zahnuna's mention of the seized firearm, the fact that no one put the task of facing the enemy in others' hands but volunteered to be the one to go reveals the admiration for the brave, which in turn is a depiction of the effect of *Zawlbuk* institution in the lives of the young men. Despite this, the young men also learnt to listen to wise counsel and not behave rashly, as seen in the speech of Huaia.

It could be said that the times of our forefathers were rife with wars. They raided one another's villages, terrorized the children and mothers, burning houses to the ground. Above all that, ambush was the most dangerous kind and quite irritating. There were times when they would find a headless body of those who had started early to the cultivation, and those whose heads were taken at the cultivation itself. It was mainly due to this that the villages at the north and the west territory hardly left for the cultivation fields without taking their guns along. Our great-grandparents did the same to their enemies' villages. Due to this, a brave person who killed an enemy was given high honour by the villagers (*Mizo Pi Pute leh An Thlahte Chanchin* 90).

As seen in the above, the prevalence of wars between villages elevated the status of a young man skilled at killing one's enemy. It is a general tendency to change one's perception or value system based on peace in society. In a war-zone area, the victors prosper and they receive adulation from others. In a peaceful area, the rich and powerful are admired, and thus man's value system is malleable by the need of the hour. Protecting the chief's village and its people was considered to be their responsibility, and they would go into war willing to lose their heads and arms. They had great admiration for those who could kill a famous *Pasaltha*. Utmost sincerity was taken at the initial stage of raiding expeditions. They believed that "a star on the right side of the new moon meant good fortune since it was said to be carrying a head. If a star appeared to the left of the new moon, it was said to be "lifting a hatchet" or *Chem a Chawi*. At such times, they would forego hunting or raiding. Moreover, if a *Bawngpui* bird facing the forest chirped during its flight, they

took it as a sign of success and thus, were quite excited. If the *Bawngpui* bird flew homewards while chirping loudly, they believed it to be a prophecy of misfortune and hence, failure (*Mizo Pi Pute Khawvel* 171).

With the arrival of the pleasant season the young men at the *Zawlbuk* would preoccupy themselves with conversations on hunting or raiding expeditions. They began preparing gunpowder, and polished their best arms and armour. The chief and his council of elders convened together, and if all signs proved favourable, they would set out for a raiding expedition. After having spent some time on the expedition, the warriors would return and chant the *Bawhhla* at the village entrance to announce their success, claiming their superiority over their enemies by stating that above them remain the stars and the moon; and that the warriors had slain his enemy:

Arsi e, thlapa chawl law

Ralvawn arkhuan an e,

Zan thim e, zing hman se law

Kei chu e, ka do rimnampa ka tlun e (*Ngirtling* 46).

In the play *Thawmvunga*, Act I Scene I depicts the successful return of the warriors of Vuttaia's village from Hualtu village chief's house. The adoration of the villagers and their pride in their warriors is clearly portrayed, as well as the security that Vuttaia and his elders felt because of their courageous *Pasaltha* and brave young men who could kill their enemies.

*Lal Vuttaia: Mualkil upate u, kan pasaltha rammu turte kha Bawngpui
khan a hruai chhuak a ni lawm ni kha?*

*Upa Huaia: A chhuahpui ngei chu a nih kha! Ngawi teh u, vawin tlai
khan Bawngpui rawn hram lut luah luah ka hmu tak a sin!*

*Upa Denga: Chu Zawng kan pasalthate ai a tluang a ni ngei ang.
Hlawhtling tlak hian an khawsa thin hrim hrim mai a. Kan khaw
tlangvalho taimak leh tlawmngaihdan hi chu a.*

*Upa Zahnuna: Ni e, chhel leh huaisen nen hian an la kawp lehngal
a. Mipa fa dik tak, kan khaw uaptu nih zawng an tlin e.*

Lal Vuttaia: Mualkil upate u, didn't the Bawngpui bird led our
pasaltha on their way to the expedition?

Upa Huaia: Indeed it led them! Wait, I did hear the cry of a Bawngpui
bird this evening!

Upa Denga: That must mean fortune has favoured our pasalthate. And
yet they conduct themselves to be so blessed by fortune. Their
diligence and selflessness is indescribable.

Upa Zahnuna: Indeed, and they have combined endurance and
bravery. They are the true sons of the male, rightly befitted protectors
of our village (155).

The chief and his Upate would take great care in their speech, for their greatest fear was the unsuccessful return of the raiding party. *Upa Denga's* speech "And yet they conduct themselves to be so blessed by fortune" reveals his pride in the young men of their village. The structure of the early Mizo society demanded the success of the *Pasaltha* and the young men where brave men skilled at killing were required, and this factor dictated the value system of the earlier society where they placed such brave men at the pedestal. A careful deliberation of *Upa Zahnuna's* remark of the men, "Indeed, and they have combined endurance and bravery. They are the true sons of the male, rightly befitted protectors of our village" reflects the utmost necessity of endurance and bravery to emerge victorious in the midst of countless enemies and fiends. Their primary goal was to be able to bring about security to the village and thus be adored by the villagers. As such, they rightly deserved the honour of being called "the true sons of the male" by the village elders.

Had they not been the victors but the oppressed, they would end up in mired conditions where starting anew would be an impossible task for some. Those who surrendered in wars and raids were taken as slaves, with all their treasures looted and at the loss of numerous lives. In the meantime, the victors were respected by others, and believed that at their death they would be given a grand entry at *Pialral*, the village of the dead. The successful return of the raiding party was celebrated by the entire village, welcoming them with the choicest food and the sweetest *zu*. Since such was the privilege given to them, it was an imperative for the *pasaltha* and the young men to give their utmost best, for it was the means to earn favour of the chief and his elders, by dint of which they could attain greatness during their lifetime and irrelevant to their wishes, every male child was forced to take that path. In the play *Thawmvunga* is depicted the manner in which the *Pasaltha* who returned successfully were greeted by the villagers at the pillar of stone by the village entrance:

Zahnuna: Chu le, kan pasalthaten khua an rawn lut dawn ta e

(Pasaltha ho chu nula ho chuan arkeziak an lo ban sup sup mai a, zu an lo tulh a an hlim ngei mai)

Val Upa: Kan lawm e. Hualtu khaw mawitu leh nula tlawmngaite u. Rammut man a awm teh thin e.

Nulaho: Khawi nge, kan ban belh zel ang che u, Ha Ha...a va han hlimawm tak em.

Zahnuna: Listen, our pasaltha are entering into the village.

(The pasaltha were greeted by the young women who tied their arkeziak on their arms and fed them zu with great jovialty)

Val Upa: We are grateful. You are the ones that beautify our Hualtu village and you are indeed selfless young women. You make our undertaking the expedition worthwhile.

Nulaho: Very well then, let us tie more of them on your arms, Ha Ha, what a joyous occasion this is (159).

3.3. The Impact of Social Environments on Shaping Individual Character

Mankind is highly affected by his environment, and a man's individuality may be shaped by the place of his birth, social structure and lifestyle, and also by the prevalence of peace or without. Thawmvunga was a brave *Pasaltha*, who was both respected and feared by the neighbouring villages of his time, and he was the pride of his uncle Vuttaia who took him everywhere with him. Among the Mizo chiefs, Vuttaia was among the most powerful and famous, whose greatness could be attributed to the wealth of *Pasaltha* in his village, among whom Thawmvunga occupied the highest order of significance. Thawmvunga achieved fame as he was under the guidance of his uncle Vuttaia who was known as the brave chief who would not surrender in wars and raids, who was determined to win against every opponent he came across. From this, it could be derived that the factors behind the making of Thawmvunga as a *Pasaltha* and a brave man was the conditions of his environment.

Vanhnuaithanga, the chief who occupied Sakhan Tlang (the kingdom of Tiperra) was a great and powerful chief, wealthy and owned a unique and famous set of *Darbu*. After Vanhnuaithanga's death, Vuta tried to obtain the said *Darbu* and set out to raid Vanhnuaithanga's village, which they entered without any obstruction, then proceeded to the hut of the chieftess, taking anything they desired. Vuta joined the raiding party. They captured Vanhnuaithanga's son Tualtawia and Tiamloa, the son of his concubine, while Tiamloa was later on released with the exchange of the famous *Selbuang Dar* as a ransom, Tualtawia remained a captive of Vuta (*Mizo Lalte Chanchin* 467)

When Vuttaia raided *Sakhan Tlang*, his group of *Pasaltha* displayed great courage and were unstoppable by Vanhnuaithanga's *Pasaltha*. However, since

Rothanga had kept the coveted Vanhnuaithanga's *Darbu* with him, Vuta was unable to obtain it. In Act I Scene II of the play *Thawmvunga* the victorious pasaltha who had returned from the successful raid were welcomed by the villagers with great festivity. Among them, Thawmvunga's name was highly mentioned,

Lengkhumi: U Thawnvung heng hi aw ni ang (Thihna a awrh tira a, thimal leh Thifen a awrh tir leh a, midangin an lo thir thap a)

Thawmvunga: Hualtu khaw pasaltha hnungzuitu mai ka ni si a, a va lawmawm danglam ve le!

Vuttaia: Tlangaupa, kan hun ruat ang kha va puangzar rawh.

Buaia: Khai khaih khaih lo ngaithla vek rawh u. Lal mualah ral lu lam tur a ni a, nula tlangval tawh phawt chu kal khawm tur a ni. Awmni kham a ni a, mi zawnz zawnz tel ngei tur a ni.

Huaia: Mihrang ho an inpeih kim tawh bawh a, lam zai kan rel tan tawh dawn em ni ang!.

Lengkhumi: U Thawmvung, here you go (She put the Thihna necklace on his neck, and then thimal and Thifen necklaces, while the others were watching.)

Thawmvunga: I am merely a follower of Hualtu village's, what a delight!

Vuttaia: Tlangaupa, you may go and announce the arrangements.

Buaia: Khai khaih khaih, listen to the announcement. A ritual of the enemy's head will be held at the chief's ground, every young men and women are expected to attend the ritual. It is a day of rest and all must attend the ritual.

Huaia: Our heroes are all ready, shall we start the ritual dance?
(159).

In this particular scene, the manner in which the *Pasaltha* who returned from a successful raid were lauded with utmost pomp can be seen, wherein Thawmvunga being the most famous of all the *Pasaltha* was garlanded by Lengkhumi, the village beauty with the best necklaces in her possession. Such welcome and precious gifts would be incentives for him to strive harder in the future.

While Vuttaia was chief of *Hualtu* village, he extended his region towards the south, likewise the descendants of chief Rolura were doing the same. The greatest among Rolura's descendants was Lalpuithanga who said, "My brothers might not be able to push through the north" and thus proceeded to move towards the north. In the meantime, Vuttaia was planning to establish a new settlement at *Buanhmun* so he set up *Bawkte*, a temporary shelter, but before he could move in Lalpuithanga preceded him by moving in from *Vanchengte*. At *Hualtu* chief's hut, the chief and his Upate appeared,

Vuttaia: E, Upate u, titi thar dawn in nei em? Lawm leh vuivaina lam pawh eng pawh?

Denga: Ngawi teh, lalpa, chutia min han kamkeu takah chuan, saw laia Rolura thlahte zinga an chhuanvawr ber Lalpuithanga sawn, 'ka unauten hmar lam an nek zo lo vang. Keiin ka dep ang e,' tiin a tawng lian viau awm a sin!

Huaia: A ni tak e. Sailam atangin Chhiahtlangah a rawn kai a, 'Vuttaia chu keimah ngeiin ka nek ang,' tiin a ram rawn zauh zel a tum a ni awm e.

Vuttaia: Chu thu thar zuk ni taka! ka beng a verh zar mai! 'Chhim thlipui hrangin thawm ti na mah se, Hualtu lal a nghing thei lo, a nghing ngai lo'.

Vuttaia: E, Upate u, have you received any news? Good news, or any bad news?

Denga: Ngawi teh, lalpa, now that you have opened our mouths, Lalpuithanga, the pride among Rolura's son had been boasting, 'My brothers might not be able to push through the north. Let me make the move,' !

Huaia: Indeed. He has crossed over Sailam to Chhiahtlang, saying 'I myself will push over Vuttaia,' and has been attempting to broaden his land.

Vuttaia: That is indeed new! It is quite appealing to my ears! 'Though the Southern storm makes loud noises, Hualtu chief is not shaken, cannot be shaken' (161).

From the above conversation, the imminent war between the *Chhim* chief Lalpuithanga and Vuttaia is foreshadowed, and the one man they would solely rely on during that time would be the village *Pasaltha* Thawmvunga. Vuttaia was deeply enraged that *Buanhmun* was occupied by Lalpuithanga, and puffed himself up by saying

My body and my mind is now ready. We shall proceed forth tomorrow morning, Thawmvunga and I shall lead the way. We shall occupy the *Bawk* that we had built, and we shall stay put there. We shall face Lalpuithanga's village, and we shall face whatever shall come to pass. There definitely is going to be one who is weaker. *Upate u*, are you ready?" (162).

In this speech made by Vuttaia, the pride and confidence that he had on

Thawmvunga is quite apparent. To rid Lalpuithanga of *Buanhmun*, Thawmvunga was trusted by the chief and was chosen among all to be the esteemed leader alongside the chief himself, and with such dependence on him, it was not possible for Thawmvunga to retract or make excuses, thus Thawmvunga had to rise to the occasion not just because he was a brave man but also because the situation demanded of him to be brave. The willingness of the angry young men to face anything with the leadership of Thawmvunga is reflected in Zahnuna's speech,

“Seems Lalpuithanga had moved into our *Bawk*, the temporary shelter we had built at Buanhmun. Our brave young man Thawmvunga and the others at *Zawlbuk* are ready to fight them at once” (162).

Vuttaia the chief along with his village *Pasaltha* Thawmvunga banished Lalpuithanga and his village from Buanhmun, and Lalpuithanga being humbled, returned to Vancheng. Thawmvunga’s fame grew following the fight between the *Pasaltha* of Vuttaia and Lalpuithanga’s villages at Buanhmun, “At the mention of Thawmvunga, they would scatter at once. It seemed their chief Lalpuithanga secretly invited him to join him instead” (164). The bravery displayed by Thawmvunga was in everyone’s account. Since the loser had to leave from *Buanhmun*, both parties had to fight with all their might, thus this facilitated the necessity of bravery due to the conditions of the environment.

Vuttaia despised Lalpuithanga who had to return to Vancheng, and in his utter scorn composed a song,

Buanhmun pai ang pawm tawh hnu

Chengte-ah lam ang let e

Lalpuithang lem a.

Having captured Buanhmun as his own

Returns back to Chengte,

Useless Lalpuithanga.

Finding an opportunity, Lalpuithanga captured a muzzle from Vuttaia’s village, which Vuttaia and Thawmvunga went to *Vancheng* to retrieve.

*Lalpuithanga: Vawinah hian an Silai lam turin Vuttaia te an lo kal
dawn a. Nasa takin min zai eltute an ni a. Thil eng emaw kan lo zirtir
ve dawn a ni.*

Upa: Chu chu remruat dan tha tak a ni. Chapo man an hmu ngei tur a ni. Tlangvalho kha in inring em?

Lalpuithanga: Kan chhaih thinrim ang a, an pau a khauh deuh chuan vuak nek tur a ni mai. Thingfak kha lo thut far rawh u.

Lalpuithanga: Vuttaia is coming to retrieve the firearm today. They have mocked us greatly by composing a song on our losing. We shall teach them a thing or two.

Upa: That is a sound plan. They must pay for their pride. Are the young men ready?

Lalpuithanga: We shall taunt them, and once they are offended we shall beat them mercilessly. Keep the firewood close by (166).

Lalpuithanga enquired Vuttaia and Thawmvunga “What are you here for, just the two of you?” Vuttaia responded that they were to retrieve the gun that he had seized. Instead of the firearm, they handed him a firewood and the young men sneered at him. When Lalpuithanga said, “Did you not sing, *Having captured Buanhmun as his own, Returns back to Chengte, Useless Lalpuithanga?*” Vuttaia was quite nervous, and replied, “We did not say useless *Lalpuithanglema*, we said where Lalpuithanga grew in strength and stature, *Lalpuithanglenna*.” Thawmvunga was enraged, he said, “E,e,e ka pu Vut, do not fear. We never said, “where Lalpuithanga grew in strength and stature *Lalpuithanglenna*”, but “*Lalpuithanglema*, one who keeps moving to and fro” and with that he grabbed his sword and danced to the beat, swinging the sword above their heads and no one dared to beat him. They could retrieve the firearm without any protest since no one dared to fight against Thawmvunga. “Vuttaia and his nephew left with the muzzle, and as they were disappearing from the bend, Lalpuithanga’s village started to shoot. They did not turn back even once” (*Mizo Lalte Chanchin* 473).

From thence, the war between the South and North began. Raids took place at several places such as

- 1) *Vanchengte*
- 2) *Hmuntha*
- 3) *Sialhmur*
- 4) *Arte*
- 5) *Khawnglung*

In these raids, legendary Mizo *Pasaltha* Chawngbawla, Nghatebaka and Thawmvunga took part. The fame behind *Pasaltha* Thawmvunga could be attributed to the attempt of his uncle Vuttaia to enlarge his chieftom, the ensuing wars he had to face, and the requirement to save his village at all costs. The historical incidents that took place and the environment that he lived in turned him into a brave war hero.

3.4. Summary of the play *Pasaltha Khuangchera*

There are 14 characters in the play *Pasaltha Khuangchera*, and apart from the main six characters, more could be added based on one's convenience. There are three Scenes in Act I, five in Act II, four in Act III to Act V. Khuangchera's name never escaped at every mention of legendary Mizo *Pasaltha*. The *Upa-te* would refer to him as, "the bravest." Apart from his bravery, his meekness, his unfailing *Tlâwmngaihna* were qualities that made others admire him deeply. He was the pride of *Parvatui* chief Lianphunga who trusted him in the matters of wild animals and wars.

Ngaihsii was bitten by a tiger on her way back from the cultivation one day, dragging her beneath the jungle road. Thangtawna, being the first to hear the noise ran to save Ngaihsii at once. Khuangchera followed Thangtawna as soon as he heard of it. He caught up with Thangtawma soon, and as he ran past him he said in utmost humility, "I don't mean that I can overcome the tiger." Khuangchera jumped down the area where the tiger dragged Ngaihsii. The tiger was lying above the corpse of Ngaihsii, and jumped at the sight of Khuangchera. Khuangchera stood with his legs beside Ngaihsii's body, guarding it steadfastly. Thangtawna and the villagers arrived shortly after, and they could take Ngaihsii's corpse without being eaten by the tiger.

There were young men who were prone to evil, who would threaten children, tease young women in the most extreme manner, and careless with their speech. Khuangchera would berate such men with pure intentions, and thus he edified the society such that the saying, “*Parvatui Nun Zilh Ngai Lo*,” or “well-mannered Parvatui bred” came to being. He knew how to encourage the young men during the circling of a tiger to be killed, which the young men enjoyed with renewed strength and vigour.

Khuangchera's teachings to the young men:

- 1) Don't attack just because you are not scared. There is a time to attack, and a time to flee.
- 2) Do not be prone to belittle others in speech, but let speech be comforting to others.
- 3) Built a *thlam* hut at the spur of a hill, tiger does not attack there.
- 4) Do not be angry over a woman, we already have the upper hand.

([https://www.themizo.us/1/khuangchera/C lalnunchanga](https://www.themizo.us/1/khuangchera/C%20lalnunchanga))

Neihthanga, the son of the chief's *Khawnbawl Upa* was envious of Khuangchera's fame, and would often say, “Khuangchera is not specially brave, he is merely fortunate” and would attempt to be more famous than Khuangchera. One day a wild tiger came to prey nearby. As they were circling it, Khuangchera and Neihthanga happened to guard the *Ngawizawn* together where they would attack the tiger on its way out. The tiger pounced at Khuangchera who covered himself with his shield, and overthrew the tiger downhill. As the tiger fled he bit Neihthanga's arm lightly. When his friends asked, “How did you receive the bruise?” Neihthanga replied, “Our Khuang-nêma decided to stuff the tiger's mouth with his shield and caused it to bite me”. Khuangchera with utmost nonchalance said, “It doesn't even amount to the bite of a wildcat, not even worth eating a good morsel of food over,” Khuangchera married Thanchhumi who was the village beauty, and since Neihthanga was secretly in love with Thanchhumi he was filled with grudges for being unable to surpass Khuangchera at everything.

When the British entered into Mizoram the villages of Lianphunga and Thanruma were at arms with each other at the beginning of September, 1890. The descendants of Manga were at war with the *Changsil* fort. *Changsil* was the stronghold of the British army where they stocked their arms and ration. Capt. H.R. Browne, also known as Hmaireka was shot in his arm, puncturing his veins. According to Lt. Cole, who stood guard at *Changsil* fort, "Brown came running on foot. When he arrived inside the fort, he had entirely bled out. Although we gave him medicine, he died within half an hour". The descendants of Manga surrounded the *Changsil* fort for 19 days, locking the soldiers inside.

In the meantime, Lianphunga and his party were surrounding *Aizawl* fort. Lt. Cole sent a messenger from *Changsil* to *Silchar* with great difficulty. 200 soldiers from *Silchar* trekked along *Tlawng* river, and helped their fellows trapped at *Changsil* fort.

Khuangchera was unable to participate in the expedition to *Changsil* fort as Thanchhumi had recently given birth. However, every *Pasaltha* from other villages inquired about his whereabouts. When their chief saw Khuangchera at home, he uttered words that deeply angered him. In response, Khuangchera left to join the fight against the outsiders, accompanied by his friend Ngurbawnga. With the soldiers having greater numbers and superior ammunition, the *Pasaltha* were leaving *Changsil* fort in disappointment, asserting, "They cannot be shot; only those who do not fear death can shoot them."

Challenging this sentiment, Khuangchera declared, "They are to be shot by me if they can only be shot by those who do not fear death. I will shoot the *Vai* outsider even if I have to die. I am not afraid of the soldiers, yet I cannot see the bullet." With this resolve, he advanced towards the fort with Ngurbawnga. This narrative highlights Khuangchera's fearless determination to confront the outsiders, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

Khuangchera and Ngurbawnga engaged in firing at *Changsil* fort, facing retaliation from the soldiers. Despite the soldiers shooting back, the duo persisted in

their attack, displaying a willingness to sacrifice themselves. In their determined assault, they managed to shoot and kill a few soldiers. However, the soldiers surrounded them from all sides, leading to Ngurbawnga suffering a broken thigh from a shot fired by a soldier from the *Vai* community. Despite attempting to flee with Ngurbawnga, the soldiers closed in. During the confrontation, Khuangchera shot one soldier who pounced on them, but unable to reload in time, he was shot in the waist by the soldiers, causing him to fall.

As Khuangchera lay on the ground, a soldier approached, to whom Khuangchera handed his hunting knife. Misinterpreting Khuangchera's intentions, the soldier, fearing an attack, shot him to death. The sequence of events reflects the intense and tragic nature of the confrontation between the *Pasaltha* and the soldiers.

3.5. Exploring *Pasaltha Khuangchera* through the Lens of Marxist Literary Theory

Karl Marx believed that society has been divided into two main categories since time immemorial and we belong to either one of the two based on our occupation. These two groups are the “oppressors” and the “oppressed,” that are at constant war with each other to attain economical and political superiority over the other. Their struggle was earlier camouflaged, but now it is laid out in the open. Karl Marx termed these two groups ‘*Bourgeoisie*’ and ‘*Proletariat*’ (*Khawvel Nghawr Nghingtu*, 19).

Marxist theory of literature, or literary concepts, takes into account the theory laid down by Karl Marx. As a literary theory, it has been widely employed to critique various writings of literature. The main preoccupation of Marxist literary theory is to identify the portrayal of class, culture and power by the writer of a particular work. Rather than focusing on the aesthetic or artistic factors, Marxist literary theory attempts to bring out the perception of “class” by the writer and how he portrays the different class structure in the society.

Marxism is a materialist philosophy. It supports a naturalist as opposed to a supernaturalist world view. It foregrounds economic realities of human

culture. Economic power is behind all institutions. In other words, it attempts to explain things without assuming that there is a force beyond the natural world and the society we inhabit (*English Literary Criticism and Theory* 223).

3.6 Examining Class Relations through the Author's Analysis

Marxist theory is an attempt to identify the divide between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and their intrinsic relationship to each other, which is also a common denominator among the playwrights who depict the same in their works.

Neihthanga: Sawi tur in neilo, ka tih chu ka tih a nih thin kha. Lal upa-min fapa ka ni lo'm ni, hmeithai fa lakah ka tlawm ang maw? Ka nula min chhuhsaktu ka hmachhawn ngam lo vang maw? Teuh lo mai, pa leh pa chu a tawp rak thlengin kan inel ang

Lukawnga: Chutin rak rak suh ka ti. Khuangchera te zawng eng kawngah mah ka tluk lo ti la a nih chu.

Neihthanga: You have nothing to say, what I say is what I say. Am I not the son of the chief's upa-min, should I be humbled by a widow's son? Should I not be able to face the man who stole my woman from me? Definitely no, a man must face a man till the end.

Lukawnga: I told you to stop making such noise. Just accept that you are no match for Khuangchera (61).

The above is a scene from the night of the *Lawichhiat* of Khuangchera and Thanchumi's wedding, the first night where she would return to her maiden's home. Neihthanga wanted to disrupt their wedding as he was the son of the most important elder among the chief's council of elders. In Neihthanga's contempt of the widow's son Khuangchera, the disregard for the proletariat by the bourgeoisie is clearly seen.

As inhabitants of a chief's village, they were wary of the authorities above them in everything that they did. Despite their hard work and dedication, any success was attributed to the chief, for the chief could attain nothing without the villagers. In

case of any mishap, the villagers would be the casualties. Waving his *pasaltha* off to fight against the *vai* soldiers, Sailianpuia said, “Hereby I and my council of elders, the aged shall see you off. Make sure you leave for sure success” (90). Here those who worked hard at battle were the group of *Pasaltha*, but those who received laurels were the chief and his elders. The role of the *Pasaltha* was to provide security to the villagers, and in case of their death their wives became poor widows, many parents lost their beloved sons, and children became orphans. Without Khuangchera, Sailianpuia had no confidence in the war with the *Vai Lian*,

I shall most definitely go. I’ll leave my wife and children behind. They can’t understand the sacred *Naulaihrilh*, can they? Defies the expectation, right? How long is three days! Perhaps Khuangchera is missed greatly on worrisome days. Before the enemies the fading of a *Tuibur*’s strength is longer without Khuangchera (92).

