

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. LOCATING MIZO HISTORICALLY AND CULTURALLY

Mizoram is one of the states of India situated in the North Eastern parts with Myanmar and Bangladesh as its international neighbours. The people of Mizoram are known as Mizos. Though Mizoram is the land of the Mizo, it is not the original home of their ancestor. There is a myth among the Mizo which says that the Mizo came out from *Chhinlung* which is some kind of a cave sealed by a big rock. This myth is still the common belief among all the Mizo ethnic groups. One of their oldest songs recorded *Chhinlung* as under:

*Ka siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,*

*Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai;*

*Chawngzil ang ko kir thei chang sien,*

*Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.*

My homeland, famous Chhinlung,

Miss my motherland;

Could it be called back like Chawngzil

Homeland of my old ancestors. (Rochunga 21)

Even though there are few other songs and legends referring to the *Chhinlung* myth, none of them mentioned its location. The Mizos are a semi nomadic tribe and they move from one place to another. It is believed that they migrated from Central Asia to Burma presently known as Myanmar. One of the two pioneer missionaries J.H.Lorrain also observed, “Their ancestral home would appear to have been somewhere in the neighborhood of S.E.Tibet and Western China, whence, by slow degrees through the centuries, they have passed southward and westward to their present habitat (*Lushai Language* v). The main reason the Mizos migrated from one place to another has been attributed to economic necessity. Ray recorded thus: ‘In the beginning of the eighteenth century the *Lushai* started moving westward from Burma to India. The diminishing jhum area for the growing population was the main reason for migration’. (*Mizoram* 23)

### 1.1 SETTLEMENT OF THE MIZO

The land of Mizoram is a hilly area, so when the people of Mizoram began to make settlement they are scattered on the hill top, and divided into small groups to form a village which is ruled by chief. The Mizos lived on the hill top so as to protect themselves from their enemy. They did not settle in one place permanently; hence, they shifted to another place after every five to ten years or so, hence, they are kind of semi nomadic tribe. The type of administration found in Mizo society may seem to be monarchical, but there are elderly wise men known as *upa* that helped the chief in the entire decision making. As a result a democratic form of government can be seen in the early Mizo society.

Early in the past and even to this day the Mizo community is characterized by frequent social, cultural and religious gatherings. Wherever there are ten or twenty of them a society is created. Therefore, to take it as a whole, the Mizos are a closed knit society where everyone in the society regards one another as brothers and sisters, as if it were one big family. When the people are closely knit together not only the people but their culture and tradition and even their belief are all linked together. In the olden days, the people had their traditional style of building houses, arrangements of houses among the people in the village, method of working agriculture land, making sacrifices, weaving their clothes etc. Hence, it was hard to live individually and be separated from the society among the Mizo.

## 1.2 LANGUAGE

The Mizos consist of many small sub-tribes having several clans speaking many dialects. Among the Mizo tribes the *Lusei* or *Duhlian* is the most common language and later on it came to be known as Mizo *tawng* or Mizo language. The Mizo language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan family. The Mizos did not have written language till the late nineteenth century, when Christian Missionary reduced the Mizo language to writing in 1894. Reporting the formation of the Mizo alphabets, Lorrain said, “For this purpose we chose the simple Roman Script, well known Hunterian system, and this, with a few slight emendations adopted since, is still used throughout the tribe with eminently satisfactory results” (*Lushai Language* v). Therefore, all the history of the Mizo was passed

on orally. Even the tales, the myths, the songs, the poetry and culture of Mizos were passed on orally, and rendered in a printed media only in the early decades of the twentieth century.

### 1.3 ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHIEF

In the early society the chief was all in all; his decision was final and there could be no higher authority. The main work of the chief was to settle disputes among his people who has come to the court. He is bound to help the people in their trouble, give rewards in their achievements, counsel them when needed and even gave food and shelter for the poor and needy. The chief distributed land among his people for annual cultivation; so the people had their rights to cultivate land according to the chief. In times of any war and trouble against their enemy the chief is the guardian, the leader and the peace ambassador between the two villages.

There was no fixed law of justice for any case of murder, if the dead person's family was brave enough they were obliged to take revenge. If the victim's family try to take revenge the murderer could look for his safety and the only safe place he could find was the chief's home so he would rush to the chief's home, and hug the chief's post known as *sutpui* which is at the center of his house. If the murderer luckily had time to hug the chief's *sutpui* the chief has the obligation to save a man's life from death. The murderer and his family will then become the slaves of the chief and were called *chemsen bawih*. He and his family would be slaves of the chief throughout their life and they would live in the chief's home as well.

There is another case when a family is too poor and were not able to make their own living, the entire family member would probably commit themselves to the chief as slaves. The chief would in turn take care of the whole family and save the life of the family from starvation and even death.

The chief not only had the power to save a life but can cancel life sentence as well. As told by P.S.Dahrawka in one of the folktale 'Chemteii' one elder is envied by other elders so they secretly conspired against him. As all the other elders were against him he was not able to defend himself so the king gave an order for his execution. But the order of the death sentence was cancelled by the chief with the help of the chief's wife Chemteii who knew that the victim was blackmailed.

#### 1.4 ECONOMY

The main occupation of the Mizos in the early society was farming. In the myth of the early Mizo it can be seen that rice is their main crop. The real reason why rice is their main crop is seen in the myth '*Buh an neih tan dan*' which means how rice came to be eaten. As told by R.L. Thanmawia in the tale man on earth did not eat rice at first; they ate maize instead. One day god said to his people "As long as you eat only maize and millet, you will not be able to defeat the destroyer Mangmuaia who is very strong, so you must eat rice" (*Mizo Hnahthak thawnthu* 39). From this time onward it is believed that the Mizos eat rice to grow strong and healthy so as to defeat their enemies as well.

Rice is the main crop of the Mizos and it is very important because of certain reasons. First, the people are considered rich or poor according to the quantity of rice they harvest in a year, besides some other valuable things they possess like guns, precious necklace and *dar*<sup>1</sup>. Hence, rice is the most reliable scale of measurement of their wealth. Most of the people earn their living by their harvest throughout the year from their own farm.

Secondly, people who harvest lots of rice can have *Khuangchawi*. *Khuangchawi* is a big feast hosted by rich people to feed the whole village, for the abundant supply of rice is needed for food and for wine. To attain the title of *Thangchhuah*<sup>2</sup>, not only one but numbers of feast is to be hosted by the same man. All these is done so as to show their wealth and status in their community. Hence, large quantity of rice is the most important thing one need to have to be *Khuangchawi*

Lastly, man in the early Mizo wanted to be *In lama thangchhuah*, and the real reason for this is that by becoming *In lama thangchhuah* they could go to *Pialral*. There is a belief that after death there are two places for the dead souls to go which are *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral*. Everybody wanted to go to *Pialral* because it is a place where no one has to work hard. Instead they would have plenty of rice to eat and live the life of a king in *Pialral*. Hence, *Pialral* is a much higher level to be in than *Mitthi khua*, because everybody can enter *Mitthi khua* but not *Pialral*. And one of the ideology of *Pialral* is *faisa ring* which means milled rice ready to eat. Hence, these are the main reasons why rice plays a very important role in the life of the Mizos.

The Mizos also reared domestic animals like pig, chicken, goat, gayal for food. Besides food, these domestic animals are very essential for sacrificial purpose also. For *thangchhuah-pa* it is very important for his feast to rear domestic animals and the number of their domestic animals may also be counted as a part of their wealth as well.

## 1.5 MIZO VALUES AND TRADITIONS

### 1.5.1 TLAWMNGAIHNA

Among the qualities that the Mizo fostered in their life was the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* which eludes literal translation. *Tlawmngaihna* may be said as the virtue of doing good to others without any expectation of return. The nearest translation in English according to K.C.Lalvunga is, “an ideal of life in which a man could not be outdone in doing good to others. When a man is *tlawmngai*, one cannot excel him in doing good to others, and that self-sacrifice sometimes demands life itself” (*Mizo values* 15). Every Mizo was expected to abide by this code of conduct. If a villager was sick and was unable to look after his plot of land, his neighbours would readily come forward. If a villager was short of rice, those having plenty would readily share the same with him. Sympathy, compassion, fellow-feeling were the traits very fondly cherished by the Mizos. Therefore, due to *tlawmngaihna*, Chhura would go instead of Nahaia in order to face the fearsome creature known as Phungpuinu. Due to this high spirit or in other words *tlawmngaihna*, Chhura was able to capture Phungpuinu. We have seen many

legendary men who are endowed with this attribute, such as Vanapa, Taitesena, Chawngbawla, Khuangchera, and others.