In the above reply made by Khuangchera to the chief’s taunt on his absence from the shoot-out with the *Vai* soldiers, the vast difference between the two classes while being interdependent on each other could clearly be seen.

3.7. Navigating Triumph over Oppression: Exploring Character Resilience

Literature is often considered a mirror reflecting the spirit of the times, portraying how marginalized individuals strive to ascend the social hierarchy. In the play *Pasaltha Khuangchera*, the dynamics of the *Pasaltha* reveal a scenario where every move appears to be orchestrated by the chief. For instance, when the tiger attempted to attack Ngaihsii, her lifeless body was rescued by Khuangchera, Changa, and Hempua. This narrative hints at the power dynamics within the society, where even in the face of challenges or dangers, the control and authority of the chief are evident,

*Upa – I: He tlangval hi an sawi fova, Nopui dawmawm taka ngaih
thin a ni a. Kan lal hian engtin nge a ngaih ve le.*

Lianphunga: E! Awma in hriat thu a ni ang chu. Chawimawi awm a nih chuan engah nge kan dawmtir loh vang a ni lawm ni, Neihthanga pa.

Upa – I: You often mention this young lad, many believe that he must partake of the Nopui mug. What is the chief's opinion on this?

Lianphunga: E! If you deem him fit. Why should we keep him from partaking if he is worthy of it, Neihthanga pa? (17).

In traditional Mizo society, the utmost honor bestowed upon a man was the privilege of drinking from the ceremonial *Nopui* mug. In the conversation mentioned, those who had the authority to allow Khuangchera to partake in that honour were the chief and his elders. The *Pasaltha*, despite risking their lives and giving their utmost for the chief and the village, were subject to the assessment of those in positions of authority above them. The determination of their worthiness for honor and accolades rested in the hands of those who held higher positions in the social hierarchy.

The entire life of *Pasaltha* Khuangchera depicted his dedication to the chief and the village, that brought security to the villagers. In the *Zawlbuk* conversation, Khuangchera's shift to Sailianpuia's village is clearly mentioned; how he was chased by the chief of former village, citing how he was the source of security to the village and how the young men and women would be unhappy without him. Khuangchera replied, "On days of worry and trouble, I am Khuangchera at the village and forest, but on days to show favour, I am the unfavoured Khuangchera thus you can't keep me anymore" (64). Khuangchera's predicament is quite similar to what Michael Ryan comments

A sense of class struggle in some characters but we also see huge gaps in the classes. The Narrator does struggle for individuality to determine his identity but he also display a class struggle in which he tries to become a prominent man" (*Marxism and Political Criticism* 60).

3.8. The Significance of Class in the Narrative *Pasaltha Khuangchera*

“Marxism is very wide field comprising a theory of economics, history, society and revolution. Marxist literary theories do not constitute a school. Marxist assign a structure to social reality. It is called a structure view of reality” (*M S Nagarajan*, 224). The term Marxism is employed to depict the various modes of life in a society, how the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the upper and lower class struggle in the capitalistic society.

The play commences at *Parvatui Zawlbuk*, where an old *Putar*, Thanga father, and *Mualkil Upa* engage in a profound conversation. During this dialogue, *Mualkil Upa* asserts, "It is indeed wishful to want to present the best and the most beautiful to our chief. He is our chief, and we can hold nothing from him!" This statement reveals that to garner favour from the chief, obedience is essential, highlighting the distinction between the chief and the commoners. This theme resonates in the play *Pasaltha Khuangchera*, where the lives of the *Pasaltha* are significantly shaped by the prevailing social structure, a circumstance from which *Khuangchera* is not exempt.

The titles mentioned, such as *Mualkil Upa* or elder from *Mualkil*, *Hmeithai Fa* or son of a widow, *Lal Upa-Min* or eldest of the chief's council of elders, *Pasaltha* or heroes, *Lal Khua leh Tui* or the chief's village and his subjects, all serve as reflections of class divisions within the early Mizo society. These titles underscore the hierarchical social order that dictated roles and relationships in this community.

The desire to win the chief's favour was a surety to secure better positions within the society which was why the *Pasaltha* gave their all for the chief and his village, never abetting responsibilities. This is what Karl Marx called 'class struggles'. *Khuangchera's* speech on his way to take part in the *Vai-Lian* shootout is also reflective of this struggle:

Khuangchera: Ka theih zat zat kan kap hlum ve phawt ang e.

Awmhmuna beidawn nghal ngawt awng a dawihzep hna deuh e. Lal khua leh tui dinhmun a derthawn laia lo inkuangkua mai zawng a

pasaltha zia lo ve. Ka tih theih chin chin chu ka ti ve mai tur a ni.
Keima tana nung ka nih loh hi!.

Khuangchera: I shall shoot to kill as many as I can. To be hopeless in one's hearth is but cowardice. To be sitting idly with arms crossed while the chief and the village is compromised is unlike the nature of a Pasaltha. To do what I can is what I must. I am not living for my own sake!" (93).

3.9. Summary of the Play *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*

In the play *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*, Act I has 6 scenes, Act II has 5 scenes and Act 3 has 5 scenes. There are 21 characters in the play wherein characters such as an old woman, an old man, young men and women, *Khawnbawl Upa*, *Pasaltha*, commoners and children can be added based on requirements. This play has several mentions of Suakpuilala, one of the most famous *Sailo* chiefs who was also known by outsiders. Apart from him, the beauty and intelligence of his sister Vanthangi, and her innumerable contributions to her society are also depicted.

The *Sailo* chief, Mangpawrha, called upon his son, Suakpuilala, and his daughter, Vanthangi, to discuss weighty matters concerning the diligent efforts he had invested in ensuring the safety of their village. He earnestly requested his children to approach these responsibilities with care and to devote their best efforts to the welfare of their land. Mangpawrha officially declared his son as his successor and sought the guidance and support of the assembly of *Val Upa* present to bolster and empower his son in his future role.

Venturing out for amusement, Vanthangi and her attendants encountered Lalzika, a *Sailo* chief and the son of Savunga, along with his friends. Vanthangi and Lalzika developed feelings for each other, leading Lalzika to dispatch messengers to propose a betrothal. Despite Vanthangi expressing her willingness through the messengers, the potential union faced a hindrance due to her brother, who adamantly opposed the alliance.

Vanthangi's beauty spread throughout every village, and innumerable suitors came to court her but her brother took immense care in choosing a suitable groom for her, and finally chose Ngursailova, *Sailo* chief, son of Lalsuthlaha. On the day Vanthangi grieved for her virginity, she dried herself naked on a rock by the riverside, basking in the sun. Lalzika, who was out hunting, happened to see her, and on their way back to the village, he caught her by her arm and tried to sleep with her. However, Vanthangi was unwilling and fought his advances, telling him that it was too late and managed to set herself free.

Vanthangi and Ngursailova celebrated their marriage with great joy. They were a happily married couple and were blessed with two sons. While Vanthangi brought numerous blessings to the village, her beauty led to some unfortunate incidents. However, her intelligence and wit played a crucial role in averting further misfortunes for the village.

In the sixth year of their marriage, she decided to welcome her husband, who was to return from his travels, with a small but grand feast to celebrate their son's birthday anniversary. Yet things did not go according to plan, for when her husband returned, he acted differently and one could tell that he was displeased about a matter or two. A great quarrel took place between the couple and Ngursailova detained his wife, calling her "despicable".

Vanthangi was a sorrowful sight, and could leave the place of her detention only because of the people who loved her and who were willing to face the consequences because of her.

Following her departure from her husband's village with a broken heart, Vanthangi's brother, Suakpuilala, constructed a village for her. Consequently, Vanthangi became the chieftess of *Chungtlang* village. Under her leadership, the village expanded rapidly. Vanthangi, being educated and proficient in various languages, attracted visitors from many places, including *Sap* and *Vai*. The chieftess received numerous gifts from these visitors, contributing to the prosperity and recognition of Chungtlang village.

The group of *Chungtlang* pasaltha was determined to administer punishment to Ngursailova for his perceived mistreatment of their chieftess. They seized firearms, spears, and machetes from his village, also taking a few slaves with them. In retaliation for Lalzika's village raiding Vanthangi's on two occasions, Suakpuilala took numerous slaves from Lalzika's village. Returning the seized belongings to Ngursailova, Suakpuilala made it clear that peace talks would only be entertained after the chief and his *Pasaltha* group sought forgiveness by bowing down before Vanthangi.

Many people gathered to welcome their chieftess at the Chungtlang memorial platform, preparing a bier for her to sit in. Unbeknownst to the crowd, four or five excited strangers joined in as carriers of the bier. As they enthusiastically tossed her onto the bier, these strangers collectively rocked it, causing the chieftess to fall off with a loud cry. Heavy materials fell on top of her, preventing her from straightening her neck. On that fateful day, Vanthangi left her village and her subjects for the paradise *Pialral*, never to return again.

After Vanthangi's death, Lalzika appeared, mourning her loudly with dishonorable behavior. The sight of young men holding him back and leading him outside was unpleasant. Vanthangi's children also emerged, weeping in deep anguish over their mother.

In his profound grief, Lalzika fell upon Vanthangi's lifeless body and could not be raised anymore. The villagers, in their sorrow, buried them as they were, with Lalzika lying dead above Vanthangi's corpse. Such was the tragic end of the play *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*.

3.10. Condition of Women in Mizo Society

Mizo society is predominantly patriarchal, where women often have limited influence in governance or family matters. Numerous idioms and phrases within this culture contribute to the demeaning perception of women, such as "a woman and a crab have no religion," "a woman's intellect does not cross over the riverbank," "a bad woman and a bad fence must be replaced," or "an unthreatened woman and an

unpruned hedge swell on." Despite women engaging in various tasks, including unconventional work, rice pounding, cotton yarn preparation, drawing water, and managing household affairs, their hard work often goes unrecognized and unappreciated. This reflects a systemic undervaluation of women's contributions within the societal framework.

In Act I, Scene I of the play *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*, Sailo chief Mangpawrha gathers his elders as witnesses for his final message to his son, Suakpuilala. Notably, the play underscores the exclusion of women from this significant event, emphasizing that women are traditionally not deemed participants in crucial familial matters. This portrayal reflects the gender norms prevalent in Mizo society, where women were often sidelined from certain ceremonial or decision-making processes,

*Mangpawrha: Chhungpui fa, he tlanga ro rel zui tur I nih avangin
kan khawnbawl upate hriatpui ngeiin tunah hian, kan ram leh
chhungkaw thil, thu ro chhiah che ka duh a ni.*

*Suakpuilala: A pawimawh dawn hle mai, unauva ngaihthlak chi a nih
chu. Thawmpawnga leh Runphunga te rammu an lo la thleng si lo va,
tlangau ka nau Vanthangi kha, hmeichhia mah ni se, va ko ve tho teh
aw.*

Vanthangi: Awi ka u ka awm ve a ngai dawn em ni?.

Mangpawrha: Chhungpui fa, son of the great clan, since you shall rule over this hilllock I have summoned you before my council of elders, the khawnbawl upate to listen to my last words on our land and family.

Suakpuilala: Since it seems most important, all of us siblings must listen to your words. Since Thawmpawnga and Runphunga have not returned from their expedition, tlangau, though she is but a woman, make haste to summon my sister Vanthangi.

Vanthangi: Awi ka u, is my presence required? (25-26).

In his address to the village herald, the *Tlangau*, Suakpuilala used the term, “though she is but a woman” which puts the expectation of a woman in family matters quite clearly. Even Vanthangi had internalized the norm and felt she was not required, which is indicative of the general perception of women that was internalized by all.

Mizo society exercised extreme caution in establishing marriage alliances, meticulously tracing family histories to identify any tendencies towards theft, assessing industriousness, and evaluating overall health. Young men and women believed that marrying without parental consent could bring misfortune, so they typically sought the counsel of their parents and relatives. While it was common for both the young man and woman to agree on sending messengers for marriage alliances, there were instances where a young man might send messengers without prior communication with the woman. Regardless of the feelings between the couple, the ultimate consent for marriage rested solely with their parents.

In this context, the woman's family held greater influence in marriage alliances, and she could not marry a young man of her choosing without her family's approval. In the play, messengers Buanga and Dumtea approached Vanthangi with a proposal for her to be Lalzika's wife. Despite Vanthangi's inner desire to be Lalzika's wife, her elder brother Suakpuilala did not favour the alliance. The dejected return of Lalzika's messengers highlights that even a powerful daughter of a chief could not enter into marriage without the consent of her family. This underscores the significant role of family approval in marital decisions within Mizo culture,

Suakpuilala: Eng pawh ni se, in ring chu a kham palh ang e, lo fan zui zel lo phawt teh u. Lam te hi a hla a, thu ngai sin chuan inkawm leh pawh a tul lem love a! min lo hrethiam phawt mai teh u khai. (A ding luah a, a kalsan ta daih mai a, Lalzika palaite chuan mak tiin an thlir zui ngawih ngawih a).

Suakpuilala: Whatever it is, your necks must be tired, do not sit stretched for too long. The distance is far, and there is no need to meet

again for the same matter! Kindly excuse me. (He stood up suddenly, and left them in utter surprise that the messengers of Lalzika continued to stare at him leaving.) (41).

Suakpuilala unequivocally rejected Lalzika's messengers, and despite his mother being present, he did not seek her counsel. This illustrates the lack of influence that the mother of the family had in her daughter's marriage, as she neither argued nor offered counsel. Similarly, Vanthangi did not dispute her brother's decision but instead sent word to Lalzika, urging his messengers to plead with her brother once more. This highlights the limited agency that women, even within their families, had in decisions related to marriage, underscoring a cultural norm where such matters were typically handled without their direct input or involvement,

Lalnu: A heti roh thin a, a farnu hi zawng a chhuang em a ni, lo hrethiam teh u khai.

Vanthangi: Lung banga hung theih nula ka ni hleinem, "kei chu ka tiam reng e" a ti ti nang che. Muang hauh suh se. Khartung hrawl ber pawh hi kik hawn dan chi khat chauh a awm hleinem!

Palai Dumtea: Aw le, ka hrilh ngei ang. Aw I hmel ka hmuh hian kan lal in timawi turin ka va awt tak che em! Mahse, maw hei I U Suakpuilala chu kan ngam mawlh si lo va.

Lalnu: This is how he is, he is too proud of his sister, do pardon him for that.

Vanthangi: I am not a maiden who can be walled in, tell him that I said "I am always willing." Make no haste. After all, there is not just one way to knock open the heaviest door!

Palai Dumtea: Aw le, I shall so convey. How I wish you to embellish our chief's throne! But again, we are unable to persuade your elder brother Suakpuilala (42).

Vanthangi's beauty was renowned across villages, drawing numerous suitors. However, her brother took careful consideration in selecting a suitable groom for her and ultimately chose Ngursailova, the son of Lalsuthlaha, the *Sailo* chief. On the day Vanthangi decided to mark the transition to womanhood, she sunbathed on a riverside rock without any clothing. Lalzika, returning from a hunting trip, encountered her and attempted to engage in intimate relations. Despite her fondness for Lalzika, Vanthangi refused, respecting the decision made by her family to betroth her to Ngursailova. She was determined not to tarnish her reputation or go against her family's wishes. This incident highlights the societal expectations placed on women in Mizo culture, emphasizing their commitment to actions that uphold family honor and align with familial decisions,

Vanthangi: Duhthusam ang a ni tawh lo , I tlai lua e. A hun dik taka thil tih nghal pawimawh zia zir chhuak ang che. Min khawih suh, a hun a liam tawh. Midang hual chhung sa ka ni tawh, I chet muan man I hmu a nih kha, mutmawh hnar mawha min neih lohzia a chiang tawh hun tha I bawhpelh tawh a tawk.

Lalzika: Hrui lovin min hnuk a, a hnaih deuh leh min khawng leh tawlh a. Thu I chah a, a tihlawhtling turin ka lo kal a, I tal leh si maw?

Vanthangi: Mi ngurchuai chuan chet muan man an hmu a ni mai. Tunah chuan thu delhkih a ni tawh, Ngursailova ta ka ni tawh dawn a, chang dang kan thei ka ni tawh lo.

Vanthangi: It is no longer ideal, you're too late. May you learn the importance of action taken at an opportune time. Touch me not, the time has passed. I have already been betrothed to someone else, you have paid the price for your tardiness, you have made it clear that I am not your greatest preoccupation. You are out of time, it is enough.

Lalzika: You have pulled me without strings, and once I come close you hit me with it. You sent me word, here I am to fulfill it, but now you're fighting me off?

Vanthangi: A sluggish man has received his reward for being slow. Words have been made, I will now belong to Ngursailova, I cannot cross any boundaries (58).

Ngursailova and Vanthangi married as per the consent of their families, but Ngursailova did not behave in a manner expected by Vanthangi. He accused her of adultery and laid his hands on her. Ngursailova was an irresponsible person, and while he was unable to pay for his wife's bride price, he put her in confinement and tortured her. The status of a woman who was divorced was quite pathetic, and she could not take anything from her husband's home except the things she brought in with her

Generally, divorce was the man's privilege and the ground for divorce was very often simple, if the wife does not find favour with the husband, he would then give an order of divorce and send her out of his house, which is called "Ma" or "Mak". According to custom a man is never said to have committed adultery even if he had done so. In case he suspected infidelity or found in adultery, the jealous husband would simply throw her out of his house empty handed and the woman would suffer helplessly. In such case, the husband is also entitled to keep his wife's *thuam* and other property such as Cloths, beads, etc. (*Women in Mizo Society* 13)

Vanthangi underwent a sorrowful plight. Though the daughter of a chief who was the pride of her brothers and beloved by her family, Ngursailova degraded her status, which reveals the plight of women in cases of divorce. The bride who entered into Ngursailova's village with greatness was mistreated and accused of adultery by her husband who not only divorced her, but detained her in a *Hreng*. In Mizo society, a woman who was kept in confinement was less fortunate in divorce. The speech made by Vanthangi before leaving from Ngursailova's village depicts her plight:

Vanthangi: Min hmangaihtu zawng zawngte chungah ka lawm e. Khuanu malsawmna lo dawng zel ang che u. Hnawl ka nih takah chuan, hrenga tang kumkhua tur chuan nangni pawhin min phal loving, kawng laka tlu hlum tur pawhin ka pen chhuah a ngai ta. Phur takin khua ka rawn luh ni kha ka ngai dawn mang e. Mahse ka rawn luhpui thuihhruai naute hi chu ka hruai hawng leh ang, min lo hrethiam dawn nia. Zan tin atan mangtha vek u.

Vanthangi: I convey my gratitude to all who have loved me. May you be blessed by *Khuanu* god abundantly. Now that I've been rejected, you too must not wish to see me detained in hreng all the time, thus I must step out even if I have to fall to my death on my way back. How I shall miss the day I entered into this village with much excitement. I am taking back everyone that I had brought along, thus I seek your pardon. I wish you goodnight for all the nights to come (89).

There is a juxtaposition in the status of women in Mizo society. While most women were subjugated, there were exceptional women who rose high up in society. One among such exceptional women is Lalnu Ropuiliani,

After her spouse Vandula passed away in the late 19th century AD, Ropuiliani became the first female chief in Mizoram's history. In southern Mizoram, she was the head of the Denlung village, which located close to Hnahthial. There is still a village there now. She was imprisoned by the British in 1893 because she refused to recognize their authority and denied the supremacy of the British colonists. She was originally imprisoned at Lunglei, Mizoram's second capital, but was subsequently moved to a jail in Rangamati, which is now in Bangladesh. "Barely a year after she was imprisoned, Ropuiliani died in jail in January 1894 and her body was taken home by her son, Lalthuama who was also imprisoned along with her. The administration of the village never came under Ropuiliani or her descendants again"

(<https://www.easternpanorama.in/index.php/cover-story/346-ropuiliani>)

Like Ropuiliani, after being divorced by Ngursailova, Vanthangi was made chieftess by her elder brother Suakpuilala. In Act III Scene I, the narration goes, “The chieftess of *Chungtlang* village, Vanthangi received numerous visitors, as if people from all nationalities came to converse with her non-stop.” Vanthangi ruled *Chungtlang* village quite well. There is a scene where she makes a peace treaty with the British Major Boyd,

Vanthangi: Kha, in hmuh ang khan, Mizo pa lukhum ka khumtir kha, inremna lukhum a nih kha. Sap pa kha, phai ram leh a chhehvela thuneitu lian leh lal tak a nih kha, min duhsak hle tih in hre thiam em? Ti khan remna palai v eve kan ni mai.

Khawnbawl: Aw, kan hrethiam e. Ka pi, I thi thar kha a mawi, I puan thar nen, kan va chhuang che em aw.

Vanthangi: As you have witnessed, the Mizo cap that I made him wear, was a token of peace. The Englishman has authority over the *Phai* valley and its vicinity. Can you tell that he has us in good favour? Now that makes us both messengers of peace.

Khawnbawl: Yes, we understand chieftess, your new necklace is beautiful, so is your new *Puan* (special type of cloth with distinct pattern), we are most proud of you (98).

While Mizo women existed within a patriarchal society, the chieftesses held a unique position of respect and admiration from the *Khawnbawl Upa* and their subjects. These women were entrusted with ensuring the security of their communities. In times of wars and raids, chieftesses exhibited the same bravery and strength as their male counterparts, leading groups of *Pasaltha* and courageous young men. In Act III, Scene II of the play, the depiction of the raid on Ngursailova's village by Vanthangi unfolds. The young men, who were peacefully sleeping at *Zawlbuk*, found themselves surrounded. Vanthangi's forces enslaved many young

men from Ngursailova's village, eliciting pride and admiration from the entire community for their chieftess,

*Salthachala: Kan lalnu hmaah kan din tlartir dawn che u a ni.
Puithiam leh thirdeng fa kan kai tel lo vang che u. In lawm em,
Chungtlang khua kan thlen hma chuan engdang mah sawi a rem tawh lo.*

Valvuma: Ka va peih lo em aw

*Salthachala: Hmmm, Hranga a ni kha chu chhuah mai teh, peih loh
thu sawi awm chhun a nih kha.*

*Hranga: A ni tak e. Chanchin lo sawi chhawngtu atan pawh a tha teh
tak ang. (A phelh nghal mawlh mawlh a) Nia, tawmkailo leh
ramtuileilo ngaihnathiam chu kan tih ngei tur a ni e.*

*Salthachala: Kal nghal ang aw. (Zawlbuka riak tlangval leh pa hote
chu tingmit dialin lalnu hmaa ding turin an liam ta a.*

Salthachala: We shall present you before our chieftess. I shall not drag along the sons of the priest *Puithiam* and the blacksmith *Thirdeng*. Are you glad, nothing is to be said until we arrive at *Chungtlang* village.

Valvuma: How I have no inclination for it!

Salthachala: Hmmm, Hranga, set him free, he is the only one who has expressed his lack of inclination.

Hranga: Certainly. He'll make good use in relaying the news. (He unties him) True, we should show consideration to the sick and the incapacitated.

Salthachala: Let's leave immediately. (All the young men who sleep at zawlbuk and the men left together to present themselves before the chieftess) (104).

The chieftesses demonstrated remarkable governance skills, exemplified by the enduring legacy of Ropuiliani, still remembered for sacrificing her life in the fight against the British. Similarly, Vanthangi, a beloved chieftess, was highly esteemed by her subjects. Despite her successful raid on Ngursailova's village, a conspiracy to assassinate her unfolded, orchestrated by five strangers who concealed themselves in the crowd. Her demise was mourned by the people, and conversations among villagers revealed their trust in Vanthangi's leadership and their yearning to be under her rule. This underscores the fact that some women possessed the capability to effectively govern a village, showcasing bravery and good governance that could even surpass that of many men,

Khawnbawl: E khai, a van hrilhhaithlak tehlul em ve le! A hmel duhawm a liampui dawn ta si. Kan ngai vawng vawng dawn a ni, ni tin zan tin in. Aw itsikna khakzia hi aw, phiarrukna tenawm ber, mi nunrawng thil tih maw.

Kawt-Pitar: Bawihthe, Bawihpui Chungtlang khaw mawitu, Thianghlimna par thuam famkim sin rengin, Dikna lal tiang nena kil tin hawl thin khan, Fahrahin min siam ta si, ka rei maw, Valtin suihlung dumtu nuthai chhuanawm, I zikah tunge par dawn ta le.

Khawnbawl: E khai, this is indeed confounding! She leaves with her beautiful face. We shall miss her, every night and day. Oh the bitterness of jealousy, most abominable conspiracy, the deed of a cruel heart.

Kawt-Pitar: *Bawihthe, Bawihpui* the beauty of *Chungtlang* village, dressed in the fullness of sanctity, covering every corner with your rod of justice, you have left us to be orphans, how woeful, you

laudable woman who pleased every man's heart, who shall bloom on your sprout? (120).

3.11. Individual Action and Its Connection to Social Ethics

The Mizo chiefs were frequently engaged in warfare, primarily driven by their ambition to acquire additional land. The sons of the esteemed *Sailo* chief Lallula undertook initiatives to expand *Zoram* both to the north and south, resulting in the loss of countless lives and the raiding of any village that posed a potential threat. These rulers were pioneers in expanding the territorial boundaries of *Zoram*.

The sons of Lallula

1. Lalpuiliana
2. Lallianvunga
3. Mangpawrha
4. Vuttaia

The third son of the great Mizo chief Lallula was Mangpawrha (Lalmanga). Mangpawrha's descendants were the *Khawthlang Lalte* or the Western Chiefs. His father Lallula wanted Manga to secure their chieftainship on the western side. While Lallula lived in *Hreichhuk*, Manga had moved to *Bedo*. Manga had three sons 1) Thawmpawnga 2) Runphunga and 3) Suakpuilala. Suakpuilala was the only legitimate son. Lalmanga's biggest rivals were the *Palian* and *Zadeng* chiefs. Though he was related to the *Palian* and *Zadeng*, being the sons of Zahmuaka, the son of his grandparents, greed took over and despite being related, they tried to humble the others. (*Mizo History Chin Hills leh Mizoram* 251).

In the play "*Lalzika leh Vanthangi*," Mangpawrha convened his *Khawnbawl Upa* in Act I, Scene I, to discuss strategies for expanding the land. He also briefed them on the measures he had taken to safeguard the area under his rule. Mangpawrha's actions and governance suggest the prevalent atmosphere of war during those times. While his focus on enlarging the total area reflected the hardships faced by the villagers, the constant warfare served as a unifying factor.

Mangpawrha's last wish, conveyed to his son Suakpuilala and his *Upate*, encapsulates the prevailing concerns shared by everyone, including the village *Pasaltha* and the anxious young men,

*Mangpawrha: Hei kan tlang chuan mek leh a chhehvelah hian Sailo
lal kan awm ve neuh neuh a, intai reng tur kan nil ova, an chala han
pen fawk ngai an awm a nih pawhin rawt chimih lam hmanhmawh
suh u. In pu Lalsuthlaha, I nu Buki pa te nen ngei khan kan ram
humhim kan duh hlur a. Kan sai ram chhuahna lo pal darhtu phaikin
vai hote khu kan zuk zilh zeuh zeuh va. Kan ram chin humhim tur hian
rosum chhuhsak ngaih chang a awm ang, sala kaih an ngaih chang a
awm zauh zauh bawk. Kan chenna ram hi hum zo turin insan phrek fa
a ngai.*

Mangpawrha: On this hillock which we have occupied and surrounding it are multiple Sailo chiefs; and though we should not have enmity with one another, ensure to slow down lest one of us is annihilated when a situation demands a discipline or two. Conserving our area was the main aim of myself and your grandfather Lalsuthlaha, father of your aunt Buki. We had to scare the phaikin vai of the valley who trespassed into the area where our elephants graze. There might be times when confiscating money is required in order to protect our land, as well as enslaving people a few times. We must be accommodating in order to protect the land we live on (26).

When the chief's primary focus was the expansion of his territory, the subjects had no option but to comply. It was the people's duty to obey the chief for their own safety. Mangpawrha's ambition to enlarge his area and ensure its protection led him to make occasional mistakes,

Around 1890, the British government placed two *Meitei* villages at *Hailakandi* to guard against the Mizo enemies, and the kings of the two villages were Ram Singh and Tribumjit Singh, descendants of the *Rajah of*

Manipur. Lalrihua invited the *Meitei* kings to raid *Pakwacherra*, and captured Manga. He was later ransomed by his children and freed. When the fight for kingdom disrupted the family of the rulers of Manipur, Manga seized the opportunity to war against Lalrihua, and being victorious, proceeded towards the south (*Mizo History Chin Hills leh Mizoram* 252).

Success is not achieved without the courage to defend one's own land. Remaining anchored in one's hillock merely to preserve chieftainship is not a prudent strategy. True manhood or womanhood, as envisioned for the next generation, involves living beyond immediate pleasures. This was the ethos instilled in children - to possess foresight and safeguard the land for future generations. Mangpawrha adhered to such principles, earning recognition as a courageous chief. His children solemnly embraced his last wishes, perpetuating his legacy by expanding their rulership,

Thawmpawnga: Ka pa, tun tum chu hliam leh mi kut tuar pawh kan awm lo. Sawi lawk ang khan Adumpur chhehvela khaw pathum kan zuk run a, en mah teh, kan ral lak sum zawng zawng te saw. (An dah vum hnuk mai a)

Mangpawrha: Silai leh a mu lam in hawn tel em

Runphunga: Ka pa, Silai chu pathum bak kan hmu zo lo, a pilril thei ang berah an thukru a ni ang.

Mangpawrha: Kan vanglai min ti ngai hle mai! kawrvai ho khu a khat tawka rum thaih deuh reng loh chuan nakin lawkah min rawn zuam lutuk mai dawn a, kan ram chin hum a ngai bawh nen.

Thawmpawnga: Ka pa, we have no casualties this time. As planned, we raided three villages nearby Adumpur, and look, the money we looted. (The loots were piled in high stock)

Mangpawrha: Did you bring guns and bullets home?

Runphunga: Ka pa, we could only find three guns, they must have hidden the rest at the deepest chambers.

Mangpawrha: You make me nostalgic of our youth! The *Kawrvai* plains-people must be raided occasionally unless they might have the upper hand later, and we must protect our area (30).

As Mangpawrha advanced in age, he expressed his desire for his son Suakpuilala to succeed him, stating, "I want him to take over. I seek the witness of all my nearest elders". Consequently, he entrusted his chieftainship to his most trusted son. Suakpuilala dutifully fulfilled his father's final wishes, focusing on the expansion and preservation of the land.

Sent by Suakpuilala, his younger brother Thawmpawnga and Ngura, son of Lallianvunga raided Mangchina's mother's fort *Palsang*, a *Thado* (*Kuki*) village situated along the *Vangai* mountain range. They killed the chieftess, captured her husband Haulala and brought him before Suakpuilala. Haulala was killed. The *Thado* reported it to the British Councillor at *Silchar*. Colonel Lister with his British troops went ahead and made peace agreement,

- 1) Company personnel and land must no longer be disturbed. Suakpuilala gifted him an elephant tusk while the British gave him a beautiful piece of cloth. They both agreed to make proper boundary, which would be carried out later on.
- 2) Slaves of Suakpuilala to be checked and in case any slave formerly belonged to the British, they must be duly sent back.

In the peace treaty made on December 18, 1850, Suakpuilala seemed to be quite solemn about it (*C Lalaudinga* 254)

Devoting the majority of their lives to warfare and raids, the men aspired to become dependable *Pasaltha*, earning the trust of both the chief and the villagers. This aspiration fueled their courage, and their unwavering loyalty to the chief and the village resulted in reciprocal love and admiration from the villagers.

Val Upa: Kan lal chungah hian tumah an leng tur a ni lo. A chungnung ber zel ang.

Tlangvalho: A dik e, a tan nun kan thap e. Muzuk fei leh chemtum nen chauha inpawmchilh a tul pawhin, tumah tlanchhiat loh tur. Silai pawh mamawh tawh kan nei ve tho.

Val Upa: Inbeih tak tak a ngaih a, inkhuainuai a thlen pawhin lal leh a chhungkuate humhim hmasak a ngai

Tlangval: Lal khua leh tuia chiang chin kan ni e. Kan lalin sap leh vai rual a hlauh lohzia pawh kan hria a lawm, ngah nge kan zam ang ni.

Val Upa: No one should be above our chief. He must prevail.

Tlangvalho: True indeed, our lives for his life. No one must flee, even if the combat is with a Muzuk sword and a chopper. We have abundant firearms as well.

Val Upa: If real war takes place and the entire village is attacked, the utmost priority is the safety of the chief and his household.

Tlangval: We are true to the chief and the village. We know just how our chief is neither afraid of the vai plains-people nor the British, why must we be afraid? (50).

In Act III, Scene 3, Lalzika's raid on Vanthangi's village unfolds as an attempt to humble the woman he once loved. Lalzika's motive was to claim her as a slave since she was no longer married. Additionally, driven by lingering emotions, Lalzika sought revenge, intending to instill anxiety in Vanthangi. Learning of this raid, Suakpuilala, incensed by the harm done to his sister, retaliated by raiding Lalzika's village, achieving a decisive victory. Suakpuilala's ruthless actions stemmed from the necessity to survive, instill fear in his enemies, demonstrate his chieftain's greatness to his subjects, and assert a sense of superiority over others. His conduct during the raid on Lalzika's village vividly portrays these motivations:

Suakpuilala: Khai le, in sal tur mi pakhat theuh han thlang phawt mai teh u aw. Chutah thutawp ka siam ang.

Val-Upa: Hei hi ti chat chat ang aw (Lalzika khaw mipui te chu an lo chhuak a) Hnuk hrang nghal zel ang aw.

Nula & Nuho: Awi awi awi, a va rapthlak em ve le (An tap chuah chuah a, a then an te teng tung a, pasaltha chuan an kai nghauh nghauh mai a)

Suakpuilala: Hmm...rosum in chhuhsakte in rawn pek kira, Chungtlang lalnu Vanthangi ke bul ngeiah bawkhupa in lal leh pasaltha hovin thupha an chawi hunah, keiin rem ka ruat thar leh ang. Chu in hria em.

Suakpuilala: Khai le, choose one each to be your slave. I shall then announce the final word.

Val-Upa: Let's pick these with certainty (The inhabitants of Lalzika's village appeared) Separate them at once.

Nula & Nuho: Awi awi awi, how inhumane (They wailed, some screamed out loud, the pasaltha pulled them harshly)

Suakpuilala: Hmm...once you've returned the money you've looted, and your chief with his pasaltha bowed at the feet of *Chungtlang* chieftess Vanthangi for her forgiveness, then shall I make new declaration. Is that understood? (112).

The conduct of chiefs and *Pasaltha* as authoritative figures significantly influenced the perceptions and priorities of the people. Suakpuilala, driven by the desire to expand his territory and raid his enemies, led to the emergence of groups of courageous young men and *Pasaltha*. Lalzika, fueled by unrequited love, made the

choice to raid Vanthangi's village as an act of revenge, bringing immense suffering to his own subjects. Consequently, the people found themselves at the mercy of the whims and ambitions of their leaders.

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CHAPTER – 4

STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN *DUHMANGA LEH DARDINI*
AND *LALVUNGA* PLAYS**4.1. A Brief Summary of the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini***

Duhmanga, the chief's son was a good-looking bachelor and an extremely wise person, with unmatched physical strength, for which his father and his council of elders, the *Khawnbawl Upa* were rather proud of. Due to his striking appearance, Duhmanga was the most eligible bachelor among the young maidens, and the chief and his advisors deemed it inappropriate of him to court any girl he fancied. The only exception they made for him was Saikii, the daughter of the eldest advisor, therefore he would only frequent Saikii's home. Both Duhmanga and Saikii had naturally grown quite fond of each other. One night, Saikii and her family were required to hold a sacrificial ritual due to which Duhmanga was unable to go to Saikii's home, and having nowhere else to go, he requested the young men sitting around the fire at the village square to let him join them and consequently, he was among the courtiers of Dardini that night. Dardini had seen Duhmanga many times, but the fact that he was the son of the chief prevented her from conversing and becoming acquainted with him, however, Duhmanga had never known about Dardini. From this night on, Duhmanga became obsessed with Dardini, with his heart completely enthralled to her and to no one else. Dardini felt the same way about Duhmanga, and on this particular night when Duhmanga came along with the other suitors she could not resist watching him despite others being around. The young men pulled out their *Dawhkillh* pins and attached them to Dardini's hair. Duhmanga too attached his *Dawhkillh* pin made of *Rawchang* bamboo and stuck it into Dardini's hair. Dardini stuck all the other *Dawhkillh* pins on the thatched wall except Duhmanga's pin which she wore on her hair. From then on, the other young men were displeased towards Dardini and ceased to go to court her at her home. Duhmanga thought that was an opportune incident for him and continued to court Dardini alone at her home.

The news of the romance between the village belle and the handsome and strong chief's son spread through *Vangtlang* village within a short period of time. Chawngkhuma, the young man who had secretly fallen in love with Dardini harboured great enmity towards Duhmanga, but it seemed impossible for him to dare to challenge the place of the chief's son who was famous for his stature and prowess as a *Pasaltha*, and Dardini was equally in love and committed to Duhmanga as well. Saikii was also greatly angered at the romance between Duhmanga and Dardini. She considered it a shameful defeat that a mere widow's daughter would steal her beloved Duhmanga from her despite her being the daughter of the respected chief's *Khawnbawl Upa*. Duhmanga and Dardini were deeply in love and longed to be together, finding much delight in each other's presence. However, Dardini often felt insecure due to the immeasurable divide between their social classes. Yet their love deepened each day, though Dardini would often reflect on their differences, finding herself short from being eligible to marry the chief's son, the thoughts of which would always make her wish to leave him, but would never find the courage to do so. With a heavy conscience, she continued on the path of love with Duhmanga.

Time passed by, and eventually the news of Duhmanga's romantic liaison reached the ears of Duhmanga's parents. They were extremely upset that their son, who might very soon conquer a hillock and claim his chieftainship over it, had left the *Khawnbawl Upa*'s daughter for a widow's daughter, and decided to break them apart at the earliest. Duhmanga's mother Chawngi was especially angry and resented Dardini without any consideration for her son's feelings. It became the utmost urgent matter for Suaka, the eldest advisor and *lal Hrangvunga*, the chief to plot wisely for their separation. They acted on their despicable plan and arranged the marriage of Duhmanga and Saikii without getting consent from the groom himself. Duhmanga refused to acknowledge Saikii as his wife, and refrained from consummating the marriage, for no one but Dardini could be on his mind.

Duhmanga could not forget Dardini but instead, his love for her increased each day. Finally, he brought Dardini to be his wife while she was pounding rice in the morning, and sent Saikii home. Since Dardini's arrival caused great chaos within the household, she was utterly mistreated and scorned. One particular day, while Duhmanga was out hunting, they sent her away from the house and sent word to Saikii without Duhmanga's knowledge to return as Duhmanga's wife. Returning home after a successful hunt, Duhmanga was berserk at what his parents had done in his absence and sent Saikii home. Instead of joining the formalities of the successful hunt, he went straight to Dardini's house. Dardini and her mother were threatened by the chief and Suaka who paid a visit to their house to address the relationship between Duhmanga and Dardini.

Dardini went through great distress because of their predicament and she felt an immense sense of guilt for the severed ties between Duhmanga and his kins. Considering breaking off to be the best situation for Duhmanga, she tried to end their relationship innumerable times, yet Duhmanga was willing to abandon his chieftainship and his relatives to have her. Instead, he was always on the lookout for an opportunity where they could be together. He made a plan to escape to his uncle *Hrima's* village in secret, and told about his plans to Dardini. He would go to his uncle *Hrima's* village on the pretext of going for a hunt, and elope with Dardini upon his return.

Duhmanga left for hunting immediately without a proper visit to his house, and during his long absence his parents sent the rather pregnant Dardini home, proceeding to even banish Dardini and her mother from the village. When Duhmanga returned from his hunt, he was filled with immense grief upon learning of the banishment of Dardini and her mother and proceeded to go to *Dini's* village with a severed heart. Dardini had given birth to his son at *Mualpui* village but she died during childbirth, uttering his name till her last breath and her son was laid over her dead body. Duhmanga was shattered to pieces when he learned of the death of Dardini and his son. When his village *Vantlang* was attacked and massacred, he did

not participate but grieved for Dardini and his son and eventually died with a broken heart.

4.2. Securing Higher Status in the Society through One's Abilities:

Man is a social being who dwells in a community setting where there are different hierarchical settings be it socio-political or familial; and while others are high above the social ladder, some are comparatively in the lower. Man holds an important role in the establishment of such hierarchy in a community setting. In a Mizo community, a man may be established based on his courage, the number of his kills in hunts, and also on his physical prowess.

What they value most is a brave man, a strong and diligent warrior. At the birth of a boy, they would announce him to be a brave hunter who would shoot an elephant. Such was the blessing of the elders. First and foremost, they desired the son to be a brave and skilled hunter and if not, a respectable man who was wise with his counsel wherever he would go, similar to the wealthy and educated people in the present times (*Mizo Ramchhuah Dan 2*).

In Scene I of the short play *Duhmang leh Dardini* this is clearly indicated in the conversation between the *Vangtlang* chief Hrangvunga and his council of elders at *Vangtlang lal In*. They were undoubtedly proud of their young men and had no reason to envy other villages. The young men gave their best for the welfare of the village and the dwellers, vying for a respectable position within the community by virtue of their selflessness and dedication towards the village and its chief.

*Suaka: Taka hei Duhmanga pa, kan val upate chu I thu nghakin an
thu reng chu a ni a, pawl hai a awm thar deuh em ni ta?*

*Zahmuaka: Ni e, Val upa, kan khawtlang daingul, tlangvalte
huihaitu leh a zaizap tu, an ni tlawmngaihna hi a nih hi keini akara
thlamuanga kan awm theih hi. Thu chhia thu tha fah thuai a dik ang.*

Val upa III: Eng ti tur pawhin kan inpeih reng e.

Suaka: Indeed, father of Duhmanga, our *Val Upa* are sitting and waiting to hear from you, is there any new matter of concern?

Zahmuaka: True, *Val Upa*, the real fences of our village, the one who bonds with our young men and guide them, it is due to their dedication that we are able to feel secure and at peace. It'd be correct to let them know whatever the concern is, good or bad.

Val upa III: We are ready for anything (16).

As seen in the dialogues above, there is a great dependence on the brave and altruistic young men whose presence brings peace and security to the village. From the speech of Hrangvunga, the depth of the dedication of the young men towards the welfare of the village can clearly be seen. Since young men whose names were being called out by the chiefs depicted acknowledgment of their bravery and *Tlawmngaihna* towards the village, the young men were respected by others and it was therefore imperative for them to dedicate themselves deeper, just as the Val Upa replied that they were ready to do anything required of them. Hrangvunga desired to know who among the young men was most brave and *Tlawmngai*, for he had not heard of any name being mentioned in particular for some time now, and thus he was keen to find out. Since it was the highest competition among young men, a wise chief would look for the most committed young man to instigate them to perform their best.

Lal: A ni tak e, ka lo mangnghilh leh dawn tawh a sin. Eng dang a ni law a hmingin khua leh tuite zarah lal thut chuan ka han thu ve a, khawtlang leh lal tana mi huaissen leh tlawmngai ber mi hi ka hre chak em a, chumi thuah chuan in mi rawn beiseiin ka koh tir mai che u a ni e.

Suaka: Hmm, a pawimawh reng asin. Tu hualthu suhah tam avanga lo inmuan sual pawh thil awmthei a ni. Kan Lalpa thu han rawt chu

*thil finthlak tak a ni ang, mi leh sa pawh kan inhre chiang theiin rual
elna duhawm a hrin ngei ka ring*

*Zakhuma: A tha ngawt tak ang chu. Mi huaisen kan chawi san chuan
mi hratkhawkheng leh pasaltha an pung ngei ang. Kan vangtlang val
rualte hi an duai lo teh chuan ka hre nghe nghe a sin.*

Lal: Indeed, I have almost forgotten about it. It is nothing grave, but since I hold the office of being a chief due to the benevolence of the villagers, I am quite impatient to know who is the bravest and most altruistic man towards the village and its chief, and thus I have summoned you to counsel me on that.

Suaka: Hmm, that is a matter of great importance. Not to offend anybody, but it is possible to be careless with too many. Our chief's suggestion is certainly wise, for it could lead to better acquaintance for all of us and I have no doubt this will lead to a healthy competition among us.

Zakhuma: That is indeed a good idea. If we honour the bravest, it'd most definitely lead to an increase in the numbers of dedicated and great hunters. I am most certain that the young men of our village are great men (17).

Young brave men whose presence comforted the villagers were duly respected and admired. The conversation between Hrangvunga and his council of advisors at the onset of the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* depicts their contemporary society with their worldview including their value systems and the ambition of the young bachelors to attain prominence and status within the society. The male child was taught to be brave from his tender years. The primary focus of their education was to acquire skills in hunting and killing in times of war and plunder. The other marker of a brave and gifted hunter was in the display of the myriad skulls of animals on their *Sumhmun*, the outer porch.

As a people, the Mizo were *Tlawmngai*, putting selflessness to the fore and brave nation. Facing a savage man or a rampant wild animal without any fear or trepidation was the means through which they could earn the most coveted name for themselves. Courage during battles to save the village, during elephant hunts and standing up to save their friends, and being helpful during times of fortune and misfortune were the competitions among the young men, and those who qualified were greatly admired and respected even by the elder villagers, showing them great partiality. On occasions of a village's *Sechhun Khuangchawi* the brave and *Tlawmngai* men were being favoured upon at the *Sumdeng Zu*. It was considered improper to drink of the *Sumdeng Zu* without the presence of the young prominent men and would not dare drink of the zu even if the drink was ready without the *Tlawmngaité* and the *Pasaltha*. The man who was considered to be the most selfless and brave was to have the first drink from the largest mug, which was seen as the highest form of respect that could be paid to the most deserving young man.

Mizo wrestling occupied an important place in their lives; and wrestling areas were prepared at *Zawlbuk* or other open spaces based on convenience, and under the supervision of the *Val Upa*, wrestling matches were held to identify strong bachelors.

Such was the importance of this sport that it was the main event each day and night and used by a village to challenge another village. Moreover, it served as the main form of entertainment among men of the same village who would indulge in it on preparing graves and other community services through which the strength of the young men were tested, and hence the older generation popularized it above all other sports and had great respect for it. The young Mizo men did not spend the night at their homes, every village had *Zawlbuk*, or the men's dormitory. The young men would spend the night together at *Zawlbuk*, unless he was sick and suffering from serious ailment, or having serious matter which demanded his presence at his home since it was expected of all the bachelors to spend the night at *Zawlbuk*. The bachelors would wrestle at night, and make loud clamours, for it was the sport that they found most entertaining. Any travelling bachelor who spent the night at the

Zawlbuk would be wrestled by everyone in good humour. (*Kan Mizo Infiamnate* 90).

Mizo in the earlier society travelled to and fro during lean seasons and when a particular year did not require heavy labour or building of huts, they would travel to other villages in search of suitable brides to marry. During such times, the bachelors who were visiting would spend the night at *Zawlbuk*, the boys dormitory, where as per tradition they would be wrestled by the young men of that particular village, and it was considered to be a grievous shame to lose to the guests. Since they admired strong and brave men, it was a matter of pride to have the courage to wrestle the guest, and if they won against the guest, they were admired by all the other young men and the entire village was proud of them, and wanting to be on their good side, would not dare to speak carelessly with the,. The proudest were the chief and his council of elders who welcomed the depiction of the strength of their young men against those from other villages, believing it to be an indicator of the strength of the entire village that would not be challenged by the village of the defeated, and thus put it as a matter of prime importance. Knowing that this was an opportune time to make a name for themselves, young men who were otherwise unknown would give their best to be recognised. In the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* there is the depiction of the wrestling match between the young men of the village and their guest, and the pride of the chief and the elders are clearly seen:

Lal: Ngawi teh u, thildang daih. Kan Mualnuam khualte kha an kal leh ta em ni? An zingah khan chak hmel fahran mai a awm an ti lo maw?

Zakhuma: Ni tak, kha buan lohvin em ni in chhuah tak mai le

Val Upa: Chhuah suh e! kan han fiam ve hlawm kha maw. An buan chak Manga phei kha chu a chak khawp a, kan tlangvalte an mualpho thelh mai le!

Zakhuma: Khai a!chu, in tlawm deuh mai elo?

Val Upa: A ni deuh ber mai e. Amaherawh chu, Duhmangan a han buan ve hnu kha chuan a pha ta a nih kha maw le.

Lal: Another thing. Have the guests from *Mualnuam* left? Wasn't it said that there was one among them who appeared to be rather strong?

Zakhuma: Indeed, did you allow them to leave without being wrestled?

Val Upa: Certainly not! We did sport with them. Their champion Manga was a strong contender, our young men were almost shamed!

Zakhuma: Oh no! So, does that mean you were almost defeated?

Val Upa: Almost so. However, when Duhmanga wrestled him he finally gave up (17-18).

In this conversation between chief Zakhuma and *Val Upa* it is clear that the defeat of the young men of the village by the guest would be a grave matter of shame, an utter humiliation for the young men and would be an embarrassment to face the chief and his elders. The young men vied to show their prowess during such times, knowing the significance of such a sport. Apart from proving themselves to their fellow young men, it was an ideal time to prove themselves before the chief, his council of advisers and the *Val Upa* in order to create a higher position for themselves for which they would try their best, knowing that losing would reverse their social standing and so despite wrestling being taken as an entertainment, it was also quite serious, and if anyone lose he would be deeply remorseful secretly.

In the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* the admiration for the hunters and warriors skilled at killing enemies is also depicted, as well as the dependence of the villagers on them for their security and their pride because of prowess of the young men before other villages.

The young men kept their watch during the day and night if enemies were close by. They were ready to fight against any wild animals or enemies. Those

who were willing to put their lives at stake for the sake of the village were revered by the chief and the villagers for their extreme courage and selflessness, thus they were honoured and respected. Such men were honoured by preparing *Nopui* or *Huai No* to commemorate their acts (*Hmasang Zonun* 60).

The privilege of holding the *Nopui* was an esteem not merely for the recipient but for the entire household to which he belonged due to which every male child aspired to achieve it, and this instance is clearly seen in the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini*. *Vangtlang* chief *Hrangvunga* and his *Upa-te* took utmost pride in their young men and often talked about them with great pride, and the *Val Upa* had tough deliberation on who would they pick as the most selfless and bravest among all. The chief's son *Duhmanga* was a young man of high repute who surpassed many of his peers, but his status as the chief's son did not free him from taking part in the competition of being the best in all criteria of judgment, which is clear in the words of the *Khawnbawl Upa Suaka*:

Suaka: Kan Val Upate pawh khan an sawi tlang lo mai pawh a, an Mualnuam buan chak Manga pawh kha a tang hman eih lo an ti tak a sin! Hei kan hmu reng a, sa lamah lah lasi a zawl a ni ang e tih turin a kut lah a hmui chap a, a hmel lah a duai si lo, kawlngo leng (Nula) te hi a lo sai thla tam lua ang tih mai palh pawh a awl a nih hi.

Lal: Chuti em ni dawn? Tlangval chhuanawm han tih tlak meuh chu a ni ngut lo vang e. Mahse le hei, kan sawi na mek mek a, kan rap hnuaizawng sarep awm loh lai reng a awm hauh lo tak chu a ni a, eng ang takin han inchher chho ang maw tih hi ka rilru helhkham ber a ni.

Suaka: Our Val Upa failed to put into direct words, but there is talk that the Mualnuam wrestler Manga failed to make even a single move! We see him, he appears to be communing with the fairy lasi in

his fortune in hunting, and he excels in handsomeness, such that he might have too many fair maidens besotted with him.