One interesting story is that one day a man called Vanzema dived into the deep water in the river where there was a horrible monster who warned him not to come back. Unfortunately no one believed Vanzema when he told what he had seen inside the deep water. As he could not convince his companions, Vanzema told them that he would enter into the deep water again, and that they should pull him out of water immediately when he gave signal. He then entered the water, but the horrible monster got hold of him and he died. Before he entered for second time, Vanzema knew that he would surely lose his life, but due to his spirit of *tlawmngaihna*, he wanted truth to triumph at the cost of his life.

Vanapa, a famous Mizo legendary man may be considered here. As told by K.Zawla on the story of 'Vanapa', one fine day young hunters went to the forest under the leadership of Vanapa to chase wild animals. Tired and hungry after roaming about the thick forest the entire day, they realised that they were bereft of any food. Vanapa located a very plenteous fruit bearing fig tree. He then called the hungry youngsters. Happily they ran after him, and one young man arrived at the place immediately and began to eat the fruit. Vanapa then told him that he had not yet eaten a single fruit; he said it out so that the fruit could be shared equally amongst them. In this way, the youngsters learnt different aspects related to *tlawmngaihna* from the elders in the olden days. Decent and courteous behaviour with others was one of the sides of *tlawmngaihna*, and was considered of value for everyone. Act of decency and courtesy, especially to the



elder people were considered norms of good conduct and as such were valued in the society.

*Tlawmngaihna* can be shown in different ways individually and as a group in the society. In the early age, there was no means to communicate at a distance; so some persons were made to convey the sad news in case of death; these were called *zualko*. Usually the *zualko* had to go to far away villages to carry the sad news to the dead person's relatives. Hence, it is indeed an act of *tlawmngaihna* for a person to just sacrifice their valuable time and energy for the sake of others.

When somebody went missing without any trace, every man in the village is expected to search for the lost person. The search last usually for seven days. As for a farmer, not to work for seven days is a costly endeavor and a true sacrifice. Yet they tried their best to find the missing person which is also an act of *tlawmngaihna* in the Mizo society.

When a person died it is the duty of every young man to dig the grave for the dead as there were no undertaker in the society and it is an important act of *tlawmngaihna* which can be seen even till today. Another act of *tlawmngaihna* which can be seen in the early Mizo society is that when a person died men used to sleep in the house of the dead people so as to help them in their household need such as fetching water and wood for fire. Men and women gather at the house of the death and sing songs with the family which is an act of condolence and comfort for the family.

### 1.5.2 HUNTING

Hunting was the most favourite game of the Mizos. The society honoured the *pasaltha*, successful hunters. When a boy was born, they blessed him to be a *pasaltha*. They had plenty of *hlado* which means chants raised by the successful hunters, and *Salulam zai*, songs usually sung on the celebration of the animals killed by the hunters. Some few examples may be taken out from the lines of *hlado*, as follows:

*Chhawl thing e, thliak na ngai e,*  
*Mangnghan e, thanhawl ka vak liau ve;*  
*Chhawlhnawm e, rak tho ulaw,*  
*Valan nghovari zalna e.*

Being a brave hunter,  
 I go out hunting,  
 Now remove the leave which covered  
 The wild boar chased by me

Immediately after chanting this war chant they fire a gun or guns. *Hlado* revealed their emulations. The successful hunters were held in high esteem. Every young man tried to become a successful hunter. A young hunter proudly chanted the following lines –

*Chun nun e, a tir che maw,  
 Uai hnianga ram va uan chu e,  
 Kei chu e, changram te nen,  
 Tlangah e, thliten ka her liai e.*

Obeying the command of your mother,  
 Languidly you go to work in the jhum  
 As for me, I take my gun and  
 Hunted over the hills after wild animals.

*Hlado* disclosed the manner in which the rich men as well as the commoners achieved fame and the prestigious title *thangchhuah*. A poor, but successful hunter thus chanted as follows:

*Lianchhung e, an than ni'n e,  
 Tualah hnumkhuang a ri e,  
 Rairah e, kan than ni'n e,  
 Tlangan e, kan lo au lai rih e.*

On the day the rich man performs a grand feast,  
 The village resounds with joy,  
 We poor men achieve fame,  
 The hills echo chants of our victorious hunt.

### 1.5.3 MUSIC

Music is very important in the life of the early Mizo people. On every occasion people sing and danced with different songs for different occasions. In their happy time like wedding and festivals they sang together which was self-entertaining. Even in time of death, the Mizo people mourn with the dead person's family by singing songs which are especially composed for the mourning period.

There are certain folksongs which are composed in memory of the dead. There are many folk songs, which are composed purely on the subject of death : '*Khawhar zai*' and '*Mitthi hrah zai*' of '*Chawngchen zai*', '*Sa lam hla thu*' of '*Salu lam zai*', '*Darpawngi lusun zai*', '*Mitthi ngaih hla*' of '*Thangnunnemi*'. The early Mizos had frequent gathering or festivals and in such cases different kind of dances are used to be shown. Of the many dances of the early Mizo, *Mitthi Rawp lam* is a dance which is performed in memory of the dead.

The Mizo society is a singing tribe. Without music, the life of the Mizo is incomplete. B. Thanmawia says, "Music to the Mizo, is as indispensable as air is to man and beasts" (*Mizos and Music* 12). They sing on all happy and despairing occasions. When condoling bereaved family, they sing the songs of condolence for the whole day and night. When attending marriage party, they sing a song of joy. They even sing or hum tunes while they are working or walking on the roads. Kathryn Mc Kenzie remarks, "the sound of their harmonious singing and the haunting rhythm of their tribal songs can often be heard" (*Chhinlung Magazine* 19).

A survey of Mizo names indicates that a great many of the names are derivatives of traditional musical instruments like *dar* (Gong), *khuang* (Drum), *zai* (Sing) *rem* (accompanying music), *ri* (musical sound). Some of the popular names are as follows:

- Dar (Gong) : Darchhawna, Darliana, Darlawma,  
Darhmingthanga, Darchhunga, Darpuui,  
Darlianthangi, Darthanpuui etc.
- Khuang (drum) : Khuangliana, Khuanglawma, Khuangtuaha,  
Khuangchhunga,
- Zai (to sing) : Zairema, Zaikunga, Zaithanga,  
Zailiana, Zaithanpuui, Zaihmingthanga

In the olden days, the Mizo used to celebrate a new song or songs. It is said that one day, a cicada sings beautifully at *lungdawh*, *lungdawh* is the platform at the entrance of the village where the villagers used to rest when they were about to work in the jhum. On hearing the sweet song of the cicada, no one could go on, and all the villagers gathered waiting for Saikuti, the poetess of the village. When Saikuti arrived, they immediately requested her to compose a song on that cicada. She then spontaneously recited the following verse-

*Oh, thou cicada of the wood,  
Your sweet voice of no rhythm,  
Enchanted people from their works*

On hearing this verse, the villagers went back and sang together the whole day celebrating to the new song.

The Mizo traditional tunes are very soft and gentle so that they can sing the whole night without getting tired. Even without musical instruments, the Mizo can enthusiastically sing together by clapping hands or any materials which can produce complimentary sound. All these informal instruments are called *chhepchher*. The Mizo in the early period were very close to nature and that music was the tune of their life.

### 1.5.3 FESTIVAL

*Kut* means festival and in the early *Mizo* society there were three very important known *kut* widely celebrated by the people such as *Chapchar kut*, *Pawl kut* and *Mim kut*. *Chapchar kut* is the biggest and most important festival among the festivals which is mainly held at the end of February or in March after the completion of cutting down of trees. It is mainly a festival for adults. *Pawl kut* is usually held soon after the harvest festival and may be known as a thanks giving festival. It is especially made for the children where the adult participate too. *Mim kut* is a festival which is held in memory of the people who had passed away and there is belief that the spirit of the dead will revisit their house during the *Mim kut*. Generally, the festival is conducted in late August or early September when the crop were reaped and completion of their harvests. And here is how the festival is mainly celebrated:

Fresh vegetables, maize bread necklaces and clothes are placed on the memorials of the dead. In houses in which someone has died during the year zu is drunk and on the second day everybody eats bread. At the end of this feast there is one day's *hril*<sup>3</sup>.

*(A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies 91)*

## 1.6 HISTORICAL EVENTS

In the early *Mizo* society there were many remarkable and unforgettable events which occur, but not all of it is important for our topics. So let us take a look at some of the massive destruction and events that cause death. Two massive famines that occurred in Mizoram are *Thing tam* and *Mau tam*.

*Thing tam* is a famine which occurred in the year 1880. They did not have any rice to eat. Hence, the only food they ate was unhealthy food which caused viral disease and even death in large number. The main cause of *Thing tam* was attributed thus:

At first all *rawthing*<sup>4</sup> bear fruit, dried up, died, and sprout again from the fruit. In the spring *thangnang*<sup>5</sup> multiplied itself into a massive number, then large number of rats appeared. They eat rice, and all the crop of their land.

*(Mizo History 91)*

*Mau tam* is another famine that occurred which is almost the same as *Thing tam*. *Mau tam* means bamboo famine. In *Mau tam* bamboos bear fruits and dried up. Then different kinds of insects and rats suddenly appeared in large number. There are so many rats that they can eat and destroy the whole farm in just one night. The Mizo people did not have sufficient food to eat which eventually cause malnutrition, different kind of sickness and even death. *Mau tam* occurred after every fifty years, first in the year 1861 and then in 1911. In one of the folk songs in *Chai Hla* the effect of *Mau tam* can be seen:

*Mau tam kan ram loh, kan ram lohvah,*

*Thlawh lovin sawmfang a dum dur e,*

*Thlawh lovin sawmfang a dum dur e.*

Bamboo famine in our land, in our land

Our cultivated land is plough without our effort,

Our cultivated land is plough without our effort. (*Mizo Hla Hlui* 185)

From the song it is clear that *Mau tam* has caused rats to multiply which eat and destroy their rice and cultivated plants. Rat holes were seen everywhere in the land as if it was plough for farming purpose.



*Darlenglehi zai* is a folk song about a woman called Darlenglehi or composed in the name of Darlenglehi. In the song she is lovesick and compare her loneliness with that of *Thingtam and Mautam*:

*Thingtam leh Mautampui tuar ang ka ni,*

*Darlenglehi nuam tin dil ing e,*

*Tlang leh thang sual em ni le?*

Feels like experiencing Thingtam and Mautam,

Darlenglehi wish all the happiness,

*Is my wish mistaken? (275)*

Here Darlenglehi is effected by her love life that the love she felt hurts her as *thingtam* and *Mautam* has affected the Mizos. Her wish for happiness did not come true which did not fill her emptiness. *Thingtam* and *Mautam* is compared as the most desperate time of their life, which shows the unforgettable destruction that happen in the early Mizo society.

## END NOTES

1. A gong, a bell
2. The title given to a man who distinguish himself by killing acertain number of different animals in the chase, or by giving a certain number of public feast.
3. It is the special day or days set apart for observance for religious taboos on which no work must be done. It can beof misfortune or on account of festival or a sacrifice.
4. The name of a large species of clump bamboo
5. The name of a species of cinnamon – beetle or cinnamon fly

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## CHAPTER II

### MIZO TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Concepts of death and afterlife have close relation with religious beliefs. The concept of death and after life in the early Mizo belief too is interfused with their religion. Therefore, these chapter will highlight the Mizo traditional religion and their belief. As in the rest of the world Mizos have their own way of dealing with life and death. Death is the permanent end of the life of a person or animal, and death is universal. So is the belief that life does not end in physical death and that another life exists after death. This can be seen in almost every culture and religion.

Almost every society, culture and religion believe in life after death. It is not just a belief but there is a reason for their belief. No one knows exactly what it feels like to live in a world other than this present life. But there are certain phenomena that create such a belief. Till today a story of a ghost or spirit of a dead person is common. Such a story or incident makes man to believe that death of a person is not the end and that there must be a place for the spirit to go after death, which is also known as life after death.

Men have dreams during their sleep, and these dreams may or may not be relate to real life, but many times it came true. In a dream world, certain things which are not known to the people may be seen which seem to be the next world or the world for the life after death. In a dream there are certain cases where a spirit of a dead person is seen or speaking to the dreamer about the place where he is right now, which may be a better place than the

present world or that there can be a place which is far worse than the present world. Besides these, there may be many reasons why men think of death and life after death to truly exist. Most society which believe in the existence of life after death speaks of two places for the spirit of the dead person to enter. One is for the people who do good deeds during his lifetime, which is a place of everlasting joy and happiness, and the other a place of punishment for the people for their bad conduct during their lifetime.

## 2.1 ANIMISM

Prior to the advent of Christian Missionaries, Mizo religion was animistic in nature. McCall also remarked that the Lushais were wholly animists (*Lushai Chrysallis* 67). According to V.L.Siama, who was one of the first Mizo historians, Mizos believed that every big tree, hill, big stone etc., is inhabited by various spirits, and storms, bad crops and accident were brought about by them (Mizo History 73). Those evil spirits inhabited such places are known as *Huai*, and those residing in water were called *tui huai*, and one which resides in a tree is known as *thing huai* etc. Besides these *huai*, there is some kind of fearsome spirit known as '*Ramhuai*' which may be equivalent to the evil spirit which may not equate with the animistic concept of spirit dwelling in natural surroundings. The evil spirits were believed to cause all kinds of illness and misfortunes. At the same time, Mizo also believed in the existence of good spirits like *lasi*, *khuavang* and family of gods who caused no harm to them. They offered less sacrifices to those good spirit as they neither caused illness to men nor dead. Instead sometimes man used to ask for their blessings. Like most tribes the Mizos too were much afraid of the evil spirits other than good spirits that time and again they

offered sacrifices to them. As such, some writers stated that the Mizos worshipped evil spirit or *huai*. According to Pastor Challiana, ‘Worship of *Ramhuai*’ to be the Mizo religion (*Pipu Nun* 28).

At the same time, another prominent church leader Rev. Liangkhaia repudiated the theory of worship of *ramhuai*. According to him, the Mizos offered sacrifices to *ramhuai* only to appease them, and to cure their sickness, but they did not worship them as gods or goddesses. He asserted that the word *Sakhua* (religion) was a compound of two words ‘*sa*’ and ‘*khua*’. *Sa* was believed to be origin of men or creator of human beings, and *khua*, nature (*Mizo Sakhua* 60). The Mizos fear *Ramhuai* that they frequently performed offering and sacrifices to propitiating evil spirits. Rev. Edwin Rowlands also mentioned Mizo religious practices in his Report 1899:

During the first tour, we witnessed one of the Lushai feasts, in which, as they say, they worship their God. They generally sacrifice to demon, of whom they are in great fear, but two or three times in a year they worship their God. Two of these feasts are held, one after cleaning of the land for sowing and the other after the harvest home.

(Thanzauva 7)

Therefore in a strict sense, the Mizos offered sacrifices to evil spirits to appease them so that they may be free from all the adversities caused by them but they did not worship *ramhuai* as God. Liangkhaia believed that Mizo *sakhua* (religion) had its origin from the Mizo spiritual need for some entity that could give them peace of mind, comfort and good

health in the midst of all the struggles and difficulties of life. However, this entity was unknown to the Mizo society. In fact, they clearly did not know whom they worshipped, but still they worshiped him very seriously and they offered feast in honoring their god. The forms of invocations and incantations were enriched and improved from time to time.

## 2.2 INTHAWINA (SACRIFICIAL)

There are two kinds to *puithiam* (Priests) in Mizo society, one is called *Sadawt* and another is *Bawlpu*. Each of them occupied important place in Mizo society that no ceremonies or religious rituals could be performed without them. *Sadawt* performed the traditional religious ceremony, invoking the blessings of god for the well-being of the whole community. Sacrificial includes for the blessing to ensure the good crops, success in animal hunting, and security from enemies and natural calamities. Sacrificial also performed for individual purpose which has relation with life after death. If a rich man can perform a series of sacrificial public feast for the whole community, he was called *in lama thangchhuah* or *khuangchawi*. *Thangchhuah* family were believed to be in *Pialral* after death. A *thangchhuah* occupied a place of honor in Mizo society. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Another priest *Bawlpu* performed the rituals to appease the evil spirits to cure people of their sickness, and his performance was individual in nature. *Inthawi* means to sacrifice, so *inthawina* may be termed as ‘ceremonial cure’. It was performed if and when a person became sick. The Mizos believed that *ramhuai* (the evil spirit) envied human beings for the

blessing they received from *pathian* or *khuanu*, and that they caused illness to them so that man would perform sacrifice with their wealth to appeal them. These sacrifices were performed by a priest called *Puithiam*, also known as *Bawlpu*, who was assisted by *Tlahpawi*. *Bawlpu* performed all the rituals to appease the evil spirits to cure their sickness.

There are two types of offering: one is to ask god for his blessing as seen before. The other is to the evil spirit as they were afraid because they thought pain and sickness occurred due to the work of the evil spirit. As told by R.L.Thanmawia in one Mizo myth ‘Ngalsia’ there was one hunter called Ngalsia. One day while hunting with friends, Ngalsia was lost in a deep forest and nowhere to be found. After many years has passed his friends found him alive in the forest. Even though they tried to take him home they failed because of his supernatural wife who could change into a human form, sealed their lips and she could even knew their minds. After a deep thought and long discussion Ngalsia’s wife agreed to let him go home with his friends. The story spread around the villagers which led them to believe that the evil spirit can read their minds and hence, they had to make offering to the evil spirit whenever they are sick.