Lal: Is that true? He may not be an ideal bachelor to be proud of.

However, even as we speak, our hearth appears to have never run out of smoked meat, and my main concern remains how we would train out to be in the future (18).

According to Rev Dr K. Thanzaua, the significance of *Pasaltha* in Mizo society is thus:

The primary job of the *Pasaltha* is to protect the village for the people therein to dwell in peace. For the safety of the village, it might be necessary to wage war with villages nearby. In every war, the focus is to be victorious for the village to be proud of them, and to be ferocious towards the enemies to scare them. In any case of misfortune, they should face death without any fear for the sake of their village. They brought security to the chief and the villagers (*Pasaltha Sakhuana Atanga Thlirna* 37).

The Mizo constantly waged war and feuds due to which the *Pasaltha* on whom they could rely on for their security were duly admired, and their opinions were placed at high value at the court of the chief. The *Val Upa* often led them to wars and feuds, and the young men listened to their instructions rather than acting upon their whims and prerogative, waiting for the *Val Upa*'s direction to retreat or march forward. They chose to rely on the experienced *Val Upa* and refrained from behaving independently, and if anyone selfishly acted without concern for the others, he would be counselled not only by the *Val Upa* but also by the chief and his elders.

In Act II.I of the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* the combat between the warriors of Vantlang village and their enemies is depicted, and the manner in which they heeded on the instructions of the *Val Upa* is clearly indicated, and how it was the *Val Upa* who encouraged them at the battle-field:

Val Upa-I: Zam Reng reng suh u tumah kha. Pasaltha rammu theuh theuh a huai huai kan ding chang ang.

Tlangval-I: I hi U Thiang, pakhat ka thal e, saw an tal buai nasa mai.

Tlangval –II: E khai! In ring reng rawh u, in pho lang mai suh. Tah khan insuan rawh, hman hmawh lovin.

Thianga: An thawm a va reh ve le. An tlandarh ta em ni chu le! Khawnge kan thli thlai ang e.

Duhmanga: Ni lo, kal suh an la awm (Silai a lo ri a Thianga chu an lo kap fuh a) An kap fuh che e law? Khawnge helamah hian kan pawmphei ang che.

Val Upa-I: Don't lose heart, any of you. Of all the *Pasaltha* who have gone to war, only the braves will stand still.

Tlangval-I: Ehe le *U Thiang*, I shot one, look how agitated they are.

Tlangval –II: Hark hark! Be on guard at all times, do not show yourself. Shift over there, without hurrying.

Thianga: They sure are silent. Have they all fled? Let me find out.

Duhmanga: No, do not go for they are still there (There was the sound of a gunshot and *Thianga* was shot at) Did they hit you? Here, let me carry you to this side (33).

From the depiction of the behaviour of the raiders from *Vangtlang* village, the manner in which the words of the *Val Upa* were being listened to, and the way in which the brave warrior Duhmanga took precautions reveals that they were cautious and were considerate towards others, their willingness to die for a friend's sake and how they never betrayed one another no matter what would happen. This signified that there was an orderly administration in Mizo society, especially at the battlefield where the older people or the more experienced *Val Upa* were paid due respect. In

the following conversation between Thatkhuma and *Val Upa*, the fact that no one acted on their own based on their own decision, but would deliberate together wisely can clearly be seen. Bachelors who were obedient were favoured by the *Val Upa* and were given preference in the future, and since it was considered to be an honour to be favoured by those in higher authority, the young men rarely behaved against the words of the *Val Upa*.

Thatkhuma: E heu kan inhliam elaw? I fimkhur ang u, kan mi beihte hi an ralhrat hmel khawp a nia. Ral rel thiam takin an ho a ni ngat ang. Mahse pathum chu chiang takin kan thal tawh a nia. Keini chu kan la vannei a nih hi. Khai, silai a ri leh ta!inring reng rawh u.

Val Upa I: In awm hmun kha sawn zeuh zeuh rawh u. Duhmang khawnge Thanhrranga hi? Ti teh u ro I rel lawk ang u.

Thatkhuma: *E heU!!* are we wounded? Do let us be cautious, our opponents seem to be skilled at war. They must be led by someone quite skilled at war. Yet we have definitely killed three. We are still fortunate. Hark, there is the sound of gunshot again! Be wary at all times.

Val Upa I: Ensure to shift your positions from time to time. Duhmang, where is Thanhrranga? Come for a quick deliberation (34).

Sufferance and bravery were the qualities admired by the Mizo, and anyone possessing such virtues were instrumental during the war for they encouraged the young men from slacking, and motivating them from dejection. Sufferance was considered to be an inherent virtue in a man, and so every man was taught to be so. They did not want to appear to be in pain if they were wounded, and during sickness they would claim, “I am fine, don’t worry about me” for fear that others would think they lacked in sufferance. Every male child was valiant in saving the chief’s village and its inhabitants. Since there were wars fought most of the time, they had to be ready at all times, due to which brave men who were undaunted before enemies, who were willing to risk their lives were utmost precious. In the play *Duhmanga leh*

Dardini, the conduct of the *Val Upa* and the young men reveals their dedication to the chief and the villagers, to the extreme point that they did not mind losing their own lives.

After the cessation of the rainy season when the work on the cultivation lessened, the central highlight in the conversation between the young men sleeping at *Zawlbuk* and the *Pasaltha* was to go on an expedition on hunting and raids. They would prepare earnestly for it,

In order to acquire sufficient gunpowder, they would collect the outer layer of the earth below their huts and distill it for a long time. The chief and his elders were aware of the conversation between *Pasaltha* and the young men, and they were closely observing the possibility of success in the hunt or raid expedition. If a star appeared on the right side of the new moon, it was said to be “lifting a hatchet” or *Chem a chawi*. At such times, they would forego hunting or raiding. If a star appeared to the left of the new moon, it was said to be carrying a head, believing that meant a sign of sure victory. Moreover, if a *Bawngpui* bird facing the forest chirped during its flight, they took it as a sign of success and thus, were quite excited. If the *Bawngpui* bird flew homewards while chirping loudly, they believed it to be a prophecy of misfortune and failure, and these were the signs that the chief and his elders were observing closely. (*Mizo Pi Pute Lenlai* 44).

In terms of hunting and warring, they waited on the words of the chief and his elders and would not move out without their consent. If all conditions turned out to be favourable under the advice of the chief and his elders, the *Pasaltha* would then move out accordingly. They would plan according to the counsel of the chief and his elders, and then leave with food and other amenities, including their full gear. The *Val Upa* and the *Pasaltha* were keen on being submissive to the counsel of the chief and his elders, this was mainly due to the fact that in success or failure, they knew that the chief and his elders would offer their congratulations or sympathy accordingly, for it was the discretion of the chief and his elders to praise their ability, and place them at higher positions and so they respected those in power.

In Act II.I of the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* the sufferance of the *Pasaltha* is depicted. Thianga, the *Pasaltha* of *Vangtlang* village was shot with a bullet, and despite his severe wound he said, “*A na lo, mi thawi hlek chauh a lawm*” or “It doesn’t hurt, it’s just a graze” so that the others would not panic or be distracted, while being in the midst of the battle with the loud sound of gunshots, he showed his sufferance by saying “*Kei chu min ngaihtuah suh u, a na miah lo a nia*” or “Do not worry about me, it does not hurt at all.” In the conversation between the wounded Thanhrranga, one of their pride and one of the *Val Upa*, the sufferance of the men can clearly be seen:

Val Upa: Khawi aw! I Inhliam a ni maw? A na em Thanhrrang? Khaw maw ka lo en ang e

Thanhrranga: A na lo a na lo! Chaw ei titui tham pawh a tling lo vang a na lo tak tak a lawm.

Val Upa: Khawi aw! Have you been wounded? Does it hurt, Thanhrrang? Here, let me have a look.

Thanhrranga: It doesn’t hurt, it doesn’t hurt! It doesn’t even amount to a wound that would make you eat with great appetite (37).

Whenever the *Pasaltha* returned successfully from a raiding expedition, the entire village in their utmost pride would hold a celebration on their behalf. They would take the severed heads of their enemies to be seen by the chief and the villagers, such as seen in *Duhmanga*’s attempt to take the head of the enemy home:

Val Upa: Khawnge Duhmanga kha?

Tlangval IV: Saw laiah sawn a lut (a piaha ngaw a kaw k a)

Thanhrranga: Sawtah sawn ral pahnih chu kan that baw k a, chu mite lu chu a va la dawn a niang. Pakhat chu kei pawhin a sahin ka sat hlum a (Duhmanga Mil u khaiin a lo lang a)

Duhmanga: U Thiang, hei milu ka rawn la nghal mai a sin! Hei zawk hi Thanhraha sah hlum a nih hi.

Val Upa I: In lo va che deuh ve. Tunah zawng kan hlawhtling a, a beih pawh I beizui tawh lo mai ang. Muangchang lovin haw turin inpuahchah zawk ila a dik ang.

Val Upa: Where is Duhmanga?

Tlangval IV: He entered there (pointing to the forest nearby)

Thanhraha: We killed two enemies there, perhaps he had gone to severe their heads. I hacked one to death as well. (Duhmanga appeared carrying a head)

Duhmanga: U Thiang, I've severed a head already! This is the one hacked to death by Thanhraha.

Val Upa I: You've been quite valiant. Now that we're victors, let us not continue to fight. It'd be better to prepare to return without dallying. (37-38).

If they were far from their village, they would rather skin the head and take the skin of the head with a clump of hair,

They would stand at the place where they slaughtered their enemy, or on top of the corpse of the enemy and chant the *Bawhhla* with his name being repeated thrice (*Bawhhla* is a song chanted by the Mizo over the dead body of their enemy). This is because the slain enemy would be his servant at the village of the dead, and soon as the pasaltha who had killed him die he would be able to recognize him and welcome him at his house. They believed that a person who had killed many enemies would have many servants welcoming him (*Hmasang Zonun* 78).

The victorious *Pasaltha* with the head of the enemies were not to enter into their village during the daytime, and so they would wait for nightfall at a spot near the village till dinner time was over, and once it was time they would shoot their guns, chanting the *Bawhhla*. When the raiding party arrived at *Vangtlang* village, they shot their guns and made sounds to inform of their victory to the inhabitants:

Val Upa: Ngawi ru ngaithla teh u (Kawtchhuah atangin)

Zain in e thainu khan e

Zei mang nan sih hlah maw e

Thangsir e, par hnuaiah khan

Thang lung nau ang ka tah tir e

Val Upa II: I hi le, rammu hlawhtling an ni ngat mai le, ngawi the u chu pawh. (Kawtchhuah atang bawkin Chhimah e, hei thaling law Ka do hmarzawl khua ka thun e, Tual leh e, vai rawl thul, keini e, Tha kim mi ti u law (Silai a ri nawn awn awn a)).

Val Upa: Be silent, listen here (From the entrance to the village)

Zain in e thainu khan e

Zei mang nan sih hlah maw e

Thangsir e, par hnuaiah khan

Thang lung nau ang ka tah tir e

(The song is an indicator of their supremacy above their enemy, to state their victory, and how the relatives of the slain enemy were mourning over their fallen hero.)

Val Upa II: Wow, it's the successful raiding party, wait, listen to that as well. (From the same entrance to the village Chhimah e, hei thaling law Ka do

hmarzawl khua ka tlun e, Tual leh e, vai rawl thul, keini e, Tha kim mi ti u law (Gunshots were repeated at close intervals) (40-41).

At such times there was no need to specially announce the success of the raiding party to the villagers who had heard the gunshots and the chants, they were agitated with excitement, and none of the young men who stayed back at the village went to court the maidens, for everyone was busy, including the women who were preparing to welcome the *pasaltha* who had returned from a successful raid with the *Arkeziak* dance (*Arkeziak* is a long white cotton with tassel at both ends. The string is called *Hranghrual* and when they knitted and curried the goat's hair for the string, it is called *Zawngchal*. *Arkeziak* is made by the maidens of the village in honour of the prowess of men in raiding and is used to decorate their hair with when they returned home). The men, young and old were eagerly waiting for the arrival of the *Pasaltha* to listen to their account of the raid. Since the *Pasaltha* were to wait for daybreak at the outskirts of the village, no one was to go close to them, and the *Pasaltha* kept on firing from their guns, and on such nights as these it was impossible to get proper sleep. Since the raiding party were greatly admired by all based on their performance, the relatives of the party were eager to hear about their own kin. In the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* the general attitude of the villagers of admiration towards the successful warriors and in their preparation for welcoming their successful warriors reflected the status of successful raiders in Mizo society. The excitement to meet the raiders was common to all, including the children:

Val Upa I: Mite khan kan pasalthate kha an lo va pawh rawk ang e, tih loh tawp tur a nia, naupang pawh kha hrilh zel rawh u

Naupang: Ka pu hetia Zawlbuka lo inthemthiam ve chiam hi enge a awmzia? Kan va hmuak nghal dawn lo em ni.

Putar I: Khai Vala, ila nau deuh a ni maw. Thingnawi han chhawp belh deuh la ka lo hrilh ang che.

Naupang: Hei le thing tel chu, ka pu min hrilh tawh the. Hei ka thiante pawh ka rawn hruai a nia.

Putar I: Ti sawn rammu ho saw daiah an tlaivar dawn a ni. Khua an lo lut rih lovang. An thawm atangin an hlawhtling tih a langa, chumi lo chhan let nan chuan ti hian thawm kan nei tlaivar ve dawn a ni. Tumahin va pawh tur a ni lo naktuk zingah a nasa thei ang berin thawm an nei leh ang a, ropui takin khua an lo lut ang a, an lo luh hunah lo hmuak turin kan inbuatsaih a nih hi.

Putar III: Tunah hian nulate chuan pasaltha, mihrangho ban tur arkeziak an buatsaih sauh sauh hlawm ang chu.

Val Upa I: Ensure that no one goes to meet our *Pasaltha*, that is an impermissible act, inform the children as well.

Naupang: *Ka Pu* what is the meaning of practising here at *Zawlbuk*? Are we not going to meet them at once?

Putar I: *Khai Vala*, you must be quite young. Bring more sticks and I'll tell you so.

Naupang: Here is a bundle of wood, *Ka Pu* kindly tell me now. Look, I've even brought my friends.

Putar I: The raiders will be staying up for the night at the outskirts. They will not enter into the village yet. From their sounds, we know that they are successful and in return we are staying up and making sounds. No one is supposed to meet them. Tomorrow in the morning they will make the loudest sounds and with that, they will enter into the village, and it is in preparation of their entrance that we are readying ourselves.

Putar III: The maidens must be making *Arkeziak* for the *pasaltha*, the heroes to wear. (41-42).

The successful raiders were welcomed with the fullest pomp, and sounds were made for everyone in the village to hear, in which every villager wanted to

participate. Even the maidens made sure to join the welcome party organized for the heroes who brought honour to their village, the heroes who protected them. They would dress in their finest to take part in the celebratory dance at the display of the enemy's head before the entire village:

The young girls placed their *Arkeziak* on the heads, the arms, and the ankles of their heroes. The chieftess and other noble women gave them *Thihna*, *Thival* and *Thifen* necklaces instead of *Arteziak*. It was quite impossible for every member in the raiding party to kill an enemy each. They would hack at the corpse of the enemy, and this was seen as equivalent to having killed one. Apart from *Arkeziak* those that receive the most valuable and precious gifts were those who carried the severed head. The plunder brought home by the raiders was relieved from them by their relatives and family members who lived in separate houses. The plunders were mostly guns, gongs, spears and machetes. It was not permissible to ask such plunders as free gifts but they must be paid for with a price. However, there was no fixed price for the plunder. One could claim it by gun, pig, *Puan* or even an egg. After chanting *Bawhhla*, “the heroes entered into their respective houses. They left the severed heads of the enemies at the blacksmith's. They would then dress in their full armour and go to the celebration of the slain enemies after having the morning meal” (*Hmasang Zonun* 79).

4.3 The cost of human injustice and the Social system

In the earlier Mizo society there were many instances of discrimination not by choice, but by dint of familial relations, and also based on their upbringing. The Mizo were inherently selfless and willing to die for a friend, but due to discrimination within the society, there were many hardships. In *Duhmanga leh Dardini* the depiction of the plight of someone who fell short in the society due to being born into a lowly position and who could never be seen as equal to others is seen. In matrimonial matters, those who were born into poor families rarely forge alliances with the rich and powerful, and if there were marriages between such different backgrounds, they have to go through innumerable difficulties. If a bachelor wanted to marry, the bride price was different for each girl, the price being calculated

by the price of a mithun; due to which a young man would refrain from attempting to marry into the relatives of the chief. On the calculation of a bride price, K.Zawla states thus “The price of a maiden from a poor/ lower class family was equivalent to four to five mithun, while *Pachau* and other clans of the chiefs was seven, and even though they were not chiefs, any *Sailo* clan went by ten mithuns. (*Mizo Pi Pute leh An Thlahte Chanchin* 104)

Many young men and women who deeply loved one another could not marry due to the difference in social standing, to which Duhmanga and Dardini also belonged. Duhmanga the chief’s son and Dardini the daughter of a widow were unable to enjoy their basic human rights and faced many hardships, and despite their love and desire to be together, Duhmanga’s family could not accept a widow’s daughter as the wife of their son. Since they wanted him to marry Saikii, the daughter of *Khawnbawl* they created innumerable problems between them. They believed that it would be a great shame for the chief’s son to marry a woman from the lower rung of the society and it was due to the creation of such a rigid social system that the besotted lovers had to undergo unspeakable turmoil.

Since Saikii’s family were to undertake a particular ritual sacrifice, Duhmanga could not go to court her as usual, which gave him the opportunity to visit Dardini with his peers. The other young men failed to understand why the son of the chief would go to court a widow’s daughter Dardini, despite her being a graceful and beautiful young woman none of them wanted the chief’s son to court her. In this, there is a clear reflection of human injustice where Dardini became the victim solely because the chief’s son decided to visit her house on that particular night. None of the young men wanted to court Dardini following that night, and in the existing social system being collectively shunned by the young men was a grievous matter of shame, and the plight of the innocent Dardini is reflected in the following conversation between Duhmanga and his peers:

*Duhmanga: Kan sawi ang e Saikii te inthawi an thian loh zan khan ka
va leng ve e ka ti a, an paw ka sawi zawn ka hre hauh lo nain Dari*

*inlengte an Nuara, an haw ta phiar a. A chhan phe chu ka hre law,
Dari mei mi pek nung har lutuk kha an hua a nih nghal loh chuan*

Thatkhuma: Chu engtin nge ni zel a?

*Duhmanga: A tua mah leng duh ta lo chu le, ka mal rim heuh heuh
mai. Saikii han rim leh tur chuan rilru thahrui ka nei tawh lo a ni.*

*Thanhranga: Ni e, Dari zawng a tha a lawm. An michhiat hi a hre em
a rual a pawl lo zawk pawh a.*

Duhmanga: Let me say that I decided to visit her the night Saikii's family had a sacrificial ritual, and although I am not conscious of anything that I had done wrong, the men who courted Dardini were offended, and left altogether. I have no idea, but it could be that the tobacco Dardini gave me was too difficult to light at once.

Thatkhuma: And then what happened afterward?

Duhmanga: Since no one wanted to court again, I went all alone, much to my joy. I no longer had the desire to court Saikii.

Thanhranga: True, Dardini is a suitable girl. She is too conscious of her social standing and that prevents her from rising to the par (29).

In the earlier Mizo society, the rich and affluent were respected and everybody wanted to please them. Duhmanga's previous love interest Saikii could not compare to Dardini in myriad ways, not merely in terms of beauty but also in character and manner of speech, but since Saikii was the daughter of a *Khawnbawl Upa*, Duhmanga's parents preferred her over Dardini and wanted her to be the wife of their son. Dardini was popular among young men and women, and even old men and widowers were fond of her; and they were sorry that she was not wanted by Duhmanga's family because of her social status. They were able to foresee that Dardini would have to go through the plight that those in the lower rung suffered. This is clearly reflected in the conversation of the young men who courted Thankimi

regarding the secret problem between Duhmanga and Dardini with regard to their different status in the society:

Pathlawi: Kan sawi ta mek a, Kan lal fapa Duhmanga hi chu sa leh ralah a duaidim lo teh e. Chak lah a chak eltiang. A hming ngawt pawh hi chhak lama kan ralte chuan a tih-in a sin an tih ni. Dardini nen lah hian an sawi thang viau a, a nu leh pain an duhpui lo hle lehngal a ni awm a, tak tak ni maw?.

Putar: E le tu nge va hre kilh kelh ang ni, an michhe deuh ve tih mai lovah chuan Dari hi chu nula chhuanawm tak a ni phawt mai. A tawngin mi a lem in hawih lah a hawihhawm ngiang a. Hman ni kan feh hawng tlai pawh ka phur kha a rit deuh bawk a, minrawn um phak velekh kan mi han chhawk nghal thuai mai a, ka lawm teh a sin.

Thankimi Nu: A hmel pawh a tha ngawt nia. An mi chhiat hi a hre khawp a, thuhnuaairawlh dek hian a khawsa a, a khawngaihthlak ngawt mai.

Thankimi: Keipawh ka ti. Hmani pawh a rilru hah zia min hrilh a.

Pathlawi: Now that we're on the topic, our chief's son Duhmanga is an absolute champion in hunting and raiding. He is incomparably strong. It is said that the *Ralte* clan to the east are scared by his name alone. He's often gossiped about with Dardini, it seems like his parents are quite unhappy about them, but is there any truth to it?

Putar: E le who would be knowledgeable to such extent, apart from being poor Dardini is among the young women of high repute. She speaks pleasantly and she is quite meek. The other day I was heavily loaded on our way back from the cultivation and soon as she caught up with us, she relieved me much to my delight.

Thankimi Nu: She is also quite beautiful. Yet she is too aware of their status, and behaves in a meek way, I feel sorry for her.

Thankimi: I agree with that. The other day she told me about her worries. (50).

The rule of the chiefs were severely felt, with no one daring to argue with them, their words became the final words, and in terms of marriage, the poor and the lowly never expected to form any alliance with the relatives of the chiefs. Great care was taken to marry into the same social standing. The chief's family would look for marriage alliance with the same royal family from other village, and if they wanted to marry from the village itself, they looked among their clan first, and then to the family of the chief's adviser or the affluent. Not all human beings are the same, and there would be times when the kith and kin of the chief would fall in love with people from the lower status, due to which the young man and woman in love had to undergo tough times from their families. At such times, the one belonging to the poorer section had to experience worse treatment. In the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* the suffering of the innocent Dardini depicts the predicament faced by the widow's daughter since she was a commoner and child of an ordinary person with no social standing.

Problems in forging alliances through marriage had occurred several times due to differences in social positions in the past, one among which was experienced by Laltheri, the daughter of a Mizo chief who fell in love with a commoner Chalthanga and the following is an account of their ill-fate written as a story by PS Dahrawka in 1987:

Laltheri was the daughter of the Sailo chief, Lalsavunga and her siblings were Vanhnuailiana, Lalphunga and Thawmvunga. Laltheri became famous because of her affair with a commoner Chalthanga. After the death of her father Lalsavunga, her brothers moved to different places, but Laltheri stayed at the ancestral house with her mother.

Laltheri (Lalchawngpuii) might not be famous as a beautiful maiden, but she was tall, with great physique and beautiful skin. Apart from that, she was a humble and merciful person, whom people were fond of. However, since she was the dote

daughter of the famous *Sailo* chief Lalsavunga, a mere bachelor would not dare to strike up a conversation with her. In the meantime, Laltheri fell in love with a commoner and a widower named Chalthanga. During those times, it was considered next to taboo for a commoner to fall in love or marry the maidens from the clan of the *Sailo* chief. It was considered to be putting up one's head on the spike. Despite that, Laltheri fell in love with Chalthanga, and sought for pretexts to meet him, at times waiting for Chalthanga at the entrance of the village, and delaying him from reaching his cultivation. Soon they became the topic of discussion. The gossip reached the ears of Laltheri's brothers, and they began to grow irritated with the sight of Laltheri and Chalthanga.

They implored Laltheri to stop talking to the commoner Chalthanga and to prevent herself from falling in love with him. However, as the saying 'the darker the night, the brighter the light from the torch' goes, the more they opposed the more she was drawn to the charms of Chalthanga. Laltheri's brothers pleaded with her, "The path that you're taking is utmost shame for the family, stop it now," yet she could not leave Chalthanga, looking for him and sending people to find him on celebrations where zu was to be partaken, and eventually stopped drinking and eating without Chalthanga's presence. She was no longer at peace without Chalthanga. Because of Laltheri's conduct, Vanhnuailiana and her other brothers were put to shame. To avoid the situation from escalating, they controlled themselves. They looked for ways to part Chalthanga and their sister. At times, they threatened Chalthanga with his life, and sometimes to banish him from the village. In the meantime, despite his love and longing for Laltheri, Chalthanga dared not love her openly but tried to distance himself from her. However, Laltheri was unstoppable and it became impossible for Chalthanga to avoid her advances, so they became intimate, and Laltheri became pregnant with Chalthanga's son, the news of which spread like wildfire.

Laltheri's pregnancy bruised the ego of her brothers saying, "We are *Sailo* steel, born between the sun and the moon, we refuse to be tainted by a *Pawih* commoner, we cannot be defeated, we must go to mutilate Chalthanga completely,

for treating us in this manner”. They deliberated on the matter and decided not to act rashly, so they banished him and his family. However, they realized that banishing him would not prevent him from reuniting with their sister and they must have been afraid of that, so Vanhnuailiana sent his elders to follow him. They caught up with him at *Lungpawn*, and said to him, “Chalthang, stay put, Laltheri wants to meet you,” they proceeded to drink their portion of *Zu*, and axed Chalthanga to his death while he was drinking from his portion.

When Laltheri heard of her brothers’ action, she was in deep pain that almost led to her death. In her overwhelming grief she broke her necklaces worth several mithuns at a tree- stump. Not having enough, she took off her entire garments, and the respected *Sailo* woman began running around in sheer nakedness around the village. She would sleep naked in the open spaces during the coldest of winter nights, and her worried mother would follow her, saying “Lalpui, at least use this for a covering” and would try to give her a blanket and a hard-boiled egg.