There are many superstitious beliefs among the early Mizos; and of the many beliefs, they were scared of anything beyond the normal such as things like *thinglubul*<sup>1</sup>, *leiruangtuam*<sup>2</sup>, *fangfar*<sup>3</sup>, *thingzungkai*<sup>4</sup>, *sih*<sup>5</sup> etc. There is a belief that even the mountains, rivers, lakes and pond possess some kind of evil spirit that could harm people and even cause death.



### 2.3 FAMILY OF GODS

As already mentioned before that the Mizos believed in the existence of family of gods, at the same time, they also believed in a God known as *Pathian* who created the universe and considered to be having supreme power over all creations. Even though they had no clear definition of *Pathian*, it was regarded as supreme God. *Pa* means father, and *Pathian* probably means ‘holy father’ it is in fact very difficult to say the exact role of *Pathian* in the lives of the Mizos. They regarded him as a guardian who eventually looked after them from heaven not actively involved in the affairs of the people. However, some of the Mizo sayings suggested to some extent that *Pathian* involved in their day to day life. When they were blessed with good fortune they would say, ‘*Ka Pathian a tha*’ (My God is good) and when they were in danger, they uttered ‘*Pathianin zah a ngai ang chu*’ (May God be merciful upon us). But when misfortune frequent them they would say, ‘*Kan Pathian thin a ur*’ meaning ‘Our God is angry with us’. If a couple enjoyed a compatible married life, they would say, ‘*Pathian samsuih*’ meaning ‘God appointed partners’ (Mizo Studies Vol no. 166). C.Pazawna therefore believes that “The Mizos knew something about the good god ‘*Pathian*’. Just as the ancient worshipped him and would offer sacrifices so that they might receive his blessings at home and in the jhums” (*Christianity in Mizoram* 49).

C.V.L.Auva defines Mizo religion as a kind of Polytheism with a tendency towards Monotheism (*Religious Beliefs* 352). They believed that the family of gods headed by *Pu Vana* as a father inhabited heaven; *Khuanu* and *Vanchungnula* as the mother and the daughter of the family of gods. Vannghaka remarked about Pu Vana, “He was so kind and gentled that he could not be provoked to anger. As he never ill-treat or torment human

beings, an offer of sacrifices to appease him is unnecessary. He was protector and guardian of men against all dangers and blessed them with fortune” (166). We may conclude that the Mizos believed in family of gods but different names were given to the head of the family such as *Khawzing Pathian*, *Khua*, *Pu Vana*. They believed in god but did not worship god as in other religions like praying to god daily or weekly or even praising god directly. There is no special place for the people to worship god. They worshipped god through their priest known as *Sadawt* who gave offering to god. In one of the offerings they made to god a pig is sacrificed and then the priest known as *Sadawt* chanted these words:

*Mi tin siamtu pathianin,*

*Ka satluang lo chhang ang che,*

*God the creator of every man*

*Accept and bless my offerings (Mizo Hla Hlui 118)*

These chanted words show that they indeed believed in god who is the creator who protect and bless them in their prayer through the priest.

Another important person in the family of gods as cited above was *Khuanu*, who is regarded as the god of love and blessing. A happy married couple is called *Khuanu tuah* or *Khuanu samsuih* which means god's predestined partners in wedlock. *Khuanu*, as a god of the Roman Cupid or the Greek Eros as it is a god, not only of erotic love but also of other love (*Mizo Poetry* 17). The terms *Pathian samsuih* and *Khuanu samsuih* are of the same

meaning, because both *Pathian* and *Khuanu* were regarded as god and goddess. *Vanchung nula* is a Damsel of heaven who is regarded as the goddess of rain.

Apart from these, the Mizos also believed in the existence of other gods living in the atmosphere or under the earth or living in the forest. According to Thanmawia, such gods were *Chung* (god of light and rain), *Vansen* (creator of clouds), *Hnuaite* or *Hnuaipui* (god of different layers of the earth), *Lasi* or *Chawngtinleri* (creator and guardian of animals) and *Vanhrika* (god of science and learning); this god functioned like Saraswati of the Hindus (18). There is another important person called *Khuavang* who was considered as one who has knowledge of everything. *Khuavang* is believed to be in the air, but not regarded as a member of family of gods. *Khuavang* is often regarded as the guardian of human beings by bringing comfort and peace. Because of her work of caring for the people and being responsible for their well-being *Khuavang* was often referred to as a comforter and protector of humans. (Saiaithanga 12).

The *Lasi* were group of beautiful fairies who used to fall in love with handsome hunters. They often revealed themselves as human being, and if a single lucky *Lasi* girl meet a young hunter, she asked him to marry her on condition that if the hunter agreed to, she promised to give him any wild animal he desired to kill. The hunters who fell in love with the *Lasi* were called *Lasi zawl*, and the *Lasi zawl* become successful hunters.

It is very difficult to describe Mizo religion in one sentence since there is no definite identity. E.E.Taylor defined religion as “the belief in spiritual beings” (*Religion and Culture* 20). The Mizo traditional religion too is a belief in spiritual beings, a search for an unknown

God to whom they rendered worship and service. Basically all beings are supposed to be endowed with the spirit and this is the indigenous faiths of the Mizos. They believed in the existence of Supreme Beings. Even though they did not know the name of that Beings, but they understood God to be involved in human affairs. Their belief in God is not merely concerned with their day to day life but it included the concept of life after death.

## End note

1. A tree which has had the whole of its leafy head broken off in a storm leaving the trunk standing. Such tree are regarded as haunted by spirit.
2. An unlucky mound resembling a grave.
3. The constant dripping of water from a rock or from a tree.
4. The root of a tree crossing a stream which is suppose to be used as a bridge by the evil spirit.
5. A small salty spring generally regarded as haunted by the evil spirit.

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## CHAPTER III

### DEATH IN EARLY MIZO SOCIETY

#### 3. CONCEPT OF DEATH

Death is the end of life of a person, or it can be said that man is born but to die one day. Death to every man is not the same, death happens in different ways, in different places, at different time, in different age and is never predictable. Being a mortal, man dies but it does not stop here, it has several impact on the living including the whole society. But first let us look into the different kinds of death known in the early Mizo society which were given names and can be classified into five types which are:

1) *Awmlai* : *Awmlai* means illness, when a person is ill he is known as *awmlai vei*. If a person dies due to an illness in a short or long span of time it is called *awmlai a thi*. *Darpawngi zai* is a well-known folk song named after Darpawngi who composes many songs which is divided into three *zai* (tune). In one of *Darpawngi zai*, ‘*Darpawngi Lusun zai*’, a song of grief in which she composes of the loss of her child. Darpawngi compose a song of her child’s death due to an illness:

*Awmlai lengin tlang tin dung rawn zui,*

*Vanduai runah ser ang cham na e,*

*Ka tuai chawnban a kai e.*

*Awmlai* runs through every place,  
 Stays in the unlucky home like a scar;  
 Hold on to my beloved child. (*Mizo Hla hlui* 267)

In the song it can be seen that *Darpawngi*'s child died of *awmlai* (illness), in grief she compose the song showing the feeling of the unlucky family which *awmlai* did not spare but instead walk right into their home and caused her child to die.

2) *Zachhamlak* : When a person suddenly died of an unknown reason, not of sickness or of accident it is known as *Zachhamlak*. Usually heart failure is the main reasons for this kind of death. 'Za' here means hundred, 'chham' means to run short of and 'la' which is the modified form of 'lak' means take. Hence, the early Mizos thought that there would be some kind of an unforeseen reason behind the death, and their explanation was :

Every year if the death count in that year did not reach hundred, for that reason a person would suddenly die without any sickness, he is said to be the hundredth count'.

(*Tawngt Un Hrilhfiahna* 443)

As seen in the lines *zachhamlak* was belief that, when a person die of an unknown reason he or she would probably be the hundred count for the number of dead.



3) *Sarathi* : This is an unnatural death. Here it may include different kinds of unnatural death such as accident, suicide, murder and attack by animal. *Sarathi* is the most unwanted kind of death in the Mizo society, and it was thought that it could even change the weather of that day when one died of *sarathi*. When there is a thin strip cloud form in a ring shape around the sun or when an unexpected wind blows suddenly out of nowhere they used to say, “*E khai, sarathi an awm a ni*” which means someone died of *sarathi*. The soul of *sarathi* is belief to be very gloomy and depressed on knowing his last moment and realizing that he died of *sarathi*. For these reason, the soul would sadly cover his head afraid to show his face while making its way to *Mitthi khua*. As it is an unnatural death, they used to bury *sarathi* in the graveyard even if it is in the middle of the night because they did not want to leave the dead body overnight.