She claimed that her brothers were unwilling to raid the Eastern enemies but dared to slaughter her lover Chalthanga, refusing to indulge herself in food and clothing while the corpse of her lover Chalthanga was laid on the cold ground. She believed that the spirit of Chalthanga resided with her, and in her bereavement her face eventually lost all colour; she pleaded with her mother to feed Chalthanga’s spirit instead of her and caused great distress to her family. The famous *Laltheri Zai* emerged from this experience.

Bawmzo ral mah dar ang chhai ngam lo,

Belzu Kungah ka di Chalthang chawng sai ang sat e.

Nemte Puan chu ka chawi lo vang ka nu,

Ka Di Thangdanga zalna mah chhimhlei tual daiah

Chhunrawl lovin ka fam lo vang ka nu,

Suihlung lengin Sailo ngurpui Fam awl na e.

Suihlung lengin Piallei Khar hawng ila,

A sakhmel leh a zung za tial engtin awm ang maw e.

A zungza tial engtin awm lo e,

Sakhmel sensiar khua fur hawk tui ang luang zo ta e.

Thlohmu (Khawimu) lengin Chhippui kan dai a vel,

Ka tawnmangah Thangdang rauthlain run a vel e.

Rauthla lengin kan run khuai ang a vel,

Fang fa lo chu ka nu, chhunrawl a belin hlui rawh (Ngirtling 18)

Dardini too loved Duhmanga wholeheartedly, but because of the great divide between their social status she knew that her love for him would turn into an ache and suffering, so she tried to reject Duhmanga graciously, but he was beyond understanding, thinking that she found him lacking, while Dardini could not bear to think of the problems they would have to face in the future. Though she told Duhmanga, “It is because of our unequal status. We are not just a commoner but we live by the outskirts of the village, where our neighbours are the excrete from the pigs and *Liankual* plants, but you, you are the only son of the chief! Ah! I can’t even put it into words, but I am indeed greatly troubled,” (*Duhmanga leh Dardini* 53) he failed to understand her. Dardini knew that falling in love with someone who she did not deserve would invite unnecessary gossip and that his family would never accept her, and the knowledge of what others would perceive filled her with distress.

Dardini: Duhmang I van hrethiam thei lo tak em? lo haw miah lo la

Duhmanga: Nang hi ka hua ang che maw?

Dardini: Khawngaihin lo haw lo hram la e. Nang zawng I pian I

murna tanga renga mi chung a leng I ni a, kei hi min han en teh, kan inhhung hi han hawi vel teh, min hriatpui lo a ni, min hriatpui thei

lo, mi thate leh michhiate dinhmun inlak hleihzia hi. I retheih ve phawt loh chuan I hrethiam ngai dawn si lova, retheih tur chuan ka phal si lo che. I dinhmunah zawng rem pawh a rem thei hek lo.

Duhmanga: Huat tur I sawi awm reng reng ka hre phak lo ve, chutiang lam thu ka lo thluk ve ngai hauh lo a sin.

Dardini: Ni reng e, tuna ka han sawi kha ka dinhmun chu a ni a sin. Ka chhia leh tha hriatna hian nang nena inkawp loh hi duh teh mah ila, Duhmang ka zuam lo a ni. Nangin min duh vezia hre reng chung a han thlah che chu ka ngai ngam bik ngang thin si lo a nih hi.

Dardini: Duhmang how can you not understand? Don't be angry but

Duhmanga: Be angry with you?

Dardini: Please don't take this otherwise. You are above everyone because of the privilege of your birth, but look at me, look at our house, you have no idea, you can have no idea, just how different the rich and the poor are. You will never understand since you weren't poor, but I do not wish for you to be poor. You can't be poor because of your social status.

Duhmanga: I find nothing to be upset about, I've never looked at things in that manner.

Dardini: Exactly, what I've just said is my condition. Although from my knowledge of right and wrong, I do not want to have any relationship with you, Duhmang I am not willing to. I dare not let you go while knowing just how much you want me too (55).

Despite many hurdles and problems, Duhmanga and Dardini loved each other, and so they kept their unequal status and problems aside, not allowing anyone to come in the way of their fondness for each other, with their love increasing day by day. Dardini's mother knew that worse things could happen and so she would try to

break them up in order to escape from it, for she was certain that she and her daughter alone would not be able to survive being neglected by the entire village with the judgment of the chief, for which she advised Dardini to break up with Duhmanga many times. Duhmanga, with his stubbornness did not wish his beloved Dardini to be with anyone else, thus there was no reason for him to lose Dardini. In such scenario, Dardini and her mother could not enjoy their rights and spent their days in great distress. They were aware that they had no one who would advise or support them, which made them miss Dardini's father who had died, saying that had he been alive their torment would be less, crying out at the contemplation of Duhmanga and Dardini thus: "Oh how distressing this is! Of anyone to appear, we had the best! How I abhor poverty! Mambawih pa, how I miss you, had you been around we wouldn't be this bad. I wonder if you watch us from Rihtlang. A! I can't bear this all alone. Let me go and chat with Rovi's mother instead" (60).

With the passage of time the love between Duhmanga and Dardini reached its climax and Duhmanga married Dardini without paying heed to his parents. Duhmanga's parents, including his council of advisers wanted Duhmanga to marry the senior elder's daughter Saikii rather than an inconsequential widow's daughter. Dardini, despite being a commoner's daughter could not leave her beloved Duhmanga due to which she spent most of her waking hours in sadness and hopelessness. Just when she thought she would finally be happy, a deep anxiety occupied her deepest consciousness: "Oh tiny spark of happiness, may the storm-clouds of disdain not wash it away, for blow the spring storms, and fall hard the darkening rains, but worry and breathlessness hover above, yet the close to all is the beautiful rainbow so as they say hope, hope oh flower of life" (70) and this revealed the anxiety that she faced due to the discrimination in the social system where the less advantaged suffered without any crime.

Without consulting Duhmanga, his parents convinced Saikii and took her as Duhmanga's wife, but Duhmanga refused to lie with her even for a night and brought Dardini home to be his wife while she was pounding rice in the morning. Duhmanga's parents were extremely angry at the behaviour of their son, and they

could not tolerate the fact that Saikii had to leave while Dardini occupied her place. Duhmanga, the only one who supported Dardini was an only son on whom the family relied on for food and therefore he could not remain in the house at all times since he had to go on hunting expeditions. While he was on a hunting expedition, Dardini was sent away from the chief's house and Saikii was brought back as Duhmanga's wife, which enraged him when he heard of it:

Duhmanga: Luangthli chhem thluk ang mai maia thle kual tawn fapa I duh lo, min thlem nem thei a nih chuan I la zak ang. Mipa ka ni ve bawk, puitling ka nih tawh hi

Lalnu: A va han pawl take m! Duhmang I zawlpui aiin hnamchawm mi chhia I thlang ang maw? Eng a ti nge maw ni le?.

Duhmanga: You do not want your son to be blown about like an aimless reed, it would be your shame for you to appease me. I am a man, and an adult at that.

Lalnu: How sorrowful! Duhmang do you really choose a commoner over your equal? What has happened? (75).

From the above speech of Duhmanga's mother, it is quite easy to surmise the disdain and poor treatment that Dardini experienced.

Oftentimes, an individual may be stripped of his/her rights by those in authority, which disallows them from indulging in basic rights since laws formed by those in power oppressed them. Rather than being uplifted from their plight, there are many times that they have to go through hardships, and it will not cease. Although Duhmanga wanted to be with his beloved wife Dardini forever, the rigid social system that failed to compromise on his perception became the cause of their great affliction.

Dardini was sent off from the chief's house in the absence of Duhmanga, and without stopping there, they banished her from the village even though she was heavily pregnant with a child. The suffering of Dardini and her mother was most

atrocious, and the cost of their suffering due to the chief of *Vangtlang* and his elders would be quite high if brought into today's law. When Duhmanga heard of the relocation of Dardini while heavily pregnant with his child at *Mualpui* village, he was heart-broken and quite angry. Comprehending the plight of the commoners, he opposed the actions of the rich and affluent, refusing to have anything to do with his parents, cutting off all ties with them. The devastating effects of discrimination based on clan or status is quite horrendous.

Lal: Duhmang I tana tha tur kan ngaihtuah avanga thil ti kan ni a sin

Duhmanga: Ka pa tun atang hian I inchhung leh I chhungkua hi ka tan mihrang in ni ta e, chaw bar khat pawh ka bar tawh dawn lo.

Chuti taka thla vaia in lo hnawhchhuah ka nupui hnem turin ka kal dawn, nangni ngaiha hausak avanga hlimna puarpawleng hi ka tan hlutna a awm ve lo. An chhia zawng ka phuh chhuak dawn lo, amaherawhchu mi hausa leh chhumchhiate inthliar fo reng chuan van ni sal khua in tlai hlek lo vang (Vanduaina). Kei zawng he Vantlang khuaa hmingchhe taka lala thut ai chuan lentu karah pawh ka zam ral zawk nang e.

Lal: Duhmang, we are taking actions based on what we consider to be the best for you.

Duhmanga: Ka pa from now on your household and your family are strangers to me, I will no longer eat even a morsel of rice. I will go to comfort my wife whom you had sent off with a great show, for I have no desire for the effervescent happiness that you think riches could bring. I shall not utter any word of curse, yet if you continue to discriminate between the rich and the poor a great misfortune will soon befall you. As for me, I'd rather disappear along with the blowing wind than occupy the disgraceful seat of the chief at *Vangtlang* village (101).

The suffering of the chief's son Duhmanga because of his unwavering love for Dardini was indeed great, and the perception of the poor and unfortunate in the society and their depressive condition could be seen in Dardini's speech,

Oh my heart is wandering in the desert of disquiet once again. Why did I not born into a better state than I am now! All the beauty of my face has brought me nothing but sorrow. Why was I even born? Father, you left me so forlorn, how I miss you. Oh this heart of mine (She sat down, breaking into tears) The eyes without joy can perceive no beauty, the poor and dejected heart has nothing of value. Are the sun and the moon ever equals? The moon indeed shines, but it does not carry warmth and greatness. Duhmang Duhmang will my love for you be gone just like the swirling wind beyond paradise *Dailungrawn*, though you make me the happiest, I cry because of you. For me, it is not just the horizon that darkens but the overwhelming darkening of the spring-rains. As for me, I am but born to be unfortunate even though I am hale and hearty (81).

4.4 Summary of the play Lalvunga:

The play *Lalvunga* can be categorised under 'history play', which was written based on Lalvunga, a handsome and brave man during his time whose name will remain in Mizo history. In this play, there are mentions of legendary persons among the Mizo such as Lianchia, famed for his dashing looks and Darthiangi, a celebrated songstress and a dancer.

The entire play is divided into five acts, 147 pages thick, with 33 characters in it. The play also falls under the genre of tragedy.

Lalvunga was the son of Chawngmura and Tuahzovi. They were three siblings, his older brother being Mangpuma and his sister Huallianpuui who was the youngest of the three. Although Lalvunga was the middle child, he took over his father's chieftainship since Mangpuia was a disabled person and with the early death of their father, Lalvunga became the overseer of *Phaiphul* village.

The play opened at the chief's house of *Phaiphul* village and the conversation between Lalvunga's mother Tuahzovi and his sister Huali served as an important exposition to the foreshadowing of conflict and trouble.

The village where Lalvunga ruled as its chief was earlier known as *Phaiphul* but was later changed to Farzawl because of the abundance of *far* trees, and the latter name became more popular. There were two chiefs, one a *Hualngo* chief, Lalvunga, and other a *Palian* chief Lianpuia. The village lived in harmony under the two chiefs but kept their guard since they belonged to different clans. Lianpuia kept close contact with his relations *Thangluah* and *Zadeng* chiefs by providing them with gossips, due to which Lalvunga and his elders were ready at all times in case any clash took place between them.

In the meantime, Lalvunga's sister Huali had fallen for the nephew of the *Palian* chief Lianpuia, Thahleia the son of the chief's eldest sister. Despite being advised by her mother and brothers and being told about what could ensue she was blinded by her love for him and could not perceive logically, saying adamantly, "As for me, I am able to distinguish between what I want and do not want, and I am going to distinguish so..."

Falling into the smooth-talk of Thahleia, she became blind-sighted by her love for him and proceeded to spill everything from her brother Lalvunga's administration and latest events to Thahleia. Thahleia did not feel the same way for Huali, but used her to gain privy to the occurrences within Lalvunga's court. He fooled Huali without any affection and love, to the extent of instigating her to runaway from her mother and brother.

Thahleia continued taking advantage of Huali as he deemed fit, with the sole aim of manipulating her for his benefits. He took every detail of Lalvunga's deliberations with his elders. Having learnt of how Lalvunga and his elders were keeping their guard against Lianpuia, he informed his uncle Lianpuia who in turn informed their brothers *Zadeng* and *Thangluah*. He even commented sarcastically to Huali with spite, "How sorry I feel for you as you're a simple woman! You are

nothing but a foolish woman who is unable to decipher deception and the face of a deceiver.”

So then, Lianpuia summoned Thangluah chief Darzaturala, *Zadeng* chief Lalpuihluta and *Chuaungo* chief Lianhnaa for a conference. After having learnt that Lalvunga had prepared for any possible war and that he was conspiring against Lianpuia like an enemy, they decided to join forces and attack Lalvunga while he least expected it.

Although the other chiefs initially agreed that the enemies at the east needed attention and not create enmity within the village, they were compelled to swear their loyalty and support to Lianpuia at all cost because of his oratorical skills and high intelligence.

Unfortunately for them, Lianhnaa could not be convinced by the agreement with Lianpuia and the other chiefs, so he betrayed them. He informed Lalvunga about the meeting at Lianpuia’s house and how Thahleia had taken advantage of Huali. Besides this, he requested Lalvunga to allow him to be on his side. He felt that it would be safer for him and his village to join forces with Lalvunga.

When Lalvunga heard of those words, he was deeply enraged, and proceeded towards the house of chief Lianpuia with his army of *Pasaltha* at once. Out of his anger, he wanted to kill Lianpuia and Thahleia at once. However, Lianpuia pleaded earnestly, “I surrender, let me live, and from now on I shall never hold grudge against your amicability,” and so he allowed Lianpuia and his followers to leave from the village.

Lianpuia and his group marched towards their uncle *Darzaturala*’s village. Since they left with rage and shame they never stopped thinking about ways to avenge Lalvunga. Thahleia continued to take advantage of Huali who was blinded by her love for him.

In the play *Lalvunga*, another character who stood out besides Lalvunga is Lianchia, who was known for his handsomeness among the Mizo, who captivated the

hearts not only of the young maidens but also of the older, married women. Lalvunga and Lianchia were contemporaries and lived at the same village, both striking in their looks and both acclaimed *Pasaltha* for which it was said that they had rivalry with each other.

Lianchia's name appeared in Act I, Scene II. From the tattle of the young bachelors at the house of the maiden they were courting, the strange incidents in the early life of Lianchia began to be exposed: how he was shunned by his peers due to his ugliness, how wretched his own mother felt, how the *Khuavang* guardian spirits watched him cry and fell asleep in the forest in agony and turned him into a handsome lad because they pitied him, and how he became handsome as if he had been birthed by a *Khuavang* spirit. All the maidens wanted to work beside Lianchia in the cultivation, "All the young maidens decided to busy themselves nearby him", such was his handsomeness that he could pick anyone he wanted. Yet among them all, there was one he was interested in, whose name was Rualchhingi.

Since he was such a handsome bachelor who could choose anyone, Rualchhingi was not quite secure. Moreover, there were people who were good at creating gossip, which was aggravated by Lianchia's carelessness with his speech that eventually reached the ears of the chief. One day when Lianchia and his friends planned to catch fish, Lianchia was alone at the entrance of the village waiting for them when Lalvunga appeared. He asked Lianchia if he dared to scout alone for he had been boasting in front of the young maidens and calling himself a *Pasaltha*. Lianchia's ego was bruised for he considered himself to be brave and so he accepted the challenge saying, "brave men and brave roosters do not wish to live long..." If he chance had to die while scouting he asked Lalvunga to take care of his widowed mother. The reason behind Lalvunga's action was not because he was jealous of Lianchia or hold grudge against him but because in his goodwill for Lianchia, he wanted him to earn the title *Pasaltha* and forge a name for himself.

Unfortunately, their conversation was overheard by Thahleia who had come stealthily to meet Huali. Having overheard everything, he thought that it was a good opportunity to avenge Lalvunga so he discussed the matter at once with his uncle

Lianpuia. They appeased the chief of Lunglerh with a token of *Darbu*, a set of three gongs and planned to kill Lianchia.

Just as he had promised, Lianchia scouted alone at the security post, and although he caught a quick glimpse of the flames of a torch from faraway, he thought that his eyes were dazzled by sleep, so he went back to sleep. The enemies approached while he was sleeping and when they looked at the post, they were struck by the glow of Lianchia's skin that made them claim, "a god is revealed by the rays of the moon!" They ascertained that it was indeed a human being and then shot him. While he was being shot at, Lianchia tried his best to fight back, uttering chants in his name. From his chanting, the enemies learnt that he was the one borne by the *Khuavang* spirits, the famed Lianchia known for his handsomeness. Haukhupa, the man who killed him was filled with regret, saying, "We have touched upon the sacred and woe to us". They made him lie on the ground properly and left without severing his head.

On the morning of Lianchia's death, strange occurrences took place. The roosters did not crow at *Farzawl* village, the maidens did not have the energy to pound the rice and everyone felt sullen, as if they were overcome by illness. Their chief Lalvunga was tormented like everyone else, he mourned the death of Lianchia, even shedding tears for him. He pondered if there was any conspiracy for the enemies to appear when Lianchia guarded the post alone.

On the other hand, the men who killed Lianchia were boastful to have slain the most handsome and famous man from Lalvunga's village. Thahleia lured Huali and took her back with them. Lianpuia was not appeased and was still looking for ways to avenge Lalvunga for the shame he brought to him. Therefore, he summoned his brothers – Lalpuihluta, Darzatuala, Khawzahulha and Lalpuichhinga to plot the downfall of Lalvunga by killing an animal with him as a treaty of peace.

When the peace treaty offered by Lianpuia was decided by Lalvunga and his council of elders, they were not convinced, for they looked back at the times when Lianpuia tried to take his revenge and how he killed Lianchia. He sent word that

Lalvunga should come to Farkawn alone to slay the *Inremna Sa Ui* so as to avoid frightening the villagers there. The elders were not quite convinced and were troubled, wishing that their chief would refrain from going. However, Lalvunga believed that Lianpuia really meant to offer peace alliance and so he decided to go accordingly.

On his way to Farkawn to make peace, he met his sister Huali who told him how Thahleia made a fool out of her, how Lianchia was killed and how they plotted to kill her brother Lalvunga on the pretext of peacemaking. She tried her best to coax him to return, but Lalvunga would not recant on his word. Ignoring her pleas, he said “They cannot be the enemy, it’d be a hsame for me to run from a local enemy”. However, he told her to return at once to their village in case anything untoward would take place, and that Darlianpuia, the son of their elder brother Mangpuma should occupy the chief’s seat at *Farzawl* and attack Lianpuia without any show of mercy.

Lianpuia, Lalpuihluta, Darzatuala, Khawzahulha and Lalpuichhinga appeared at the place where the peace-making would take place. They pretended to desire peace with Lalvunga. To signify their peace, the followers of the chief prepared a portion of *Zu* in the celebratory mug made out of the horn of a mithun, and each man drank his portion with his hand tied at the back.

When it was Lalvunga’s turn, they fastened him securely than others, and Lianpuia chugged his portion down his throat while using profanities. The brave chief Lalvunga easily broke the ropes that they secured him with and fell the chiefs quite easily. However, since they were comparatively more in number and were prepared with their young men, Lalvunga became the loser. Yet the brave chief fought valiantly till his death, without surrendering to the his enemies.

When Huali arrived at their village, she narrated what had taken place and Darlianpuia and his father arrived at *Farzawl* at once. Lalvunga’s mother and his council of elders convened together, and despite wishing to fulfill Lalvunga’s demands of avenging him, they decided that Darlianpuia was yet too young to fight

and that they were unmatched against Lianpuia and his alliances and so the best they could do was to fortify themselves at the present, to avenge their chief when they would be well- prepared.

Lianpuia was quite arrogant in his ability to kill Lalvunga by means of deceit. Dancing and singing

“Lalvunga ’n ka lian a ti Farzawl a luah,

A luah sual e, changsial sawmthum an la e”

“Lalvunga said I am great and took Farzawl,

But he made a mistake for they plundered off thirty changsial”

Lianpuia made a mockery out of Lalvunga and showed contempt to his family by such a song.

However, as Huali said “poetry and songs survive mankind, once the younger generations grow up, they will sing about us” the song that Lianpuia sang to ridicule Lalvunga became one of the best form of *Chai Hla* that the Mizo have. It is from this *Chai Hla* that the younger generations continue to learn and hear about the greatness of Lalvunga.

4.5 Problems in Mizo Society due to the Ambition of Authority:

Since time immemorial, the Mizo were ruled by their chiefs, and before they had particular clans as chiefs, the bravest would become the chief. During those times, each clan had its own chief and they governed themselves respectively. If there were two clans in one village, they would divide themselves as clans within the village and have separate chief with an independent administration. Every time a need arise for a hero, the one the villagers believed would be able to save them was considered to be their chief” (*Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* 125).

The Mizo often warred and plundered among themselves, and any village that had a strong and brave chief was unchallenged by others, therefore they could peacefully concentrate on progress in their agrarian front since they had no one to fight with them. Villages that did not have brave chiefs were often warred against, and if their opponents did not want a peace treaty between them, the villagers had to become their slaves, living wretched lives. If they were governed by their superiors and unequal, they had to pay taxes that would eventually become a huge burden for them, for they needed to find a chief who would protect them since they were weaker.

The Mizo chiefs were extremely dedicated to their village and its inhabitants, they had their distinct form of administration, forming an organized structure with the people to prevent themselves from being raided by the chiefs of other villages. Since they were constantly raiding and fighting with one another, the primary concern of the chief was to protect the villagers from enemies and rampant wild animals,

They would fence their village all around, calling it a fortress. If enemies were close by, the young men stood guard at every door and opening day and night. It is said that the brave Mizo chief Nikuala would go at midnight to visit the young men who guard the village (*Mizo Chanchin* 355).

Lalvunga was a great *Hualngo* chief who was good looking, who established *Phaiphul* village from *Hriangngai*, naming his village with a different name *Farzawl*, which is situated a little further up north from *Tiau* between *Khawthlir* and *Phunte* villages. In the play *Lalvunga*, the friction between the Mizo chiefs due to the desire for authority is clearly depicted and in their strife for being greater and stronger, the sorry plight of the villagers, including the death of Lalvunga is seen. Two chiefs, Lalvunga and Lianpuia ruled over *Phaiphul* village, and the inevitable fight for being the more powerful of the two stood in the way of peace among the villagers. In Act I. II of the play, the discussion among the young men about the Palian locality where Lianpuia ruled reflected that they were constantly ready for battle:

Seia: Taka U Dar, kan Palian veng lam hian thawm hran an nei deuh em ni, sawi sep sep a awm ka ti?

Dara: A, Ka hre lo le, hetia lal inkhinga awm ngawt hi chuan thu veivir leh inbah sual te hi awm ve chawh tur chu a nia lawm. A thu hrimah ro hran neia kan lalpain a rin pawh hi a tisual lo maithei ve tho. Mi thu haw lam kal lam erawh ka hre rih lem law.

Seia: Eng thu emaw chu a awm deuh a ni maithei kan hre ve chhawm bawh ang chu. Engah nge Palianho pawh hian an unau Zadeng hi an fin mai loh lem le? Hetia mahni khaw bil pawh nei lova lal inkhinga awm ngawt mai hi mak ka tih zawng tak a ni mai

Chawngbela: A ni viau tak e. Thlanrawn ral an hnai tih pawh ni si lo, a mak a nih ngawt tak hi.

Dara: In sawi chu a dik a lawm, mak tih a ni rih mai ka hriat chhun chu. Hetiang hi chuan inrin loh laia rik phut pawh awm thei niin ka hria. Chi leh kuanga lal hrang an ni a, a kumkhaw tlaitluana kan sangawizawnpui lah an ni hlei lo. Mi hriat lohva menah, inrin rilruk hi a mawh lovin ka hria. Ka pa pawhin a sawi ru deuh tlat a ni.

Zahrawka: Chuvang a nih dawn chu mi hi an phusa deuh tlata ka lo hriat ni. Mahse en gem kan ti lo vang e. Mipa chu kan inrin reng tho khawp hi maw.

Dara: Ni deuh reng e. Thu inchuh te hi han awm se chuan Lianpuia hi a aihnah phahpuiten an phulpui hlut duh dawn tih hi a rinawm a. Ral an chang ta a nih vaih chuan leido rip zet kan nei ve thei reng mai. Zadeng leh Thangluah lalte hian an vuipui ngei ngei ang lo ngai reng mah rawh u.

Seia: U Dar, does the *Palian* side of the village have something going on, that I hear people talking about it?

Dara: Aaa, I don't know, but whenever there are contesting chiefs rumours abound and misunderstandings are to occur frequently. Whatever may be, the belief of our chief that they might have differing agenda might not be wrong. I know nothing about what goes on between them.

Seia: Something must be going on, we shall most definitely hear about it. Why don't the *Palian* just go and join their *Zadeng* brothers? I fail to understand why they choose to live without forming their own village and contesting with another chief here.

Chawngbela: True. The *Thlanrawn* enemies are not even near, it indeed is strange.

Dara: What you're saying is true, all I know is to be amazed. As far as I can tell in such situation like this anything can happen when we're least ready. They are of different clan, and not the ones with whom we have shared our load of a deer since time immemorial. I do not deem it inappropriate to be at constant guard. My father has even talked about it in privy.

Zahrawka: That might be exactly why I felt everyone was being restless. Hopefully nothing will really take place. But we, as men, are quite ready.

Dara: Indeed we are. In case any disagreement takes place, it may be surmised that Lianpuia's allies would definitely rise to the occasion. Were they to become our foes, we surely would have tough enemies. Keep this in mind that the *Zadeng* and *Thangluah* chiefs would join in the disagreement (26-27)

While they could have dwelt together peacefully, the struggle for superiority between Lalvunga and Lianpuia caused restlessness among their respective young men, with the villagers watching the behaviour of their chiefs, unable to live through each day in peace and calm. Knowing that the smallest incident could trigger into a devastating effects between Lalvunga and Lianpuia, they could no longer remain tranquil, for the conflict between the chiefs did not agitate them both but had already reverberated throughout the entire village.

Since Lalvunga was a brave chief, he had a large number of people who had sought for his protection, and within a short period of time, the area of his village vastly increased. Within Lalvunga's village there were people from *Lusei*, *Chawngthu*, *Ralte*, *Chhangte*, *Ngente* leh *Khiangte* clans. It was said that the most handsome Mizo man Lianchia of *Chhangte* clan dwelt in his village. There were a number of *Pasaltha* and with the abundance in staple food the villagers were quite content. On the other side of the village, Lianpuia who had ardent supporters, and related to *Thangluah* chief Darzatuala, *Zadeng* chief Lalpuihluta and *Chuaungo* chief Lianhnaa who would give him alliance and man-force as required. Since Lalvunga and Lianpuia were both chiefs, neither of them wanted to appear to be weaker than the other, thus in order to appear more powerful their family members and relatives lived very carefully. They lived in perpetual fear and competition against one another, which prevented Lalvunga's sister Huali from receiving real love from her beloved Thahleia, as revealed in her conversation with her mother Tuahzovi about the constraints that she was bound by being scared of what her relatives would say.

Tuahzovi: Pehhel pehhel kual pawh tulin ka hre love, Hleia nena in chungchang ka hriat hi a dik em Hualte

Huali: Engah nge Hleia chu pawl a tawh ta em ni le?

Tuahzovi: Hei in tlangthang chu a ni ta ber a, mawh lo deuhva khawsak te in nei em? Tlangkam atanga ka hriat mai chu ania

Huali: A chute lama khawsak te chu awm suh ei. Kan thing phurh dun te kha a nih ngawt nghal loh chuan, chutia han tlangthan tur kan neih ka hre nem

Tuahzovi: Aw chungte pawh chu a ni ta ang chu. Mi mitmei ven deuh tur a ni ngai a sin. I u lah hian a ti riau lovin ka hre lehngal a, chhan tha te te hi a lo nei a ni ang e

Huali: Ka bulah a sawi tlang duh lo mai mai a lawm, a duh loh chhan te chu ka hre vek tawh a sin. Lianpuia farnu upa ber fapa, a tupa a nih vang chauh a lawm. Chu chu eng nge han hal viau chhan tur aw, mihring vet ho an nih hi maw.

Tuahzovi: I do not want to beat about the bush, is what I have heard about you and Hleia true, Hualte?

Huali: What about Hleia, has something bad happened to him?

Tuahzovi: It appears that you both are now being gossiped about, have you done anything you should be ashamed of? Yet this I have gathered from mere gossip

Huali: Nothing to worry about such behaviour. If it wasn't us collecting firewood together, I have no knowledge of why we both should be talked about.

Tuahzovi: Aw that could perhaps be the reason why. You must be wary of others. I feel like your brother doesn't really entertain him, there must be a good reason why so.

Huali: He doesn't want to speak to me directly, but I already know why he doesn't like him. It's because he is the son of Lianpuia's eldest sister, his nephew. Why must he have problems with that, they are human being too (11-12).

Knowing that her elder brother Lalvunga would never approve of her relationship with her beloved Thahleia, Huali felt uncomfortable and rarely spoke about her innermost thoughts. The fact that Thahleia was the nephew of chief Lianpuia and the possibility of enmity between their families affected Huali to a great extent, and failing to comprehend the conflict between her brother Lalvunga and Lianpuia, she stood to her point that “*they are human beings too*” and remained upset that others were suffering due to the struggle for supremacy and authority between her brother and Lianpuia.

Lalvunga was a mighty and brave chief, but because his father died early, he was quite alone, and with his elder brother Mangpuma being an invalid, his mother Tuahzovi feared that his chieftainship and authority would be taken from him, and if they failed to keep their guard there were people around them who were jealous of Lalvunga and would grab his chieftainship, so they lived in perpetual fear. In terms of lineage support Lianpuia had many alliances, but Lalvunga remained resolute not to lose his chieftainship or surrender before another chief. In her fear, Tuahzovi would often chide Lalvunga and his council of elders that their discussions were heralds of disaster and gloom, “How must one remain alert, and you are no more than a single man, your brother Mangpuma being of no use. How I wish that you would not deliberate on grievous matters” (55). Being a stubborn and brave person, Lalvunga did not believe that anyone would be able to take his authority from him, thus he felt neither fear nor sorrow. Rather than being afraid of Lianpuia and his allies, he would puff himself up, saying, “If they tried to wipe us off the earth, they would not live as they desired.” Claiming that God “made me grow in abundance at *Phaiphul* village, and the chieftdom of *Hualngo* is as sturdy as a solid rock” he did not think that anyone would challenge him. Instead of searching for peace, Lalvunga and Lianpuia sought for power and authority, due to which the inhabitants of their village became casualties, among them being his mother Tuahzovi who was dismayed by the tension that rose due to the competition for superiority and authority:

Tuahzovi: Nizan ka mumang reng a dik lo, do ral an rel dawn a nih loh chuan lal leh upate inrawn tluk tluk thu a awm lo. Zing zinga khual hmel hruaia lal in an hrut a nih chuan leido thuthang a nih loh pawhin inphiarna thu bak an rawn thlen ka ring lo. Aw, kan lal chu I ni tak a, ka fapa I ni si. Fa sual zilh taka zilh I thiang si lo, kan hmaah hian hun thim a hnaiin ka va hre em! Zan lai laia archham hram leh hauhuk hualreu an sawite kha chhiatna hmahruai te hi a lo ni mai a ngem aw. Chawngmur, ka ngai che a ni. En teh I fapa hian mal leh thla vaiin ro a rel a, ama chhiatna chauh a rel chhuah te hi ka va hlau em! A u Mangpuma lah ramtuileilo a ni ta si, nang chu awm la, heiti chuan hmelma lungpui doruk hi a namnul lo tur. Ka lung a leng mang e.

My dream last night showed that something was not right, unless they were deliberating on war there is no reason for a chief to meet his elders so often. If they arrive in wee hours of the morning with a stranger's countenance I am certain that they would be bringing nothing but talk of enemies or conspiracy. Yes, you are indeed our chief, but you also are my son. I have no right to scold you as a disobedient son, but how I foresee darkness before us! Could the noises of the archham and the screeching of the apes at midnight be the harbinger of destruction to follow. *Chawngmur*, how I miss you. Look at your son who tries to rule according to his whims, how scared am I that he would only bring out disaster for himself! His elder brother Mangpuma has become incapacitated, had you been here, he would not dare push the boundaries of the enemy. How I long for you (55).

4.6 Social consensus on values and norms

Known for his striking handsomeness, Lianchia was born at *Sepui* village, and there are differing accounts of where he had earlier lived. There is a saying that the most handsome and popular Mizo man lived in *Selesih*, surmised to be a great

village during the days of our ancestors while there are sayings that he lived in *Bualte*, *Hlaizawl* leh *Fârzâwl* village as well. While he lived in *Farzawl*, the chief was Lalvunga who was also a handsome man, and it was said that they rivalled against each other. Both of them were popular among the young maidens, but according to some accounts, Lianchia was the more handsome of the two and so more popular to a varying degree. Lianchia was a *Pasaltha* and it was said that everyone who saw him fell in love with him because of his striking looks, and all women- virgins or married would heedlessly fall in love with him.

Since all the women fell in love with him, it is said that no man dared to make complaints against him, for they wanted him to be the husband of their daughters, and so no one dared to mistreat him or talk him down. Despite his popularity, Lianchia was a modest and humble person who did not behave untoward against any woman. Although he was liked by all, Lianchia had a responsibility to fulfill for his village, which was to ensure his dedication to the chief and the village in all matters. The villagers were proud of their heroes and had high expectations from them as well.

Lalvunga met Lianchia during his casual stray in the village, and since he was curious to know just how dedicated Lianchia was to his village he decided to test him. Lalvunga told him that he regarded Lianchia as a boastful person with empty words who would not really invest himself in action, to which Lianchia replied that he would do anything required of him for the chief and his village:

Lalvunga: Nula khualchhawng tha deuh kianga han in sawi pawhraw nan bak a saseh hi in ngam meuh dawn em maw ni le?

Lianchia: Engah nge ka han ngam loh lem ang. Leido I neih tikah ka ngam leh ngam loh chu I la hre mai ang. Sa hrang hmaa ka tlan tak lah ka la hre bik lo.

Lalvunga: Halkha ral hran vanglai khan keimahin ral dai ka deng tawh a. Sa hrang kapin ral hma ka tawng a, chu vanga pasaltha

*inchhal ngam ve chu ka ni. Chu chu I tin gam ve a nih chuan
pasalthaah ka chhal mawlh ang che. Thil dangah hal na che ka nei lo.*

*Lianchia: E ngam the lul mai e, mipa leh arpa hluisen chuan dam rei
kan tum hlei nem. Thih leh than khat, dam leh than khat a ni mai a.
Tlangzawl ral ven chu keimahin ka che ang, kawppui mim siamsak
ma lek dawn nia.*

Lalvunga: Apart from boasting before a gracious maiden, would you have the guts to prove yourself?

Lianchia: Why would I not have the guts. You will find it for yourself once you have enemies against you. I don't recall myself running from wild animals at any time.

Lalvunga: During the height of the *Halkha* enemies, I stood guard at the post all alone. I killed a wild animal and led the war with our enemy, for which I claim myself to be a *pasaltha*. If you have the courage to do the same, I shall call you *Pasaltha* as well. Besides that, I have nothing against you.

Lianchia: E! I definitely am willing, brave men and brave roosters do not wish to live long. A singular fame if dead, a singular fame if alive. I shall scout the enemy alone, do not make for me a companion (89).

From Lianchia's reply to Lalvunga, his dedication was proved as was expected of him by the villagers and the chief himself, for there was an undying admiration and respect for those who were courageous and bold before their enemies.

While the *Pasaltha* of Lianpuia's village were on their way to raid Lalvunga's village Lianchia remained at the security post all by himself, and after a long fight they were able to kill Lianchia. They were remorseful to have killed such a brave and handsome young man, and left his corpse at the post without chopping his head off. In the bidding of Lianchia's corpse by Haukhupa, the famed *Pasaltha* of

Lianpuia's village, the respect of the Mizo society towards their heroes who were willing to die for the sake of their villagers can be seen clearly:

Haukhupa: Aw nun zahawm, thang leh tharin pasaltha an chhal mawlh ang che. Hmel tha hmingthang, I hming hi theihnghilh ni awm suh se la, chhuan tamin la hril rawh se. Khuavangten an hrai chawi hi an lo kuanguah ang che. In mei thal kau u la, pasaltha I sun ang.
 Haukhupa: Aw.. respected life, the younger generations will definitely call you pasaltha. Famous for your looks, may your name never be forgotten, but repeated by generations to come. You who was borne by the khuavang spirits will be embraced by them. Cock your guns, let us mourn a pasaltha (96).

Despite being a chief himself, the villagers had high expectations from Lalvunga because of which he could not slack. In his ambition to be a brave and strong chief who was adored by his people and were peaceful under him, he had many moments of stress and worry, "When people think being the chief is a privilege and greatness, they do not see that troubles and hardships come along with it. Should it be that we desire whatever is in our hands. In our quest to obtain what is beyond us, we tire, but in vain. Is responsibility greatness and admiration, or a burden and exhaustion, how difficult it is to learn to live" (38).

Lalvunga being acutely aware of the expectations on him, he felt the need to mend ways with their enemy Lianpuia and chose to go unaccompanied to meet him. Lianpuia with his sons and their allies Darzatuala and Lalpuihluta summoned Lalvunga through a messenger at *Farkawn* village to make a treaty of peace. Lalvunga was gullible and thinking that they meant to foster better relations, he went by himself. Although his younger sister Huali informed him of the conspiracy against him, he chose to disbelieve her and at *Farkawn* village, there was no peace made but he was bound without warning and killed. A close examination of Lalvunga's decisions that cost him his life reflected his desire to be the able chief who could provide security to his villagers and who in turn, would be proud to have

such a courageous chief. In Huali's account of her elder brother Lalvunga and Lianpuia's song of mockery depict this instance:

*Aw ka u, a van a em, ka thu awih khan han tlan mai la chuan I nunna
kan chhan ni mai tur nia le. Kan chhiat tawh a leia min phuah elna
hla te hi ngaihnawm ka vat i em! mahse, thu leh hlate hi mihring aiin
a dam rei si a, nakinah thang leh tharin an hril ang a, kan chanchin
hi an la sawi ve dawn asin, ka u an thah laiin Lianpuian,*

Lalvung an ka lian a ti Farzawl a luah,

A luah sual e Changsial sawmthum an la e.

Tlan rawh tlan rawh Lalvung tlan rawh ral an ti,

Tual khel ralah Lalvung ka tlan ngai love.

Lalvunga nu tap tap lo la I chau vang,

I fa Lalvung sahlam a uia zo ta e.

Ooo brother (*Aw ka u*), how it torments, had you heeded to my words and fled your life would have been saved. How pleasant does this song of mockery sound while we grieve! Yet, poetry survives the life of a man, and later when the younger generations sing of this song, they will be narrating our story, while my elder brother was being killed, Lianpuia sang,

Lalvunga claimed greatness and occupied Farzawl,

He was mistaken for they took thirty Changsial.

Flee, flee, Lalvung, flee from the enemy

I do not flee from the enemy that you play with at the village square.

Lalvunga nu stop crying, else you will be tired,

Your son Lalvunga hangs at the sahlam tree (144-145).

(Lianpuia composed this song to mock Lalvunga in their disagreement with their mithun and how they managed to kill him because he did not listen to Huali who told him to flee, and asked Lalvunga's mother to stop crying in vain for she would only grow tired since the head of Lalvunga was hung at the tree).

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CHAPTER- 5

CONCLUSION

Mankind is divided into several social groups in the community according to factors such as caste, ethnicity, and race, as well as social classes, social strata, and status groups according to an individual's or group's economic and political circumstances. By these measures, people are different from each other in terms of being rulers and subjects, rich and poor, upper class and commoner, and so forth. As a result, every community experiences inequality, which is defined as an unequal distribution of valued economic resources.

The primary occupation of the Mizo is agriculture, specifically practicing shifting cultivation, also known as slash-and-burn agriculture. This traditional farming method involves clearing land by cutting and burning vegetation. After cultivation for several years, the land is left fallow for natural regeneration. Since agriculture is the core livelihood, there are no businessmen or alternative jobs sustaining their lives, resulting in a relatively equal economic status. Contrary to the prevalent depiction in Mizo literature, *Liandova-te Unau* portrays a distinct societal scenario. Following Liandova's father's death, his mother abandons the family in pursuit of a new husband, leaving the siblings destitute and scorned by the community. This contrasts with the usual image of the Mizo community, which is known for mutual support and upliftment in times of need. Despite the generally helpful nature of the Mizo society, the imperfection of human nature sometimes manifests in the mistreatment and disdain toward the poor and unfortunate. Consequently, there exists a common drive within the community to strive for success and encourage one another to avoid poverty and mistreatment.

The Mizo society of that time displayed a tendency to stigmatize or marginalize individuals facing economic disadvantages or an inability to sustain themselves. This phenomenon indicates a form of social bias where individuals may be unfairly judged based on their financial status or capacity to earn a living. In Act

I, Scene one of the play *Liandova-te Unau*, Liandova's father, on his deathbed, expresses deep concern for his wife and children due to their weakened and frail state. Liandova, being only a child along with his sibling, is apprehensive about navigating life without the guidance of a father figure, given their youth and inability to support themselves. The outset of the play highlights that, in the Mizo society of that time, individuals unable to work efficiently and those in the economically disadvantaged segment lived in impoverished conditions, often envying those in better circumstances, existing on the societal margins.

In the historical context of Mizo society, the challenges faced by Liandova, his brother, and their mother stem from a lack of necessary manpower. This deficiency hampers their ability to lead self-sufficient lives, consequently impacting their socio-economic circumstances and daily living conditions. The absence of sufficient manpower poses difficulties in initiating cultivation activities, a labour-intensive process exacerbated by the need for constant assistance from the community. Despite the customary practice of communal support during illness or adversity, the family's constant reliance proves burdensome, particularly in the initial stages of crop cultivation. The labour-intensive task of clearing densely forested areas further compounds their predicament, requiring significant effort and manpower, resources the family conspicuously lacks. This condition leads to societal disdain, as the community perceives them as incapable. Despite Liandova's youth, his understanding of community dynamics is evident through his profound lamentations upon realizing his father's imminent demise.

Rich and affluent people had a prominent and high standing in the Mizo society of the past. Tuaichawngi's choice of Liandova as her husband is influenced by Pi Fangi, who reveals his wealth in secret, even though Tuaichawngi does not have a close acquaintance with Pi Fangi. The rich and affluent were not overlooked, even by the chief's daughter. Initially unaware of Liandova's wealth, Tuaichawngi's father reacts angrily, symbolized by cutting off her finger. When he realises that his daughter has chosen whom he considers to be a poor man as her husband, he scorned Tuaichawngi saying that she does not need to be a whole person to marry such

person, then he took his knife and cut off Tuaichawngi's index finger. His initial response suggests a societal perception that the poor are only suitable for marriage to disabled individuals. However, Liandova successfully fulfills all the bride prices demanded for Tuaichawngi, including numerous necklaces, brass instruments, and mithuns. Despite initial skepticism, they ultimately accept him as their son-in-law due to his wealth. This underscores the societal inclination to regard the rich and wealthy with admiration, and the acceptance of Liandova based on his newfound wealth reflects the societal judgment of individuals based on their lifestyle.

The status of women in Mizo society was relatively low. Traditionally, women in societies require protection, care, and consideration. During childhood, fathers assume the role of protectors for their daughters. Following marriage, husbands assume the responsibility of being their protectors. In old age, it becomes the duty of their sons to fulfill the role of protectors for their mothers. As stated elsewhere, agriculture demanded substantial manpower, and the labour-intensive nature of cultivation tasks placed men in a pivotal role as providers for their families. The strenuous agricultural activities made it challenging for women to participate, resulting in their perceived lower status. Men were highly respected due to their crucial contribution to sustaining households through intensive agricultural work. In the context of marriage, individuals sought partners who were healthy and capable of vigorous labour, further reinforcing the elevated status of men. In cases of divorce, women faced greater challenges than men. Despite their efforts in building a home, women were limited in what they could take with them when divorcing. The status of women was intricately tied to the status of the men they married, determining their dignity and position in society. The quote "Widow could remarry, but did not often do so if they had children..." emphasizes the societal norms regarding widowed women, highlighting their paramount position in a son's house if they chose not to remarry.

The comprehensive examination of the status of women in Mizo society can be elucidated through the life of Liandova's mother in the play. Following the demise of Liandova's father, the mother assumes a pivotal role as the primary caregiver in

the family, and the family's welfare is contingent on her efforts. Anticipating the challenges of widowhood, Liandova's mother expresses profound sorrow as she contemplates the burdens she will bear alone. Aware of the societal treatment of widows and the difficulties in sustaining livelihood, she laments the anticipated hardships and the scornful treatment she and her children might face. The prospect of her children being taunted with labels such as *Hmeithai Fa* (son of a widow), *Daikil Kawmkar a Mi* (one belonging to the slum), *Fahrah Lubawk* (big-headed orphan) distresses her. Consequently, the situation Liandova's mother found herself in and her emotional state amply demonstrate the predicament that women endure in society.

The play *Lianchhiari* is rooted in a true event from Mizo history and continues to be a perennial favourite among the people, remaining one of the most renowned stories. This dramatic work serves as a reflection of Mizo society, providing a profound glimpse into their way of life. In that historical context, Mizo were known for their migratory lifestyle, often moving from village to village in search of improved and sustainable livelihoods. With farming and cultivation being their primary means of sustenance, Mizo practiced migratory agriculture, characterized by shifting cultivation. They practiced inter-village invasion and incursion, strategically selecting plots of land that were not easily accessible to enemies. Living in larger villages with a higher population provided safety against external threats, as a larger number of people made the village less vulnerable to adversaries.

The first scene of the first Act introduces the village of *Selesih Sangsarih*, showcasing the downfall and division of one of the biggest and mighty Mizo villages. Some Mizo chiefs proposed merging their villages into a larger unit, leading to *Selesih* village becoming a combined entity of seven chiefs. This united village comprised seven thousand houses and twenty bachelor's dormitories *Zawlbuk*. The collaboration of seven chiefs in establishing the town results in the formulation of numerous laws and customs. As a conglomeration of seven distinct villages, the town establishes an extensive set of rules and regulations to facilitate harmonious

coexistence encompassing a range of guidelines to foster order and societal cohesion. These include the prohibition of homicide, fornication, theft, mistreatment of handicapped or differently-abled, illegal shifting of landmarks, emphasis of respect for and adherence to the words of older individuals, respect and harmony with neighbours, etc. Mutual support is evident, as wealthier individuals readily assist those in need. *Sangsarih* is portrayed as an exemplary village, characterized by cooperation and generosity. In the first scene of Act two in *Lianchhiari* play, construction of the chief's house was highlighted as *Lianchhiari*'s father migrated from the eastern side of the *Tiau River* to assume the role of *Durtlang* chief at the invitation of *Selesih* chief Pu Kawlha. It is customary to prioritize the construction of the chief's residence when the community undergoes relocation. During such transitions, individuals displaying strength and a strong work ethic are highly regarded and *Lianchhiari*'s father acknowledges these qualities in *Chawngfianga* and praises him. The virtue of selflessness, referred to as *Tlawmngaihna*, held great significance, with parents actively encouraging their children to embody this quality and be a blessing to others. The bachelors in Mizo society seldom act independently, placing significant value on the guidance of their elders in work or hunting expeditions, carefully heeding the advice of their youth commanders, known as *Val Upa*.

In matters of marriage, Mizo exercised great caution in selecting partners, with chief's daughters rarely marrying commoners. Similarly, commoner bachelors seldom considered the possibility of marrying a chief's daughter. However, the opinions of chiefs varied significantly in Mizo society, leading to potential issues arising from affairs between commoners and chiefs' children. Despite this, in the case of *Lianchhiari* and *Chawngfianga*, class differences do not pose a problem. It appears as if *Lianchhiari*'s father also desires him as a potential son-in-law. Since the time *Chawngfianga* cut down branches of the banyan tree from their field, he is already convinced of his goodness and selflessness, and it seems as if he does not mind having him as their son-in-law. Even though *Chawngfianga* wants to marry *Lianchhiari*, her father can already see how society will perceive him, how he will not be able to afford the bride price because she is the chief's daughter, and they will

not have any family wealth on their own. In the first scene of the third Act, as Lianchhiari's family desires Chawngfianga as their son-in-law, they reach a decision to allow Chawngfianga to send a messenger proposing a wedding, despite him being only a commoner.

When families with a certain level of wealth contemplated migration, others in the community would endeavor to dissuade them, including the chiefs who preferred to retain such families in their villages. Instances abound where families contemplating migration were persuaded to stay by their fellow villagers. In this play, the influence of individuals like the cunning Mangmuaia, sent as a messenger by Chawngfianga's parents, led to Chawngfianga and his family relocating to another village based on lies. He wove a web of lies that compelled Chawngfianga and his family to relocate to another village, driven by the belief that their chief harbored animosity towards them. The departure of Chawngfianga and his family was a cause for grief not only for them but also for Lianchhiari and her family. Lianchhiari expressed the depth of their longing and sorrow for Chawngfianga and his family in a song she composed herself, capturing the emotional toll of their departure influenced by Mangmuaia's deceit.

Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga's love story remains a cherished tale among the Mizo, resonating even in contemporary times. Their narrative, featuring the poignant theme of a man and a woman deeply in love but unable to marry due to class and wealth disparities, has inspired numerous songs expressing their loneliness and yearning despite residing in different villages. The play serves as a poignant reflection of the societal conditions and norms prevalent among the Mizo during that era. A closer analysis of the challenges faced by Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga, hindered by significant economic and social gaps, further illuminates the narrative.

The Mizo in historical times were often warring against and raiding one another, they had great admiration for brave men who would protect them, therefore such men were highly esteemed. Since they were agrarian, they depended on their cultivation products for which they required hunters with good skills to help towards the control of wild animals that would otherwise consume their agricultural produce.

Thus, their way of life directly dictated their value system. As the saying goes, need and lack brings forth better and more convenient things, the need for security brought about the need for the brave *Pasaltha* in the society. Greatly respected and admired, the *Pasaltha* became not only their protector from man and wild, but their main resource of strength which they would boast about.

In Act I Scene two of the play *Thawmvunga* there is a depiction of a deliberation on attacking the enemy by the young men in Vuttaia's village. Their anger over their guns being seized by the young men of Lalpuithanga's village is reflected in the conversation. They desired to retrieve their guns at the earliest. In this particular scene, the prominent use of *Zawlbuk* as a place where the *Val upa* and the young men carefully plotted an attack is depicted. The conversation between the young men and the *Upate* revealed the bravery of the young men who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the welfare of their village and to attack those who terrorized them. In their readiness to be the one to go to face the enemies at Zahnuna's mention of the seized firearm, the fact that no one put the task of facing the enemy in others' hands but volunteered to be the one to go reveals the admiration for the brave, which in turn is a depiction of the effect of *Zawlbuk* institution in the lives of the young men. Despite this, the young men also learnt to listen to wise counsel and not behave rashly.

The prevalence of wars between villages elevated the status of a young man skilled at killing one's enemy. It is a general tendency to change one's perception or value system based on peace in society. In a war-zone area, the victors prosper and they receive adulation from others. In a peaceful area, the rich and powerful are admired, and thus man's value system is malleable by the need of the hour. Protecting the chief's village and its people was considered to be their responsibility, and they would go into war willing to lose their heads and arms. They had great admiration for those who could kill a famous *Pasaltha*.