4) *Raicheh* : When a woman dies while giving birth it is called *raicheh*. Every woman in the early *Mizo* is afraid of *raicheh* because they thought that it is the worst kind of dead for woman. So after giving birth the mother would do some small domestic work such as fetching water, cook food and so on to avoid *raicheh*. If a mother died and had done this little things right after giving birth then she would not be consider *raicheh*. There is a myth in ‘*Raicheh thlarau*’ that in the spiritual world the soul of *raicheh* is looked down, so when a woman died of *raicheh* the soul went to *Mitthi khua* all by themselves and walk the path where no other souls go. Therefore, the path of *raicheh* is thorny and bushy as compared to others and this is main reason why the Mizos used to bury an axe with the dead body of *raicheh* so as to clear the bushy road.

5) *Hlamzuih* : When an infant die soon after birth or dies before one year old or so it is known as *hlamzuih*. If the family is poor and the infant is more than a year old or may be of two years it may still be considered as *hlamzuih*. *Hlamzuih* is treated differently from adult, when an infant dies by *hlamzuih* the villagers did not bury the dead body but usually the father put it in an earthen pot, dug a grave beneath the house and bury the dead body. One very important myth is that an egg is buried with the body to direct the route to *Mitthi khua*. The egg would roll and roll all the way to its destination which is *Pialral* and the baby would follow the egg till it reaches *Pialral*. As it is mentioned before in the folktales *Chhura fa hai*, the father took care of the dead infant. When the new born baby of *Chhura* died his wife asked him to dispose the dead bodies. He did it all by himself by taking it to a cave where dead body used to be laid and he had done it all without the help of anybody.

Although these may be the five manners of death usually mentioned and given names, there is other kind of death which happens in every community. As Mizos are good hunters and being brave worriers or being *pasaltha* is their main goal, not only did they try to excel in hunting they also tried their best in warfare also for the title *pasaltha*. Men died in war against other villages and by defending their own village as well. Not only man but also women and children suffer the consequences of war and even death.

### 3.1 TREATMENT OF DEATH

In the early *Mizo* society if a person dies the first thing they do is send a messenger known as *zualko* to spread the bad news to their friends and family. The act of *zualko* is very helpful which can be seen in certain stories.

In the folktale *Keimingi leh Hualtungamtawna Thu* as seen in the book *Serkawn Graded Reader*, Keimingi and Hualtungamtawna were married but secretly hated each other and made plans to kill each other. One day while Hualtungamtawna was hunting in the forest he fell from a tree and was seriously injured. He knew that he was going to die soon and it was his wife's plan for him to die. So he sent his dog to tell the people to carry his body, and also to bite his mistress *Keimingi* at the back of her leg with all its might so as to take revenge. The dog ran home and did exactly as his master send him to. The people carry the body home from the wild forest and after that Hualtungamtawna's dead body was buried. (Nuchhungi 55)

In this story the dog acts as a messenger, not only the act of a messenger but the practice of the society of the early Mizos can be seen. When the people knew that *Hualtungamtawna* accidentally fell from a tree and died in the forest, the villagers rushed to the forest to carry the dead body.

As narrated by R.L.Thanmawia in his book *Mizo Hnahthlak Thawnthu Vol.1* there is a folktale called '*Zangkhua*' where *zualko* could also be seen. Once upon a time there was a man named Kawlawia. One night Kawlawia had a dream.

When he awoke he felt that his dream was bad dream which could indicate either death or calamity, so he had a bad feelings of danger approaching. So he set out on a trip to his uncle's village. There he wanted his uncle to make a sacrificial ceremony by killing a hen to hold back his soul to his body. When the sacrificial ceremony was done without staying the night since his own village was not so far away, he went back to his village.

A little distance from his uncle's village, at *Berhvakawn* he met a band of enemy warriors. Though he tried to run away, he was surrounded by the band of enemies who killed him. His uncle's family thought that Kawlawia had gone home. At his village, his family thought that he was with his uncle. So, no one thought to be worried about Kawlawia.

A number of days later a bulbul bird perched on top of Kawlawia's uncle's front door and chipped, "At Berhvakawn, Kawlawia lies dead". Those who heard the bird singing remarked, "How strange is the song of that bird?" They listened to the bird more intently till all could understand what the bird was singing about, "At Berhvakawn, Kawlawia lies dead."

So the villagers set out to inquire about Kawlawia. Near Berhvakawn they did smell the decomposed body and saw his dead body. In the story the bulbul bird acts as *zualko* to tell his family about his death.

The Mizo community shows the act of *tlawmngaihna* in the every possible way. *Lera*, a well-known *pasaltha* accidentally fell into the river. On hearing the incident men of the community searched for his body but could not find the body. In such case what they did was

take some leaves in a stretcher made from the tree branches and carry it home as a symbol of the dead body and also of the forest in which he die. Here in memory of him a song is composed:

*Lera thlafam nau ang kan tap e,*

*Lentupui maw thlehpuan ang kan zar. (Mizo Hla Hlui 186)*

Lera died we weep like a child,

Only the forest can be as the body.

In the early *Mizo* society death in the case of an accident is taken very seriously. And if a person is missing every male adult in the village went searching and if the missing person could not be found by the villagers within seven days, then only the missing person would be declared as dead. Here also the community plays an important role, after a long search *Lera* was declared dead not by the family but by the community.

The treatment of death may differ according to culture and religion. In *Mizo* culture dead bodies are not burnt but usually buried deep in the earth. But it happens that, in olden days a dead body is kept in a cave or a tomb which was seen in one of the tales of Chhura. As told by P.S.Dahrawka in the folktale *Chhura fa hai* when Chhura's infant child was dead, as hlamzuih were usually taken care of by the father; Chhura put the dead body inside the

cave. (*Mizo thawnthu* 243) From this story it is seen that before the Mizos dug grave and buried dead bodies inside the earth, and also they used to put death bodies inside a cave.

It is already mentioned that dead body is buried in the earth; there is another method to deal with the dead body, by way of taking the bones out of the dead body and preserving them. First a big tree about eight feet large enough to fit a dead body is needed. It is split in half and the dead body is kept inside the hollow coffin, and then using logs of wood it is burnt till the body decompose and the bones are separated. To do this it took many people, fuel to burn and many days to complete. Hence only chiefs were able to do this.

As told by Laltluangliana Khiantge in the story *Chawngvungi leh Sawngkhara*, when Sawngkhara's loving wife Chawngvung died he buried the body in a grave. On hearing the death of her daughter, Sawngkhara's mother – in – law secretly dug Chawngvungi's dead body out of the grave and took the body home with her while he was away. When he came to learn that his wife's body was taken away he tried to take back the body and followed his mother-in-law but failed. He then went home sadly and in grief but on his way home he luckily found a piece of Chawngvungi's nail on the side of the road and gladly took it home. Sawngkhara is not a king but he performed rite with the nail and burned it in a coffin for three years. Three years may not be necessary but his deed only shows his love for his wife. Not everyone can afford to burn a coffin even if they wanted to and in the story Chawngvungi's nail is burnt in the coffin showing that they indeed used to practice it in the early days. (*Mizo Songs and Folktales* 147)

One very important practice made by the Mizos is that when somebody die people used to cover the dead body using their cloth which is known as *puan a tuam*. The person who are close to them usually cover the dead body to show their affection and amity. In the folktale *Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana*, there were two young and beautiful lovers named Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana. The couple were from a different villages and not only that but also their villages were enemies. Hence for Hrangchhuana, the only time for him to see Chawngmawii was during the night. He went to Chawngmawii in the middle of the night and left before dawn. After a while he became over confident and went to Chawngmawii's house earlier in the night. On his way to Chawngmawii's house he used to kill people from her village. The folks were very upset by these that they tried to catch the killer and suspect the killer to be from outside the village.

Hrangchhuana was brilliant enough to fool the people by going backward into the village and out of the village. The folk could not catch him from his footprint and so they guarded their village and caught him at last. He was then killed and their next task was to find out the person whom he had a relation with. By making all the women in the village walk over the dead body they found out it was Chawngmawii. Chawngmawii could not control herself seeing the dead body of Hrangchhuana so she cried and covered the dead body with her best cloth.

Here Chawngmawii covered the body of Hrangchhuan in the eyes of the men who killed him to show how much she cared and loved him. Hrangchhuana is from another village who had killed many people from their own village, for this reason he should be feared and disliked. By covering the body it is the best thing she can do to the dead body to

cover it with her best cloth. There is a special cloth which is made especially for the dead known as *pawn dun*. *Pawn dum* is a cloth with different color stripes with special pattern used to cover dead body. Or used for wrapping themselves during the mourning period to show their condolence.