A man's individuality may be shaped by the place of his birth, social structure and lifestyle, and also by the prevalence of peace or without. *Thawmvunga* was a brave *Pasaltha*, who was both respected and feared by the neighbouring

villages of his time, and he was the pride of his uncle Vuttaia who took him everywhere with him. Among the Mizo chiefs, Vuttaia was among the most powerful and famous, whose greatness could be attributed to the wealth of *Pasaltha* in his village, among whom Thawmvunga occupied the highest order of significance. Thus, the factors behind the making of Thawmvunga as a *Pasaltha* and a brave man was the conditions of his environment.

Pasaltha Khuangchera play was studied through the lens of Marxist literary theory. According to Karl Marx, society is divided into two main groups - oppressors and the oppressed, based on occupation and termed these two groups as 'Bourgeoisie' and 'Proletariat'. Marxist literary theory's primary goal is to pinpoint how a writer represents class, culture, and power in a given work and to highlight the writer's understanding of "class" and how he depicts the various social classes rather than emphasizing aesthetic or artistic elements. As a literary theory, it has been widely employed to critique various writings of literature.

In *Khuangchera* play, a scene from *Khuangchera* and Thanchumi's wedding night, was seen and Neihthanga, the son of the most important elder among the chief's council of elders, intended to throw off their wedding. Neihthanga's disdain for *Khuangchera*, the widow's son, demonstrates the bourgeoisie's scorn for the proletariat. Another play act featured similar contempt or disrespect where *Khuangchera's* village had to confront the British army, and the chief had to wave his *Pasaltha* off to engage the soldiers in combat at *Changsil* fort. However, *Khuangchera* could not join the expedition as his wife was giving birth. The chief, upon notice of *Khuangchera's* absence, instantly muttered words that infuriated *Khuangchera* that made him give immediate response by departing to take up arms against the intruders, where *Khuangchera* eventually lost his life fighting the British soldiers. Because of his low social standing, *Khuangchera* frequently got remarks that disappointed him. He said, "In moments of adversity, both at home or amidst the wilderness, I am *Khuangchera*. But when the time comes for privilege the name *Khuangchera* remains unuttered". This effectively captures the idea of society as being divided along class lines and the bourgeoisie's dominance over the proletariat.

In traditional Mizo society, the utmost honor bestowed upon a man was the privilege of drinking from the ceremonial *Nopui* mug. A conversation contained in Khuangchera play revealed that those who had the authority to allow Khuangchera to partake in that honour were the chief and his elders. The *Pasaltha*, despite risking their lives and giving their utmost for the chief and the village, were subject to the assessment of those in positions of authority above them. The determination of their worthiness for honor and accolades rested in the hands of those who held higher positions in the social hierarchy.

The general makeup of Mizo society is patriarchal, and women frequently have little involvement in matters of family or government. The play *Lalzika leh Vanthangi* Act I, Scene one, involves *Sailo* leader Mangpawrha assembling his elders as witnesses for his farewell speech to his son Suakpuilala. The play emphasizes how Vanthangi, the chief's own daughter, was left out of this momentous occasion, highlighting the custom that women are not considered participants in important family affairs.

Individual actions, especially those of the higher-class members like the Chief have deep connection to social ethics, as portrayed in other sections of the play. The desire to gain more territory was the main reason why the Mizo chiefs were often fighting. The subjects were forced to cooperate and obligated to obey even when the chief's main concern was extending his territory. The men devoted much of their lives to fighting and raiding in an effort to gain the trust of the chief and the villagers by becoming trustworthy *Pasaltha*. Their desire gave them bravery, and the villagers loved and respected them back for their steadfast devotion to the chief and the community. *Pasaltha* and brave young men began to emerge as a result of Suakpuilala's desire to raid his opponents and expand his realm. Driven by unfulfilled passion, Lalzika chose to carry out a revenge raid on his former beloved Vanthangi's village, causing great pain to his own followers. As a result, the people discovered that they were dependent on the whims and aspirations of their leaders.

The Mizo people were naturally altruistic and would sacrifice their lives for a friend, but they faced numerous obstacles as a result of social inequality. Numerous

cases of discrimination occurred, not because of their choice but rather because of their family's relationship and their upbringing. People from disadvantaged backgrounds seldom form alliances with the wealthy and powerful in marriage, and in the rare cases that they do, these relationships are fraught with a host of challenges. Such a circumstance is clearly contained in Duhmanga and Dardini play. Due to their disparate social statuses, many young men and women who were genuinely in love were unable to wed and Duhmanga and Dardini were among them.

Act IV Scene one and two featured the rejection of Dardini, a widow's daughter by Duhmanga's family as their daughter-in-law. They caused countless issues between them since they wanted him to wed Saikii, *Lal Khawnbawl's* (chief elder) daughter. They thought it would be extremely shameful for the chief's son to wed a woman from a lower social class. So, his parents persuaded Saikii to become Duhmanga's wife without asking him first, but Duhmanga wouldn't even spend a night with her. Instead, he brought Dardini home to become his wife while she was pounding rice in the morning. Although Dardini was well-liked by both young and old people, widowers and thought well of her not only because of beauty but also in character and manner of speech, she was not at all accepted to be fit for the bride of the chief's son. Hence, the commoners in the village regretted that Duhmanga's family had not chosen her due to her social standing. They were able to predict that Dardini would experience the same hardships as others on the lowest echelons of society. Eventually, when Duhmanga wasn't around, Dardini was sent off from the chief's residence, and even exiled her from the community though she was heavily pregnant. She then gave birth and passed away in *Mualpui Village*, where she and her mother had relocated. Duhmanga was devastated and furious to learn of Dardini's relocation and the death of Dardini and his son at birth. Realizing the suffering of the common people, he disapproved of the intentions of the wealthy and powerful and severed all connections with his parents, refusing to interact with them. Duhmanga longed to spend eternity with his beloved Dardini, but their tremendous affliction was brought about by a rigid societal structure that refused to alter his vision.

People in positions of authority frequently deprive people of their rights, which prevents them from enjoying fundamental freedoms since the rules created by the powerful have oppressed them. Rather of being lifted out of their predicament, low class individuals will continue to face difficulties on a regular basis. The suffering of Dardini and her mother was most atrocious. It was because of the strict social structure that the enamored couple as well as Dardini's mother had to go through such horrible upheaval.

In the play *Lalvunga*, the Mizo chiefs' rivalry over power is clearly portrayed and in their strife for being greater and stronger, the sorry plight of the villagers, including the death of Lalvunga is seen. Two chiefs, Lalvunga and Lianpuia ruled over *Phaiphul* village, and the inevitable fight for being the more powerful of the two stood in the way of peace among the villagers.

In Act I. II of the play, the discussion among the young men about the *Palian* locality where Lianpuia ruled reflected that they were constantly ready for battle. Although they may have coexisted in harmony, the rivalry between Lalvunga and Lianpuia led to dissatisfaction among their respective young men. The villagers watched the behaviour of their chiefs, unable to live through each day in peace and calm. Knowing that the smallest incident could trigger into a devastating effect between Lalvunga and Lianpuia, they could no longer remain tranquil, for the conflict between the chiefs did not agitate them both but had already reverberated throughout the entire village.

A prominent facade of stratification in the historical Mizo society evident from Lalvunga play is that the chiefs' competition and greed, as the top of the society, had a great effect on the subjects, and during wars and other conflicts, the lower class or their subjects always suffered the most. It follows that all societies, whether they are in a big village or a little hamlet, are hierarchical, with the lower classes constantly bearing the brunt of the consequences stemming from the misbehavior and avarice of the upper classes.

The Mizo society is divided by divergent factors. The status of an individual is directly related to factors that determine his place in the society. In the play *Liandova-te Unau* and *Lianchhiari* written by Lalthangfala Sailo, the gap between the upper and commoner is clearly depicted, as well as the dejected plight of the less fortunate. In the plays *Thawmvunga*, *Pasaltha Khuangchera*, *Lalzika leh Vanthangi* written by Laltluangliana Khiantge, in the portrayal of the interrelationship between the upper class and the commoners in the society, despite their mutual dependence on each other, the sufferings of the commoners due to their lack of privilege in the social hierarchy is detected. Lalsangzuala's play *Lalvunga* and *Duhmanga leh Dardini* is an interesting case-study of how an individual chose to assert his superiority over his household, thereby creating problems for others within the family; as well as the wretched conditions of the innocent commoners who are harassed due to their lower status in the society.

While there was no division in the Mizo society based on clans, there were divisions in the society based on status. The existence of words such as *Hmeithai* or widow, *Fahrah Lubawk* or big-headed orphan, *Daikil Kawmkar a Mi* or one from the outskirts of the village, *Hnamchawm* or commoner, *Sawn* or illegitimate child, *Pa Neilo* or fatherless child, *Zilh loh Fa* or untaught child, *Hmeichhia leh Pal Chhia* or bad women and bad fences, *Hmeichhe Finin Tuikhur Ral a Thleng Lo* or the wisdom of a woman does not cross the edge of the spring water, all determine the discrimination and the scorn exercised to those in unfortunate circumstances. The location of an individual's house is another important denominator of his status within the society: *Mualkil* is a house situated close to the chief's quarters and it denotes the privilege of the dwellers, whereas the widows and the poorer sections would live at *Daikil Kawmkar*, the corner or at the outskirts of the village.

Despite all these factors, these plays undisputedly reveal the presence of efficient governance within the Mizo society. Under the chief's guidance, strict order was maintained and followed by everyone. Everyone in the society, including the *Khawnbawl Upa*, the *Val Upa*, *Pasaltha* and the bachelors, the aged, the young

maidens and the children all contributed to the welfare of their village with the best of their capabilities, in order to create a congenial village that did not envy any other villages.

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Glossary:

Bawi: A bondman, a slave, a serf, a servant

Chhungpuifa: A legitimate son.

Fathang: Tax or Contribute paid usually to a Chief

Hmei: Concubine

Hmeifa: Son or daughter of concubine

Hnatlang: Community Work

Inleng: Suitor

Khawchhiar: Village Writer

Khawper: A hamlet

Khuangchawi: A feast

Lal: Chief

Manpui: The principal or main portion of a bride's price

Nula: An unmarried girl

Nupui: A wife

Pa: Father

Palai: A witness or an envoy

Pasaltha: Brave, manly, heroic, courageous

Pathian; God

Pathlawi: A young married man

Pem: A migrant or migration

Pialral: Paradise

Pu: Grandfather

Puan: Cloth

Puithiam: Village Priest

Ramhual: The people who advise where jhums should be cut each year and are allowed first choice of fields to cultivate.

Sabawp: The hindleg of an animal

Sachhiah: A meat due payable to the chief

Sadawt: The chief's private priest

Sakhua: The household spirit

Sapel: Hunting by an individual

Sawn: Illegitimate child

Sechhun: The sacrifices of a mythun

Serh: A holiday due to taboo

Sial: Mithun or goyal

Thangchhuah: Famous, applied to people who have done *Khuangchawi* and killed certain animals

Thirdeng chhiah: Tribute paid to a blacksmith

Thirdeng: Village blacksmith

Thirdengsa: The blacksmith's share of a wild animal shot by the villager

Tlangau: Village crier

Tlangval: A young bachelor

Tlawmngaihna: The Mizo code of morals and good form

Upa: Elder

Val Upa: Leader in Zawlbuk

Zalen: A person who is exempted from paying *Fathang* to the chief in consideration of his helping the chief if he runs short of paddy or falls into any kind of difficulty.

Zawlbuk: Bachelor's house

Zuno: A cup of Zu

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3. *Metaphor and Symbolical poetic Techniques: "Hruaitu Vana Pa kan Ngai"* by Zikpuui Pa. ISBN-978-81-951935-6-1, 2021.
4. *Lemchan thawnthu Unau Hmel Hai Hmanga Mizo Khawtlang nun (Social Stratification) Bihchianna*. Journal of MIELS September. ISSN 2348-8611, pages 1029-1041, 2021.
5. *Thutluang Ziaktu C. Rokhuma "Zoram Parmawi Thlirn"*. Journal of Mizo Studies Vol.IX no 3 October to December ISSN 2319-6041, Pages 808-816, 2021.
6. *Mizo Rochun Thu leh Hla Zirchianna "Mizo Thufing leh Thu leh Hla Inhlanchhawn"*. ISBN 978-81-957589-2-0, 2023.
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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIZO SOCIETY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED PLAYS

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF MIZO
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JUNE, 2025**

**A STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIZO SOCIETY WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED PLAYS**

BY

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Department of Mizo

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Submitted

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Mizo of Mizoram University, Aizawl**

ABSTRACT

The focal point of this research is to underline that social inequality, based on power, rank, and prestige, has been a longstanding aspect of Mizo society. A comprehensive examination of traditional Mizo society reveals the presence of rank distinctions and social inequality. An in-depth study of the traditional Mizo society is conducted by analyzing the characters, particularly the heroes and heroines in various Mizo plays since the societal norms and customs that were common among the Mizo people at the time are eloquently reflected in these plays. The selected plays for the current study include *Liandova-te Unau* and *Lianchhiari* written by Lalthangfala Sailo, *Thawmvunga*, *Pasaltha Khuangchera* and *Lalzika leh Vanthangi* written by Laltluangliana Khiantge, *Lalvunga* and *Duhmanga leh Dardini* written by Lalsangzuala. Most of the stories presented in these plays are still beloved legends among the Mizo people, even in the modern era and many songs have been inspired by the profound themes of their narrative.

In the play *Liandova-te Unau* and *Lianchhiari*, the gap between the upper class and commoner is depicted, as well as the dejected plight of the less fortunate. The plays *Thawmvunga*, *Pasaltha Khuangchera*, *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*, are the portrayal of the interrelationship between the elites and the commoners in the society; despite their mutual dependence on each other, the sufferings of the commoners due to their lack of privilege in the social hierarchy is detected. Lalsangzuala's play *Lalvunga* and *Duhmanga leh Dardini* is an interesting case-study of how an individual chose to assert his superiority over his household, thereby creating problems for others within the family as well as the wretched conditions of the innocent commoners who are harassed due to their lower status in the society.

Humanity is split into several social groups within society based on caste, ethnicity, and race. Social classes, social strata, and status groups are formed based on the economic and political circumstances of an individual or group. By these measures, people are different from each other in terms of being rulers and subjects, rich and poor, elite and commoner, and so forth. As a result, every community experiences inequality, which is defined as an unequal distribution of valued

economic resources. A social hierarchy thus develops when people are ranked according to the attributes they have been given and the accomplishments they have made. Listed statuses are arranged in a hierarchy from highest to lowest. Hence, the term ‘social stratification’ emerged which refers to the division of persons or groups of individuals into stratified layers. In this manner, a hierarchy of power over economic resources is established from a set of ranked statuses that are determined by assessments of social value. According to Talcott Parsons, social stratification is, “The differential ranking of the human individuals who compose a given social system and their treatment as superior and inferior relative to one another in certain socially important respects” (69). It distinguishes the rights and advantages of each stratum within society and represents the social hierarchy that exists within. Melvin Tumin defines social stratification as, “the arrangement of a social group or society into a hierarchy of positions that are unequal with regard to power, property, social evaluation and psychic gratification” (12).

Social stratification is not static in nature, instead it is a dynamic phenomenon. It is a result of history as well. Varied societies had different ways for allocating power and privileges at various points throughout history. Throughout different eras of history, multiple distribution systems have existed within the same culture. This has led to periodic changes in the system of social stratification. As a result, social stratification takes on diverse forms depending on the society and assumes different forms in different societies on different criteria.

The Mizo society is likewise divided by divergent factors. The status of an individual is directly related to factors that determine his place in the society. Grading criteria for stratified positions involve factors such as political power, wealth and property, socio-religious status, age, gender, kinship relationships, and bravery. Through the analysis of empirical information and secondary sources, traditional Mizo society can be categorized into three strata. The upper strata consists of individuals holding positions such as *Lal* (Village chief), *Upa* (Elders), *Puithiam* (Village Priest), *Thangchhuahpa*, *Ramhual*, *Zalen*, and *Pasaltha*. The middle strata include *Thirdeng*, *Hnamchawm*, and *Tlangau*, while the lower strata encompass

Widow, Orphans, *Tukluh Bawi*, *Chemsen Bawi*, and *Pem*. Notably, the role of the Village chief stands out as distinctive and unique within the upper strata.

While there was no division in the Mizo society based on clans, there were divisions in the society based on status. The existence of words such as *Hmeithai* or widow, *Fahrah Lubawk* or big-headed orphan, *Daikil Kawmkar a Mi* or one from the outskirts of the village, *Hnamchawm* or commoner, *Sawn* or illegitimate child, *Pa Neilo* or fatherless child, *Zilh loh Fa* or untaught child, *Hmeichhia leh Pal Chhia* or bad women and bad fences, *Hmeichhe Finin Tuikhur Ral a Thleng Lo* or the wisdom of a woman's does not cross the edge of the spring water, all determine the discrimination and the scorn exercised to those in unfortunate circumstances. The location of an individual's house is another important denominator of his status within the society: *Mualkil* is a house situated close to the chief's quarters and it denotes the privilege of the dwellers, whereas the widows and the poorer sections would live at *Daikil Kawmkar*, the corner or at the outskirts of the village.

Chapter – 1: Introduction

An overview of social stratification, including its nature and contributing elements, is provided in this chapter. The Mizo society's hierarchy, which includes different social classes and ranks, is emphasized, along with detailed explanations of each group's roles and responsibilities.

“The *Lal*, or chief, served as the paramount legal authority and administrative leader in the traditional Mizo village and each village is operated independently, governed by its own chief” (*Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* 127). He essentially possessed ownership of all assets within the village, including the village land or *Ram*, and had the authority to requisition property from the villagers. The chief exercised direct control over the village government and assumed various responsibilities, encompassing judicial matters, administration, oversight of the *Zawlbuk* (bachelor dormitory), approval of religious affairs and festivals, allocation of jhum plots to villagers, and management of diplomatic and war-related issues. The chief, aided by his council of elders or the *Upa*, makes all decisions on internal village government in conformity with the customary laws or *Mizo Dan*.

Thangchhuahpa is a prominent status in traditional Mizo society, ranking just below the *Lal* or chief and title is conferred upon a man who distinguishes himself by either hosting a series of public feasts or demonstrating prowess in hunting. The chief selects individuals as *Ramhual* to gain favour and choose favourable land for cultivation, subjecting them to a higher tax known as *Lal Fathang*. The selection criteria for *Fathang* favour large families with effective and efficient working members. *Zalen* title also holds prestige, although individuals with this title lack influence in administrative matters like *Ramhual*. Nevertheless, they have the privilege of selecting desirable land after *Ramhual*, placing them in an esteemed position. Similar to *Ramhual*, they contribute a higher tax than ordinary residents and seek favour from the chief. The presence of individuals with the title *Hautla* is not universal across all villages; however, in certain villages, chiefs select them to enjoy a slightly elevated status compared to common residents. Their role involves choosing land after *Zalen* but before commoners.

The middle strata of the Mizo society occupied by *Thirdeng*, *Hnamchawm*, and *Tlangau*. *Thirdeng* plays a crucial role in Mizo society with one appointed in each village by the chief, known as *Lal Thirdeng*. This position demands specialized skills in tool and equipment fabrication, making it a full-time commitment. A specific tax, *Khawlai Buh*, is imposed on the *Thirdeng* of each village. The *Hnamchawm* constitutes the middle categories of society, encompassing the majority of the population. This term broadly refers to individuals outside the ruling chief's clan. Within the *Hnamchawm*, there is a further categorization based on material possessions, distinguishing between the *Mitha* (the haves) and *Mi thalo* (the have nots). The *Tlangau* function as village criers in Mizo society, responsible for disseminating public announcements and proclamations. Despite the significance of their role, they do not inherently occupy a high social status, as the position is considered open to anyone and lacks prestige. Due to the time spent around the chief, the *Tlangau* receives a salary in the form of rice, known as *Buh Kho Khat*, collected from each household in the village.

The lower strata of the hierarchy comprise *Hmeithai* (Widow), *Fahrah* (Orphans), *Tukluh Bawi*, *Chemsen Bawi*, and *Pem*. Both *Tukluh Bawi* and *Chemsen*

Bawi are essentially persons who were forced into slavery due to unfavourable situations. When they lose village conflicts, *Tukluh Bawi* are the people who are taken in as slaves in war, but *Chemsen Bawi* are the people who flee to the chief's home in hopes of safety after he kills someone. When he is chased by the victim's family, he is forgiven by the chief's authority if he reaches or touches the pillars of chief's abode, but he stays in the chief's home as a slave for the remainder of his life. *Pem* means migration, and the individual or family who migrates is also referred to as *Pem*. *Pem* face discrimination from the locals in their new community, where they are typically granted land on the outskirts of the village.

In society, there are a multitude of biological, social, cultural, economic, and political demands. The patterns and ideals of a certain society are taken into consideration while determining the significance of demands. To meet these demands, many roles exist. The function that a person plays for the good of his society determines his position. A higher social value is given to the role that is seen as being more crucial in addressing social needs. These people enjoy power, perks, and reputation as a result of the society.

In the Mizo community, warriors hold a significant and esteemed position, second only to the chief and elders. This prominence stems from historical contexts where inter-village warfare was prevalent. During times of conflict, warriors assumed the crucial role of protectors and guardians for women, children, and the elderly, earning them respect and high status within the community. Mizo highly value individuals, who excel in hunting, demonstrate courage, resilience, diligence, courtesy, and a willingness to sacrifice for their friends. Those who prove themselves to possess these qualities are honored with the title of a warrior. This title is reserved for individuals with a high degree of courage and fearlessness, making them deeply admired and cherished. This admiration is rooted in the necessity for a considerable level of valor and bravery in their living conditions for survival. "Mizo ancestors specifically hold profound admiration for three specific categories of individuals: warriors, village elders, and those recognized with *Nopui* for their fearlessness and courage" (*Mizo Pasaltha –Historical Perspective* 51).

Chapter-2: The Impact of Societal Influences on Individual's Life in Lalthangfala Sailo's Plays *Liandova-te Unau* and *Lianchhiari*

This chapter provides a brief summary of the two plays before delving deeper into the character analysis to draw attention to several intriguing societal settings that are present in the stories. The play *Liandova-te Unau* published by Lalthangfala Sailo in 1969 has six acts, each with a different set of scenes and features a total of eleven characters. On the other hand, in the play *Lianchhiari*, there are a total of seventeen characters distributed across four Acts.

The play *Liandova-te Unau*, which centers on Liandova's dying father, is staged at *Zokhua Charchhawn Veng*. His children, wife, and neighbour Pi Fangi come to tend to him as he is about to pass away. As the father dies, Liandova's mother promises in a song of sorrow to take care of the children. But the mother betrays her word by falling in love with Thangseia, a widowed traveller and finally eloped together. Abandoned by their mother, Liandova and his brother, Tuaisiala, endured poverty and toil as labours in rice field. From this tragic event, the two brothers experienced many forms of harsh treatment in life and endured scorns from their fellow villagers. Nevertheless, life's path takes turn and they eventually discovered contentment after uncovering countless treasures such as jewelry and brass items in a python's abdomen. Consequently, *Liandova-te Unau* play provides an explicit analysis of how social rank is determined by one's economic standing.

Liandova, despite his youth, fears the prospect of living without his father because he recognised their limitations in efficiently constructing houses and cultivating land and foresees a heightened struggle to meet their needs. The challenges faced by Liandova, his brother, and their mother stem from a lack of necessary manpower. Contrary to the prevalent depiction in Mizo literature, *Liandova-te Unau* portrays a distinct societal scenario. The siblings being left destitute and scorned by the community is in contrast with the usual image of the Mizo community known for mutual support and upliftment in times of need. Despite the generally helpful nature of the society, the imperfection of human nature sometimes manifests in the mistreatment and disdain toward the poor and unfortunate. The customary practice of communal support during illness or adversity is common, however, the family's constant reliance proves burdensome. This

condition leads to societal disdain, as the community perceives them as incapable. Even though Liandova is young, his knowledge of social dynamics is clear from his heartfelt sorrows when realizing his father's imminent demise which is similar to the sentiment echoed in Pi Fangi's lamentation.

Liandova: Tuaisial, this is the state of our existence, and I am in despair. Father, please forgive me; we are still so young that we are not fit to be left alone. Father, how will I have the courage to face my friends without you, and what will we even eat? My dearest father, it is not time yet; your children are not fit to be left alone, dear father (7).

In scene two of Act five, the visit of Lersia, a prominent chief from another village to *Zokhua*, the village where Liandova resides unfolds. Despite his elevated status, Lersia deliberately adorns himself in rags, assuming the appearance of a destitute individual. Consequently, no one extends hospitality to him, leaving him isolated even as evening descends. This scenario unequivocally illustrates the pervasive tendency of people to treat others based on perceived economic conditions. Observing the chief alone, Tuaisiala and Liandova decided to invite him home, presuming him to be a fellow destitute individual. Then, Liandova and his brother achieved prosperity through the assistance of Lersia. Secretly, they amassed a substantial number of mithuns and valuable items such as necklaces and brass artifacts, along with a significant quantity of rice, unbeknownst to their chief and fellow villagers.

In Act six, scene one, Pi Fangi approached and divulged chief's daughter Tuaichawngi of the extensive wealth possessed by Liandova and his brother, convincing Tuaichawngi to consider marrying Liandova. In the historical Mizo society, individuals with wealth and affluence held a prominent and elevated status were not overlooked, even by the chief's daughter. Initially unaware of Liandova's wealth, Tuaichawngi's father reacts angrily, symbolized by cutting off her finger. His first sentence when he realises that his daughter has chosen whom he considers to be a poor man as her husband is that, "Tuaichawng, out of all the sons of wealthy men you choose an orphan who only affords to lick tubers. You do not need to be a whole

person to marry such person, where is my knife?" (he takes his knife and cut off Tuaichawngi's index finger) (68). His initial response suggests a societal perception that the poor are only suitable for marriage to disabled individuals. However, Liandova successfully fulfills all the bride prices demanded for Tuaichawngi. Despite initial skepticism, they ultimately accepted him as their son-in-law due to his wealth. This underscores the societal inclination to regard the rich and wealthy with admiration, and the acceptance of Liandova based on his newfound wealth reflects the societal judgment of individuals based on their economic status.