Besides handling of death body, the Mizos had the practice of keeping some materials or other stuff inside in some of the coffin. If an infant die, an egg is put on his hand so that the egg will lead the baby to the dead's world. The egg will roll and the child will chase the egg until it reaches the dead's world. As an infant the Mizos thought that it will not know any route to the world of the afterlife. In the folktale '*Mitthi khua leh Pialral*' the gate keeper is afraid to shoot an infant at the entrance of the dead's world because the child would come up and say that he would not know who he would become when he grow up. So, an egg is very important in the early *Mizo* culture especially in an infant's dead.

As already said earlier from the tale *Raicheh thlarau* in death in case of *raicheh* an axe is put in the coffin with the body because there is a belief that when the mother dies the soul is ashamed of the type of her dead. So she ultimately separated herself from the other souls and go to *Mitthi khua* by an unused road and for these reason the road is full of plants and bushes and had to make her own path with the help of the axe. In the early Mizo society an axe is put in the coffin of every *raicheh* because of these reason.



## 3.2 DEATH MEMORIAL

When a person died there are certain things which are done by the deceased family members in memory of the death. Different practices were done to show their love, care and respect for the one who had pass away. The deceased family may not be able to do every single practices but atleast one of the following is done in memory of the one who had passed away. And the following are the practices made in the olden days in memory of the dead.

### 3.2.1 TOMBSTONE

It has been already mentioned that early Mizos bury the dead in graves. But not every grave could have a tombstone. Only the chief and some noble and rich man could have stone placed in the grave. For the tombstone a big slap of stone is needed and may involve many persons to procure the stone and such may not be available nearby, thus making it unrealizable to the common people. Tombstone is usually placed in the entrance of their village. Sometimes the stone is placed while a person is still alive, this is to show their might and power which later served as a memorial stone for them after their death. As reported by K.Zawla: Sibuta planned to erect a huge and enormous stone during his lifetime, so with the help of his elders they search for good plate of rock. (*Mizo Pi Pute 201*). Sibuta is Chief of Tachhip and it was indeed possible for him to place a stone even during his existence. As said earlier the stone of Sibuta is used as tombstone even after his death. In the early days as there was no alphabet, and on the tombstone was encrypted certain pictures of wild animals, tools and human figure which may show what the person was like.

### 3.2.2 BURIAL PLACE

As already mentioned before, the Mizo buried the dead body in a grave and tombstone may be expensive for the common people, a log of wood is affordable for most of the grave. In the early Mizo, as they were semi-nomadic tribes and moved from one place to another, they did not settle in one permanent place and so there were no designated graveyard. Thus their graves could be found near their houses or in their old farms.

In the folktale *Chhuanvawra*, one day Chhuanvawra and his father went to their farm. In the farm Chhuanvawra saw graves which were lying in an array. He then asked his father whose graves they were, and his father told him that they were the graves of Chhuanvawra's grandparents, his aunt and older sibling which were located in their cultivated land. These shows that in the early *Mizos* there were no graveyard for the common people in the village for the whole community and thus the common people buried their family near their house or in their land as their wish.

### 3.2.3 THLAI CHHIAH

There is a practice among the early *Mizos* of putting fresh vegetables or meat in the grave called *thlai chhiah* or *mitthi chaw pek*. The practice is believed to start from the folktale *Zawltlingi leh Ngambawma*. As narrated by P.S.Dahrawka Tlingi and Ngama were lovers but could not marry due to family problems. Tlingi died first and after her death Ngama dreamed that he went to the dead's world where he met Tlingi. But their world is very different and they could not be as in real life, so he decided to return home. Before he

went back to the physical world Tlingi asked for one thing when he returned, which is to put various fresh vegetables, wine and meat for her. When he returned he told his friends about his dream and asked them to join him. He and his friends then drank wine and performed a small ritual later known as *mitthi chaw pek* by putting some fresh vegetables, wine and meat for Tlingi. Hence from this myth, the practice of *thlai chhiah* continue. (*Mizo Thawnthu* 156)

It is believe that in the early Mizo society when someone die the spirit of the dead did not directly enter the death's world. It roams about for three months in and around their village. Hence, the family of the dead person would call upon the death person and made food for their love ones who had pass away. They thought that the spirit of the dead would be hungry also. There is also a belief that the souls in *Mitthi khua* does not have adequate food to eat and the food found in *Mitthi khua* is not as good as compare to the physical world. Thus, this belief also lead to *thlai chhiah* or *mitthi chaw pek*.

### 3.2.4 MIM KUT

*Mim Kut* is one of the three festivals of the early Mizos. 'Mim' means maize 'kut' means festival so it is Maize festival, it is used for eating purpose. It usually took place in the month of September when the crops are ready and reaped. In the festival wine made from maize is served for the people. According to Hangthiauva, 'At first it is not *Mim kut* but is called "Thi tin"' (Hrangthiauva 68). *Thi* means dead and *tin* means to leave. Thus the festival means to set free of the dead souls which were belief to linger in the physical world before going to *Mitthi khua*.

*Mim kut* is also linked with the myth *Tlingi leh Ngama*. To continue the above myth, after Ngama told his friends about his dream and performed the rituals *thi thin*, he then let go of his grief for Tlingi's death and killed himself to enter the dead's world and live with Tlingi. After Ngama's death, the people knew the story behind his death and the rituals he had done for Tlingi. The people then believed in the dead's world and continued to put food for the dead.

At first just as Ngama did, only the family of the dead put food for the loved ones who had passed away. But later on it became a festival which involved the whole community where everyone could participate. In *Mim Kut* the people bring food to let go and set free the spirit of their family who had passed away in that year. Thus the festival is also known as *mitthi kut* which means festival of the dead. Since the people bid farewell to the souls of the dead, the festival is not a joyful festival.

### 3.2.5 MITTHI RAWP LAM

*In lama thangchhangchhuah* is the highest title a man can attain by wealthy and to achieve that a person has to prepare feasts and ceremonies as many as five steps or five times before reaching *thangchhuah*. One of the steps before *thangchhuah* is known as *Mitthi rawplam* which is specially organized for the ancestors and family member who had passed away. Statues in the name of the ancestors and deceased family members were made and they would sing sad songs and mourn once again for the dead. One of the songs sang on the *Mitthi rawplam* ceremony is

*Che, rih tlang liam lo la,*

*I fen thi leh tiandar lo nghak la,*

*Rih tlang liam lo la*

Do not cross the *Rih* mountain,

Wait for your necklace and your veil,

Do not cross the *Rih* mountain.

The song here wishes the souls of their deceased family member not to cross the *Rih* mountain which is the way to the dead's world and did not want the souls of their deceased families to go to the dead's world. The ceremony *mitthi rawplam* is done mainly in memory of the dead.

### 3.3 IMPACT OF DEATH IN THE EARLY MIZO SOCIETY

Even though every man is to die one day there is fear of death. Death has great effect on the normal life of man. In the olden days the Mizos have done some rituals and normal practice to escape dead and to heal themselves. Besides these practices, relationships between dead and the living world could be seen.

### 3.3.1 THLA HUAL

If a person gets in serious trouble or facing a dangerous situation which nearly cost his life, the family of that person would practice a ritual to protect the person from near death which is known as *thla hual*. Usually the head of the family or grandparents would take chicken for the ritual to protect the body and soul of that person so that he will not face any dangerous situations or even death.

As told by R.L.Thanmawia in the folk tale *Zangkhua* there is a man named Kawlawia. One night Kawlawia had a horrible nightmare, when he woke up he knew that he had a bad dream. His nightmare haunted his thoughts and feared that it might cause him serious trouble or even death. So he sought his uncle who was in another village for help by having *thla hual* for him. His uncle gladly made the ritual *thla hual* for him (*Mizo Hnahthlak Thawnthu Vol.1* 120)

As in the tale, not only a physical situation that one faces but also the fear and thought of something bad going to happen which haunted the mind made them practice *thla hual*. *Thla hual* is a ritual of early Mizos to ease the fear of bad things coming their way and to protect them from death.

### 3.3.2 SACRIFICES

In the early Mizo community there may be different kinds of sickness but there were no doctors to take care of their health issue. No experts and no medicines were known to help

relieve their pain and sickness. The only choice and cure the Mizos thought was to go to the priest. The priest would demand a pig or hen or whatever he wished for the sacrifices according to the condition of the person. The priest would make animal sacrifice so as to cure their sickness and most importantly to save a person from death.

As seen in the book of *Mizo Hnahthlak thawnthu Vol.1*, in the myth *Tui huai lal Chhama*, there is a man name Chhuihthanga. Chhuihthanga's wife was killed by the spirit of the pond named Chhama. Chhuihthanga's wife was killed because she planted a scrub near the pond which disturbed Chhama the spirit of the pond. One day Chhuihthanga plucked the plant near the pond clearing all the scrubs. Chhama was so relief by Chhuihthanga's act that he later let him marry his daughter.

Chhama conducted a grand feast known as *khuangchawi* and invited Chhuihthanga and his new wife. As Chhuihthanga was human and being different from them he could not drink nor eat anything they served. He was very displeased that he left the feast in the middle of the celebration. On knowing that Chhuihthanga left in the middle of their celebration Chhama got hold of his daughter and did not allow her to return to Chhuihthanga.

When people knew about this news they were much afraid of the spirit. From here on, the people know what the spirit wants and did not and had great fear of the spirit. Hence, they might sacrifice to cure their sickness and saved them from death. They belief that these spirit might harm them if they did not go or do as it wished and for this reasons they made sacrifices. (84)

### 3.3.3 FOLK MAXIM OR PERCEPT

There are certain folk sayings or superstitious belief which obligate men in the early Mizos to protect the people from wrong doing and prevent from death as well. By prevention of death, it does not really prevent it from death but a means to control and give directions to the common people to do right and live a normal life. And thus avoiding trouble and restrain themselves from making worst mistakes.

*“Mi in aia pawngin in an sa ngai lo, thuneitu ber an thi duh ngai”* (Mizote khawsak dan 158) It means ‘never build a house nearer the street than the others, if so the head of the family may die’. The Mizo society is a patriarchal society; hence the head of the family is the oldest man in the family. The death of the head of every family would be great lost so everyone in the early Mizos would rather build] their house in alignment to others. There is no written rule but everyone had to follow it. These lines show their unity and equality in the early society. Hence the type of house they build amongst the common people in the early Mizos was always alike.

*“Vantlang kawng hnawh a thiang lo, ruang a chhuak duh ngai”* (158). This means that if a person build a house obstruction of public path someone in the family may die. As already mentioned before the early Mizos were nomadic tribes so their land were not their permanent place so people can have their house and farm land but were not allowed to disturb the main land and main road of the public. There is a report of one village Tanhril chief who built his house across public path and threw all their waste on the path. As he was the chief no one could stand against him or told him not to do it. He was later on captured by



*Reng* chief and was toasted on a bonfire to die. He died in the hands of an enemy not only that he was tortured to death which may be the worst kind of death. People attributed the manner of his death to his evil ways.

Among early Mizos their main occupation was farming, and every man had their share of land distributed by the chief. Some might be too greedy as to move their boundary; some might have a crooked boundary line so as to add small land area, while some may shifted the whole boundary line so as to own a bigger land area. There is a folk precept that says “*Lo ri kham kawih chu natna, sawn phei chu thihna*” (158). It means that a crooked boundary line may cause illness, and shifting a boundary line may even lead to death.

Adultery is a great sin in every society even in the early Mizo society. Concerning woman who committed adultery is said, “*Sakeiin an seh duh*” (*Pi pute biak hi* 143). It means that such woman are vulnerable to get killed by tiger. If someone is bit by a tiger he or she is considered to die of the attack as it is the fiercest animal in the land. Besides this, it is belief that if tiger killed someone he is considered to commit sin or break the law. As already mentioned before no one wanted to die of *sarhi*, so the saying is to keep woman out of adultery.

In the early Mizo society wedding is mainly an arranged marriage and not a love marriage. The early Mizos were very specific about their brides to be so a woman brought up from *sarhi* family is never wanted as a bride. In the early Mizos days of happiness can never come in between days of sorrow therefore days of happiness would come second. There is a

folk saying “*Innei turte ina ruang a chhuah chuan thulh rih tur*”. (Mizote khawsak dan 158)  
It means that if there is death in the house before a wedding the wedding should be cancelled.

### 3.3.4 MOURNING

Early in the Mizo society when someone passed away the relatives and loved ones did not want to be seen in a neat and clean cut outfit. People cry a lot and did not eat much or comb their hair nicely. All these were to show their love and affection for the one who had passed away. In one of the proverbs it is said that: *Only sufficient passing of time can heal the loneliness of a mourner* (Mizos of North East India 85). They thought that only time can heal their pain inside but on the other side, it seems that they wanted to be noticed by others as a mourner than being free from their loneliness.

In the folk tales narrated by P.S.Dahrawka *Laltheri and Chalthanga*, Chalthanga who is brought up in a low class family had a girlfriend named Laltheri who is daughter of the chief. The chief and his family could not accept the love between the two so Chalthanga was killed by the chief’s men on his authority. On hearing that Chalthanga was dead Laltheri tore her clothes and walked naked on the street. When her mother tried to give her clothes saying, “My dear, wear some clothes, it is too embarrassing” her answer was:

*Ka nu, ka nemte puan ka chawi lovang,*

*Ka di Thangdanga zalna mah,*

*Chhimhlei tual daiah* (Mizo Thawnthu 121)

Mother I won't wear any clothes,

While my beloved Chalthanga is laid,

Cold inside the earth.

Besides walking naked as a mad girl, Laltheri did not eat anything as she was in great pain losing the love of her life. Her mother was concerned about her mental and physical health so she tried everything she could to look after her. And when her mother tried to give her food her answer could be found in a song:

*Chhunrawl lovin thla ka fam lovang ka nu*

*Suihlunglengin Sailo Ngurpui fam lo awl na e. (Mizo hla hlui 241)*

Mother I will not die of starvation.

It will be more likely for me to die of lovesick (Sailo chief family)

In the story of Chalthanga and Laltheri, Laltheri mourn for the death of her beloved Chalthanga in such a way that she did not eat sufficiently, did not dress properly, and did not do any work and cried all the time. These shows how people in the early Mizos acted when they lost their love ones. Laltheri is so hurt by the fact that her lover was killed by her own family so this is the reasons for her over reaction in mourning Chalthanga. But it is just an indication of how the Mizos used to mourn of the dead. The early Mizos never wanted to

look natural during their mourning period instead they looked as if they were in grief for their whole time.

### 3.3.5 NATURE

As being part of the living being; man, animals and plants have some connection which create a strong bond among them. And these living beings are close that in time of sickness and even in death also they endure the sufferings together. In the folk tale *Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara*, one lady Chawngvungi was about to get married to Sawngkhara. But before leaving their house Chawngvungi leave a message to her mother about her death by a sign in a banyan tree in their compound as in the folk tale:

Pointing out to a branch, Chawngvungi said that when the leaves in that branch withered, she should know that she is unwell. If the branch broke, she would be dead.

*(Mizo songs and folk Tales 152)*

Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara had a child, but not so long after they had a child Chawngvung was in great pain and died soon thereafter. As already said by Chawngvungi the branch of the banyan tree break away after her death and as soon as it happens her mother knew that she die. And then she hurriedly rush to take her daughter's dead body.

It is belief that in the early Mizo society as a plant is connected to its owner. The death of a person usually leads to death of plants and damage of crops as well. In the tales

also as the branch of the banyan tree broke, at the time of Chawngvungi's death. At the time of her death the banyan tree grow in a far place near her mother's home. Yet, the strong relationship between the banyan tree and Chawngvungi shows bonding of man and nature.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CONCEPT OF AFTERLIFE IN THE MIZO SOCIETY

#### 4. CONCEPT OF AFTERLIFE

Death is the physical end of everyone. But it does not stop here, it is believed to be the road to the next life or it can be said that it is the beginning of the afterlife. Everyone has his own soul which is immortal and goes to the next life after death. In the early Mizos death is believed to be the separation of the soul of the people into two paths. One is the road which everybody wants to take but only few could enter. Only the rich people with a title and outstanding brave knight could enter this. The other is the place where all the other souls who could not enter the first place will go.

##### 4.1. ROUTE OF THE DEAD SOUL

The Mizos of the early society believed that when a person dies the soul did not directly enter the next world which is *Mitthi khua or Pialral*. The soul had to go through certain passage to reach *Mitthi khua or Pialral*. When a person dies it is believed that the soul follows the road to one of the place which he should enter. But before that there is a myth on how the soul exit from the dead body. As seen from the myth *Rih dil leh Mitthi khua* by R.L.Thanmawia, soul exits the body from the top of the head follows the beam near the master bed and follows the beam of the house then exit by the back door. The soul roams

about for three months around the village, and during these period the family believe that the soul would not have food to eat so they would reserve a seat during their meal and keep aside food thinking for the hungry spirit. After that the soul is released after a ceremony called *thi tin* then only can the soul make its way to *Mitth khua*.

In the story of Laltheri and Chalthanga, as Chalthanga was not favoured by the chief to be in relationship with his daughter he was killed. After Chalthanga died the soul was believed to roam about Laltheri's house as seen in the folk song of *Laltheri zai* (Lalther's song):

*Rauthlalengin kan run khuai ang a vel,*

*Fangfa lo chu ka nu, chhunrawl a belin hun u. (Mizo Hla Hlui 241)*

The soul wander about near our house,

He will be hungry, give him lunch with the pot.