Liandova-te Unau play also reveals the plight of women as a result of their position in Mizo society. In the history of Mizo society, agriculture demanded substantial manpower, and the labour-intensive nature of cultivation tasks placed men in a pivotal role as providers for their families. The strenuous agricultural activities made it challenging for women to participate, resulting in their perceived lower status. The quote "Widow could remarry, but did not often do so if they had children..." emphasizes the societal norms regarding widowed women, highlighting their paramount position in a son's house if they chose not to remarry" (*Women in Mizo Society* 14). The status of women in Mizo society can be elucidated through the life of Liandova's mother in the play. Following the demise of Liandova's father, the mother assumes a pivotal role as the primary caregiver in the family, and the family's welfare is contingent on her efforts. Aware of the societal treatment of widows and the difficulties in sustaining livelihood, she laments the anticipated hardships and the scornful treatment she and her children might face. So, she desired to marry a man named Thangseia. Additionally, she considers it advantageous for Liandova and Tuaisiala to reside with their maternal uncle in the eastern part. Liandova's mother isn't truly inclined to abandon her children, but the strain of inadequate provision for them compels her to consider marriage with another man. From another perspective, Liandova's mother appears to opt for marriage as a means to escape a life characterized by societal disdain and contempt. Initially, observers of the play might assign blame to Liandova's mother, but upon closer examination, it becomes evident that Thangseia is at fault for leaving Liandova and his brother behind. Despite this,

societal blame and fault are placed on the mother. The plight of women with low status is profound.

In the play *Lianchhiari*, the protagonist, Lianchhiari, is the daughter of *Dungtlang* chief, Tluangzachhawna and Cherhlunchhungi. Known for her exceptional beauty, Lianchhiari harbors admiration for a commoner in their village named Chawngfianga. However, being the chief's daughter, Chawngfianga hesitates to pursue her as Lianchhiari is rarely courted by other bachelors despite her exceptional attractiveness due to her rank. The play is rooted in a true event from Mizo history and continues to be a perennial favourite among the people, remaining one of the most renowned stories. This dramatic work serves as a reflection of Mizo society, providing a profound glimpse into their way of life.

The first scene of Act one introduces the village of *Selesih Sangsarih*, showcasing the downfall and division of one of the biggest and mighty Mizo villages. In the past, Mizo engaged in invasions and raids against other villages, making it difficult for weaker chiefs to prosper. At the invitation of *Selesih* chief Pu Kawlha, Lianchhiari's father migrated from the eastern side of the *Tiau* River to assume the role of *Dungtlang* chief. The first scene of Act two highlights the construction of the chief's house, as it is customary to prioritize the construction of the chief's residence when the community undergoes relocation. During such transitions, individuals displaying strength and a strong work ethic are highly regarded. Lianchhiari's father acknowledges these qualities in Chawngfianga, praising him as a diligent and motivated person. In the chief's words, "It is clear from the way he works that he is a diligent and motivated person... I never thought that such kind of person will be able to exist ever, so take out the best rice beer, and serve in chief's Cup first to the most altruistic, hospitable and working the hardest" (123). The chief's commendation of Chawngfianga during the ceremony underscores the importance of men who exhibit strength, courage, selflessness, and a willingness to sacrifice in contributing to the community's sense of safety.

The relationship between Chawngfianga and Lianchhiari highlights the Mizo practice of bride price. Despite being a commoner, Chawngfianga, admired by

Lianchhiari for his courage and virtues, is chosen by her parents to be her husband. Contrary to the popular opinion that class differences create obstacles in Mizo community marriages, Lianchhiari's father asserts that this is not universally true. Even though Chawngfianga wants to marry Lianchhiari, her father can already see how society will perceive him, how he will not be able to afford the bride price because she is the chief's daughter. He realizes how they have already been a burden to Chawngfianga and his family. Chawngfianga also dares not be too close to her due to their lower status. The only words he has the courage to say are, "Lianchhiar, it feels good to be with you. I want to be by your side calmly for the rest of our lives" (137). However, as Chawngfianga does not come from a wealthy family, a significant reduction in the bride price is considered due to his qualities.

The Mizo people of that time tended to settle in villages of their preference, often migrating from one village to another. When families with a certain level of wealth contemplated migration, others in the community would endeavor to dissuade them, including the chiefs who preferred to retain such families in their villages. Instances abound where families contemplating migration were persuaded to stay by their fellow villagers. However, there were chiefs who, contrary to this norm, actively tried to attract wealthy individuals to settle in their villages, an act sometimes frowned upon. The influence of individuals like the cunning Mangmuaia, sent as a messenger by Chawngfianga's parents, led to Chawngfianga and his family relocating to another village based on lies. Mangmuaia wove a web of lies that compelled Chawngfianga and his family to relocate to another village, driven by the belief that their chief harbored animosity towards them. The departure of Chawngfianga and his family was a cause for grief not only for them but also for Lianchhiari and her family. Lianchhiari expressed the depth of their longing and sorrow for Chawngfianga and his family in a song she composed herself, capturing the emotional toll of their departure influenced by Mangmuaia's deceit –

That you would migrate

I am not thrilled about

For me I do not consent

My lover my partner (160).

Despite the mutual affection between Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga, their marriage is thwarted by the jealousy and envy of others. The primary obstacle arises from the reluctance to accept Chawngfianga, once a commoner with low status, as the chief's son-in-law with an elevated social standing. The cunning Mangmuaia vehemently opposes the idea of a commoner marrying the chief's daughter and endeavors to obstruct the union. This opposition stems from a reluctance to allow a social elevation for a person of lower status.

Chapter-3: Effect of Surrounding Events on Mizo Society and Individuals in *Thawmvunga, Khuangchera, Lalzika Leh Vanthangi*

The play *Thawmvunga* shows the bravery and traits of a *Pasaltha* in Thawmvunga, who was a courageous man. The playwright concentrated on an incident that highlighted Thawmvunga's bravery, when he went to Lalpuithanga's house to retrieve his grandfather Vuttaia's gun that was seized by Lalpuithanga. This incident was the starting point of the war between the north and south. The war between the north and south, known as *Chhim leh Hmar Indo* began following a dispute between Lalpuithanga and Vuttaia. Thus, the play, in general, is a true depiction of heroic deeds that are motivated by the social system.

In the earlier Mizo society, the most prestigious men were the chief and his council of elders or the *Khawnbawl Upa*, who were followed by the *Pasaltha* heroes and the braves. "What they value most is a brave man, a strong and diligent warrior. At the birth of a boy, they would announce him to be a brave hunter who would shoot an elephant. Such was the blessing of the elders. First and foremost, they desired the son to be a brave and skilled hunter" (*Mizo Ramchhuah Dan* 1). Since they were often warring against and raiding one another, they had great admiration for brave men who would protect them. Likewise, being in agrarian society that relied on the results of their horticulture, they needed skilled hunters to assist keep wild animals under control. Thus, their way of life directly dictated their value system. The prevalence of wars between villages elevated the status of a young man skilled at killing one's enemy. It is a general tendency to change one's

perception or value system based on peace in society. In a war-zone area, the victors prosper and they receive adulation from others whereas in a pacific area, the rich and powerful are admired, and thus man's value system is malleable by the need of the hour.

Thawmvunga was a brave warrior (*Pasaltha*), who was both respected and feared by the neighbouring villages of his time, and he was the pride of his uncle Vuttaia who took him everywhere with him. Among the Mizo chiefs, Vuttaia was among the most powerful and famous, whose greatness could be attributed to the wealth of *Pasaltha* in his village, among whom Thawmvunga occupied the highest order of significance. Thawmvunga achieved fame as he was under the guidance of his uncle Vuttaia who was known as the brave chief who would not surrender in wars and raids, who was determined to win against every opponent he came across. From this, it could be derived that the factors behind the making of Thawmvunga as a *Pasaltha* and a brave man was the conditions of his environment.

The play *Pasaltha Khuangchera* has fourteen characters and is divided into three scenes in Act I, five scenes in Act II, and four scenes in Act III through Act V. The hero, Khuangchera is invariably mentioned whenever the fabled Mizo *Pasaltha* was brought up. He was known among the Upa-te as "the bravest." In addition to his bravery, he was well admired by others for his meekness and unwavering *Tlâwmngaihna*. This play is explored through the lens of Marxist Literary Theory. Karl Marx believed that every society has been divided into two main categories, the "oppressors" and the "oppressed" which he termed *Bourgeoisie* and *Proletariat*. Marxist theory of literature has been frequently used as a literary theory to analyze a variety of literary works. It helps to highlight the author's interpretation of "class" and how he represents the various social classes in the community. According to Karl Marx,

In a class society, ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class. In a classless society ideology is the relay whereby and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is lived to the profit of all men (Nagarajan 226).

Neihthanga, the son of the chief's *Khawnbawl Upa* was envious of Khuangchera's fame, and also despised him as he was the son of a widow. He would often say, "Khuangchera is not specially brave, he is merely fortunate" and would attempt to be more famous than Khuangchera. In Act III scene five, the night of the *Lawichhiat* of Khuangchera and Thanchumi's wedding, the first night where she would return to her maiden's home was set.

Neihthanga: You have nothing to say, what I say is what I say. Am I not the son of the chief's upa-min, should I be humbled by a widow's son? Should I not be able to face the man who stole my woman from me? Definitely no, a man must face a man till the end.

Lukawnga: I told you to stop making such noise. Just accept that you are no match for Khuangchera (61).

The above conversation between Neihthanga and Lukawnga, a fellow *Pasaltha* and close friend of Khuangchera, shows the intentions of Neihthanga, who, out of jealousy and despision, sought to ruin Khuangchera's wedding. In Neihthanga's contempt of the widow's son Khuangchera, the disregard for the proletariat by the bourgeoisie is clearly seen.

As inhabitants of a chief's village, they were wary of the authorities above them in everything that they did. Despite their hard work and dedication, any success was attributed to the chief, for the chief could attain nothing without the villagers. In case of any mishap, the villagers would be the casualties. When the British entered Mizoram, many chiefs offer resistance to the British army; at the time of Khuangchera, Changsil fort was the stronghold of the British army, which they called as '*vai*'. Waving his *Pasaltha* off to fight against the *vai* soldiers, chief Sailianpuia said, "Hereby I and my council of elders, the aged shall see you off. Make sure you leave for sure success" (90). Here those who worked hard at battle were the group of *Pasaltha*, but those who received laurels were the chief and his elders. At this time, Khuangchera was unable to participate in the expedition to

Changsil fort as Thanchhumi had recently given birth. However, every *Pasaltha* from other villages inquired about his whereabouts. When their chief saw Khuangchera at home, he had no confidence in the war and uttered words that deeply angered Khuangchera.

I shall most definitely go. I'll leave my wife and children behind. They can't understand the sacred *Naulaihrilh*, can they? Defies the expectation, right? How long is three days! Perhaps Khuangchera is missed greatly on worrisome days. Before the enemies the fading of a *Tuibur's* strength is longer without Khuangchera (92).

In the above reply made by Khuangchera to the chief's taunt on his absence from the shoot-out with the *Vai* soldiers, the vast difference between the two classes while being interdependent on each other could clearly be seen.

Distinct from previous play, *Lalzika and Vanthangi* play is studied to reflect the conditions of women in the society. The study is centered on the heroine Vanthangi, a chief's daughter. Despite being an upper class member, her story tells the genuine reflection of societal norms in terms of women's status in a patriarchal society. In Act I, Scene I of the play *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*, *Sailo* chief Mangpawrha gathers his elders as witnesses for his final message to his son, Suakpuilala. Notably, the play underscores the exclusion of women from this significant event, emphasizing that women are traditionally not deemed participants in crucial familial matters. This portrayal reflects the gender norms prevalent in Mizo society, where women were often sidelined from certain ceremonial or decision-making processes,

Mangpawrha: Chhungpui fa, son of the great clan, since you shall rule over this hillock I have summoned you before my council of elders, the khawnbawl upate to listen to my last words on our land and family.

Suakpuilala: Since it seems most important, all of us siblings must listen to your words. Since Thawmpawnga and Runphunga have not

returned from their expedition, tlangau, though she is but a woman,
make haste to summon my sister Vanthangi.

Vanthangi: O! brother, is my presence required? (25-26).

In his address to the village herald, the *Tlangau*, Suakpuilala used the term, “though she is but a woman” which puts the expectation of a woman in family matters quite clearly. Even Vanthangi had internalized the norm and felt she was not required, which is indicative of the general perception of women that was internalized by all.

In the play, messengers Buanga and Dumtea approached Vanthangi with a proposal for her to be Lalzika's wife. Despite Vanthangi's inner desire to be Lalzika's wife, her elder brother Suakpuilala did not favour the alliance. The dejected return of Lalzika's messengers highlights that even a powerful daughter of a chief could not enter into marriage without the consent of her family. Suakpuilala unequivocally rejected Lalzika's messengers, and despite his mother being present, he did not seek her counsel. This illustrates the lack of influence that the mother of the family had in her daughter's marriage, as she neither argued nor offered counsel. Similarly, Vanthangi did not dispute her brother's decision but instead sent word to Lalzika, urging his messengers to plead with her brother once more. This highlights the limited agency that women, even within their families, had in decisions related to marriage, underscoring a cultural norm where such matters were typically handled without their direct input or involvement.

Chapter 4: Study of Social Stratification in *Duhmanga Leh Dardini* and *Lalvunga* Plays

Duhmanga Leh Dardini play is studied to manifest how higher status in the society could be attained through one's abilities and the cost of human injustice due to stratified social system. It shows the misery of a person who was born into a poor status and was never able to be regarded as equal to others.

Young brave men whose presence comforted the villagers were duly respected and admired. The conversation between Hrangvunga and his council of

advisors at the onset of the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* depicts their contemporary society with their worldview including their value systems and the ambition of the young bachelors to attain prominence and status within the society. The male child was taught to be brave from his tender years. The primary focus of their education was to acquire skills in hunting and killing in times of war and plunder. In Scene I of the play, the depth of the dedication of the young men towards the welfare of the village can clearly be seen from the conversation between the *Vangtlang* chief Hrangvunga and his council of elders at *Vangtlang lal In*.

Suaka: Indeed, father of Duhmanga, our *Val Upa* are sitting and waiting to hear from you, is there any new matter of concern?

Zahmuaka: True, *Val Upa*, the real fences of our village, the one who bonds with our young men and guide them, it is due to their dedication that we are able to feel secure and at peace. It'd be correct to let them know whatever the concern is, good or bad.

Val upa III: We are ready for anything (16).

Since young men whose names were being called out by the chiefs depicted acknowledgment of their bravery and *Tlawmngaihna* towards the village, the young men were respected by others and it was therefore imperative for them to dedicate themselves deeper, just as the *Val Upa* replied that they were ready to do anything required of them. Since it was the highest competition among young men, a wise chief would look for the most committed young man to instigate them to perform their best.

In matrimonial matters within the traditional Mizo society, those who were born into poor families rarely forge alliances with the rich and powerful, and if there were marriages between such different backgrounds, they have to go through innumerable difficulties. Duhmanga and Dardini were among the many young people who, because of their differing social status, were unable to marry each other despite having a profound love for one another. Despite their love and desire to be together, Duhmanga's family could not accept a widow's daughter as their

son's spouse causing numerous issues between them since they wanted him to wed Saikii, Khawnbawl's daughter.

The suffering of the innocent Dardini in the play depicts the predicament faced by the widow's daughter since she was a commoner and child of an ordinary person with no social standing. Dardini's mother knew that worse things could happen and so she would try to break them up in order to escape from it, for she was certain that she and her daughter alone would not be able to survive being neglected by the entire village with the judgment of the chief. Duhmanga, with his stubbornness did not wish his beloved Dardini to be with anyone else, thus there was no reason for him to lose Dardini and took her home as his bride. In such scenario, Dardini and her mother could not enjoy their rights and spent their days in great distress. They were aware that they had no one who would advise or support them, which made them miss Dardini's father who had died, saying that had he been alive their torment would be less, crying out at the contemplation of Duhmanga and Dardini thus: "Oh how distressing this is! Of anyone to appear, we had the best! How I abhor poverty! Mambawih pa, how I miss you, had you been around we wouldn't be this bad. I wonder if you watch us from Rihtlang. A! I can't bear this all alone. Let me go and chat with Rovi's mother instead" (60).

In the absence of Duhmanga, Dardini was sent off from the chief's house and banished from the village even though she was heavily pregnant with a child. She eventually died giving birth upon arrival at the relocated village. The suffering of Dardini and her mother was most atrocious, and the cost of their suffering due to the chief of *Vangtlang* and his elders would be quite high if brought into today's law.

The history play, *Lalvunga* was written based on the epic narrative of Lalvunga, a handsome and courageous man during his time whose name will remain in Mizo history. The play effectively captures the issues that arise in Mizo society as a result of the ambition of authority figures. Lalvunga was the son of chief Chawngmura and Tuahzovi. Following the early death of his father, Lalvunga took over his father's chieftainship and became the overseer of *Phaiphul* village.

Lalvunga was a great chief who established *Phaiphul* village from *Hriangngai*, naming his village with a different name *Farzawl*, which is situated a

little further up north from *Tiau* between *Khawthlir* and *Phunte* villages. In the play *Lalvunga*, the friction between the Mizo chiefs due to the desire for authority is clearly depicted and in their strife for being greater and stronger, the sorry plight of the villagers, including the death of Lalvunga is seen. Two chiefs, Lalvunga and Lianpuia ruled over *Phaiphul* village, and the inevitable fight for being the more powerful of the two stood in the way of peace among the villagers. In Act I. II of the play, the discussion among the young men about the Palian locality where Lianpuia ruled reflected that they were constantly ready for battle. While they could have dwelt together peacefully, the struggle for superiority between their chiefs caused restlessness among their respective young men. The villagers watched the behaviour of their chiefs, unable to live through each day in peace and calm.

Chapter-5: Conclusion

This research has made an effort to highlight the various degrees of social inequality and class divisions that exist in traditional Mizo society. An extensive study of traditional Mizo society is undertaken by analysing various Mizo plays to highlight the societal norms and conventions that were vividly expressed in these plays. Seven Mizo plays, *Liandova Te Unau* and *Lianchhiari*, *Thawmvunga Pasaltha Khuangchera*, *Lalzika leh Vanthangi*, *Lalvunga*, and *Duhmanga leh Dardini* written by Lalthangfala Sailo, Laltluangliana Khiantge and Lalsangzuala were chosen. These plays convincingly portray the stark contrast between the affluent and the common people, as well as the miserable circumstances of the unfortunate, the status of women in Mizo society, the socio-economic influence, and the anguish of the common people as a result of their lack of privilege in the social hierarchy.

Liandova Te Unau portrays a distinct societal scenario. Following Liandova's father's death, his mother abandons the family in pursuit of a new husband, leaving the siblings destitute and scorned by the community. This phenomenon indicates a form of social bias where individuals may be unfairly judged based on their financial status or capacity to earn a living. The outset of the play highlights that, in the Mizo society of that time, individuals unable to work efficiently and those in the economically disadvantaged segment lived in impoverished conditions, often

envying those in better circumstances, existing on the societal margins. Because they live in an agrarian community, Liandova, his brother, and their mother endure issues due to a shortage of workforce. This play also included a scenario that depicted the wealthy and prosperous people as having a prominent and high standing in the Mizo society of the past. Chief's daughter, Tuaichawngi's choice of Liandova as her husband is influenced by her secret acknowledgement of Liandova's new-found treasures. Initially unaware of Liandova's wealth, Tuaichawngi's father reacts angrily, symbolized by cutting off her finger. His initial response suggests a societal perception that the poor are only suitable for marriage to disabled individuals. However, Liandova successfully fulfills all the bride prices demanded for Tuaichawngi. Despite initial skepticism, they ultimately accept him as their son-in-law due to his wealth.

The play *Lianchhiari* serves as a reflection of Mizo society, providing a profound glimpse into their way of life. Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga's love story featured the heart-breaking theme of a man and a woman deeply in love but unable to marry due to class and wealth disparities. In this play, the influence of people like the deceitful Mangmuaia, who Chawngfianga's parents dispatched as a messenger, caused Chawngfianga and his family to relocate to a different village on the basis of false information. He spun a web of falsehoods, leading Chawngfianga and his family to believe their chief was against them and forcing them to move to a different village. The exodus of Chawngfianga and his family was a cause for grief not only for them but also for Lianchhiari and her family.

Similar incident of discrimination not by choice, but by dint of familial relations and upbringing was seen in *Duhmanga and Dardini* play. Despite their love and desire to be together, Duhmanga's family could not accept a widow's daughter, Dardini as their son's spouse. As a result, Dardini and Duhmanga, the chief's son, were unable to enjoy their fundamental human rights and endured numerous hardships. Duhmanga's family caused numerous issues between them since they wanted him to wed Saikii, *Khawnbawl's* daughter. Without the consent of Duhmanga, the heavily pregnant Dardini along with her mother were banished from the village, where Dardini eventually died giving birth to a son who also died. When

Duhmanga heard about Dardini and his son's deaths, he was devastated. He did not take part in the raid and carnage that occurred in his village of *Vantlang*, but he did weep for Dardini and his son, and he passed away with a broken heart. Duhmanga's parents thought it would be extremely shameful for the chief's son to wed a woman from a lower social class. It was because of this strict social structure that the enamored couple had to go through such horrible upheaval. The anguish of the defenseless Dardini in the play *Duhmanga leh Dardini* represents the situation that the widow's daughter suffered since she was a commoner and the offspring of an ordinary person with no social position.

The prevalence of wars between villages elevated the status of a young man skilled at killing one's enemy. It is a general tendency to change one's perception or value system based on peace in society. A man's individuality might be influenced by his birthplace, social standing, way of life, and whether or not there is harmony in his environment. In *Thawmvunga* play, Vuttaia was one of the most prominent and powerful Mizo chiefs; his fame and strength came from abundance of *Pasaltha* in his village, where Thawmvunga held the greatest position of importance. Therefore, Thawmvunga's surroundings contributed to his development as a *Pasaltha* and a fearless man.

An illustration of strong bearing on social ethics by individual acts—particularly those of higher-class members like the chief is seen in *Lalzika and Vanthangi* play. The primary motivation behind the frequent fighting among the Mizo leaders was their desire to expand their land. Even in situations where the chief's primary goal was to increase his territory, the subjects were nonetheless compelled to comply and obey. The men spent a significant portion of their lives fighting and raiding to establish themselves as reliable *Pasaltha* and win the respect of the chief and the peasants. Suakpuilala's ambition to raid his rivals and enlarge his domain gave rise to *Pasaltha* and valiant young men. Fueled by unrequited passion, Lalzika planned to inflict severe suffering on his own followers by conducting a revenge raid on the village of his formerly beloved, Vanthangi. The people, therefore realized that they were at the mercy of the whims and ambitions of their leaders.

The highest honor given to a man in traditional Mizo society was the ability to sip from the ceremonial *Nopui* mug. According to a dialogue in the *Khuangchera* play, the chief and his elders were the ones with the power to grant *Khuangchera* that honor. The *Pasaltha* were judged by people in higher positions than them, even though they risked their lives and gave their all for the village and the chief. Those in higher places in the social hierarchy made the decision as to whether or not they were worthy of honor and recognition.

Another important scene in *Lalzika leh Vanthangi* play demonstrates Mizo society as strictly patriarchal, with women often playing a secondary role in home and political affairs. Act I, Scene one, of the play has Sailo leader Mangpawrha summoning his elders as witnesses for his farewell address to his son Suakpuilala. It's interesting to note that the play highlights the fact that Vanthangi, the chief's own daughter, was excluded from this historic event, underscoring the tradition that views women as not appropriate participants in significant family matters. While the play presents a number of highlights of low women's status, it does not provide a complete picture of societal conditions, for at times, women too embrace spectacular positions when circumstances call for them. During the colonial era, Vanthangi was an ambassador for peace and introduced the Mizo people to a new role for women. To contemporary historians and researchers, this is an uncommon accomplishment for Mizo women that had to be noted as an anti-colonial attitude that began to emerge in the latter half of the 19th Century.

In the play *Lalvunga*, two chiefs, Lalvunga and Lianpuia ruled over *Phaiphul* village, and the inevitable fight for being the more powerful of the two stood in the way of peace among the villagers. Knowing that the smallest incident could trigger into a devastating effects between Lalvunga and Lianpuia, the young men could no longer remain tranquil, for the conflict between the chiefs did not agitate them both but had already reverberated throughout the entire village. As a result, all societies, whether they exist in large villages or tiny hamlets, are hierarchical, with the lower classes continuously suffering the most from the indulgences and ambitions of the top classes. Since Lalvunga and Lianpuia were both chiefs, neither of them wanted to appear to be weaker than the other, thus in order to appear more powerful their

family members and relatives lived very carefully. They lived in perpetual fear and competition against one another, which prevented Lalvunga's sister Huali from receiving real love from her beloved Thahleia.

In conclusion, it is evident from these selected plays that various aspects contribute to the structure of Mizo society. An individual's status is closely linked to the elements that define one's position in society. A multitude of elements, including property, wealth, income, employment, ethnicity, and age, determine the foundation for the positions. By these measures, people are different from each other in terms of being rulers and subjects, rich and poor, elite and commoner, and so forth. As a result, every community experiences inequality, which is defined as an unequal distribution of valued resources. A social hierarchy thus develops when people are ranked according to the attributes they have been given and the accomplishments they have made. Individuals belonging to the same socioeconomic class share a particular set of sociocultural traits. Because of the organized disparity that exists between different rank statuses, superiority and inferiority consciousness is justified. The plays that have been chosen reveal a clear façade of stratification in traditional Mizo society. Both the glaring discrepancy between the privileged and ordinary folks and the desolate predicament of the less fortunate are conveyed with clarity. Class differences are exemplified by the fact that the subjects were greatly impacted by the competition and greed of the chiefs, who were at the top of the society. It follows that all societies, whether they are big or small, are hierarchical, with the lower classes constantly bearing the brunt of the consequences stemming from the misbehavior and avarice of the upper classes.

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