From here the soul then follows the road to *Rih dil*, which is the most famous or it can be said the most important lake of the Mizos. Just before *Rih dil* there is a shaky or a balancing stone known as *lung rah buk* which every souls had to pass through and after that their journey to the afterlife is said to begin.



There is a tale behind the myth every dead soul passes through *Rih dil*. In the folk tale *Rih dil leh mitthi khaw kal kawng*, once a group of friends went hunting near *Rih dil* and at night one of the friends heard a voice which sounds just like his wife. The woman talks about how she suddenly left without telling her children that she kept dried meat in their earthen pot in the shelf while her husband is out for hunting. Then the husband knew it was his wife and tried to ambush her. The husband grab her from behind and won't let go. The wife asked him to let her go but the husband won't let go, so the wife turned herself into fireflies and flew away. He was so worried that the next morning that he went home. When he reached his home he found his wife was dead in his absence. He then checked and found out that there were dried meat in their earthen pot on the shelf. Hence, he knew that the one he hold on to at *Rih dil* was indeed his wife's soul. From this tale, there is a myth that every souls passes through *Rih dil* before entering the afterlife which is *Mitthi khua* or *Pialral*.

After the soul passes through *Rih dil* the soul still misses the human world and on his way he come across a mountain known as *Hringlang tlang*. From *Hringlang tlang* the soul could see the earth and misses the physical world so much that it used to shed tears. In a folk song *Thangnunnemi zai*, *Hringlang tlang* could be seen where Thangnunnemi felt the emptiness she felt without his father who had pass away and composed it in a song as:

*Kei ka zuapa 'n thlir ve maw hringlang tlangah;*

*A hrai riangtualah kan leng (Mizo hla hlui 287).*

Will my dad watched me from Hringlang tlang;

See his children who are very lonely.

It seems that *Hringlang tlang* is the mountain of loneliness, where not only the one who had died but also their family focus mainly on it as if it is their last parting place. Hence, the soul of the dead will remember the world for the last time, so the hope for their family was for soul to remember and see their loneliness and grieve for their loss.

There are two very important things on *Hringlang tlang*, the first of which is a flower is called *Hawilopar*. It is a very beautiful flower that even the desperate soul did not fail to notice. When the soul plucked the flower and put it on its ear it never wanted to look back to the world.

The second thing that is found on *Hringlang tlang* is a clear and fresh water called *lunglo tui* at the top of the mountain. The water is so fresh and tempting that the soul must drink it and not walk pass it. As soon as the soul drinks the water the memory of all past is erased. Then, the soul is very anxious to enter the next world or *Mitthi khua*, so the soul follows the road to *Mitthi khua* with full of enthusiasm.

#### 4.2 PAWLA KAWTCHHUAH

In the folk tale '*Mitthi khua leh Pialral*', it is seen that before the entrance of *Mitthi khua*, there is one very important street or road which every soul has to pass through and it does not have any short cut or other road to pass by. The street is known as *Pawla kawtchhuah*, *Pawla* the man behind the street knows everyone who enters *Pawla kawtchhuah*. He owned a big pellet bow and shoot those who pass through this place. The pain from his shoot usually last for about three years.

There are some people whom Pawla never shoot at with his pellet bow. The first one is *hlamzuih*, as already said before the infant told Pawla that he would never know who he will be when he grows up. So Pawla is afraid of that, and spares the infant and let him pass through. Pawla will also not shoot at a virgin woman because he respect them. While in the case of men he would not shoot at a man who had slept with at least three virgins, or who slept with at least seven women weather they are virgin or not. He would definitely shoot at a guy without any lady, thus there is a saying for this reason as: '*Di nei lo Pawla'n a sai an ti*'. It means that Pawla shoots at guys who never slept with a lady.

The next is *Thangchhuah-pa*, *ram lama thangchhuah* or *in lama thangchhuah*. Pawla hesitate to shoot at these men as they are great men in their own ways. *In lama thangchhuah* were rich and great men during their lifetime, they can throw feast for the whole community and can make a kind of festival of their own. So, they and their families could escape the attack from Pawla, and just let them go.

The successful hunter known as *ram lama thangchhuah* were glorious and outstanding in their own time. The soul of every animal he had shot will follow him to the entrance of the afterlife. So, Pawla would not dare to shoot him, and he would boldly enter *Pialral* without any hesitation.

#### 4.3 MITTHI KHUA

The early Mizo believes in the existence of the afterlife for the souls which is again divided into two abodes – *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral*. The first abode where everybody can

enter is *Mitthi khua*. Though the route to *Mitthi khua* is already mentioned before the exact location is not known. Even though there is individual dead, dead due to war and famine songs about one of the abode *Mitthi khua* is hard to find in the folksong. But there is a folk tale *Zawltlingi and Ngambawma* from the book of *Mizo Thawnthu* by P.S.Dahrawka which showcases *Mitthi khua* and also what was going on in *Mitthi khua*.

In the tale *Zawltlingi leh Ngambawmaa*, a young woman Zawltlingi also known as Tlingi was madly in love with Ngambawma called by the name Ngama. Though their love grew stronger their marriage was never accepted by their parents because marriage in the early time was mainly arranged married and not love marriage. Soon Tlingi felt very sick which caused her death. One night Ngama went to *Mitthi khua* in his dream, there he saw his old lover Tlingi so he stayed for a while at Tlingi's home. One day the people of *Mitthi khua* invited Ngama to hunt a bear and when they gather around to kill a bear, the bear was a caterpillar for Ngama. He then followed the people for fishing but what they caught was bamboo leaf instead of fish. On their way home they all turn into fire flies so it is very difficult for Ngama to cope with them. Tlingi told Ngama that it is very difficult for them to be *lawm* which is helping each other in their farm as they were very much different. So, she told him to return to the living world to die first and then come back to stay with her normally.

From the folk tale of *Tlingi and Ngama* there is a firm belief that there really is a place called *Mitthi khua*. The early Mizos put all their faith upon the *Mitthi khua* on the base of the dreams of Ngama, what the place would be like, how the people live there and what did they do which has become a traditional belief.

The journey of Ngambawma into *Mitthi khua* in his dreams led the Mizos to think that the souls living in *Mitthi khua* had their own home and made their living by having farm and growing their own crop as usual like in the physical world. Hunting animals and fishing were also very important amongst the community for entertainment and for food which were all part of their livelihood just as they did in the living world as well.

Although there may be several similarities with the living world, their sight is widely different. A caterpillar is seen as a bear, a bamboo leaf is also seen as fish in *Mitthi khua*. The fish they caught was roasted on fire nicely by Tling and ready to be eaten, but when that same kind of fish was roasted on fire by Ngama it all burnt out as it was just a dry leaf. The wood which were used for floor in *Mitthi khua* is only a vegetable in the eyes of Ngama. An extra-ordinary thing which is seen in *Mitthi khua* is that the souls can transform into different form, first into fly and then into fireflies. Not only one but all of them can transform themselves.

In *Mitthi khua* the souls did not sit and rest or roam about peacefully without any worried and live happily ever after. Instead they had to work very hard to earn their living, they grow crops and hunt animals for their living. Not only that it is believed that they do not have sufficient supply of food to eat as some of the crops that are found on the earth could not be found in *Mitthi khua*. Hence, the practice of *thi tin* or *thlai chhiah* is done to cater good food to their loved ones whom they thought were insufficient in good food.

The tale did not end in the return of Ngambawma, when he woke up he missed Tlingi so much that he decided to follow her advice and return to *Mitthi khua*. Before that

Ngambawma invited some of his friends, drink wine and told them all of his dreams and organized a small ceremony which is dedicated to Tlingi. The ceremony is called *thi tin*, in which they gathered different kind of vegetables they could found, wine and chicken were put in one place of the house where they keep the water. After his friend left Ngambawma then killed himself in his bed. After his death he again entered *Mitthi khua* not as a living being but as a soul and can blend in just as they planned before. Everything is normal for him in his second entrance.

From Ngama's dreams and experience everyone considered *thi tin* or in other words *thlai chhiah* as an essential ceremony which everyone must do when one of their family pass away. They continue it as a tradition which later results in the inclusion of the whole community. One of the festivals known as *Mim kut* is celebrated in memory of the people who had passed away. As already mentioned before there is a feast and drinking of wine. Both *thi tin* and *Mim kut* were practiced separately as a family and as the whole community respectively.

#### 4.4 PIALRAL

The higher abode of the afterlife is known as *Pialral*. It is nothing like that of *Mitthi khua*, it is a most extravagance place that they could ever imagine. According to Rev. V.S. Lalrinawma, 'It was the place in the world beyond, full of comfort and luxury and was regarded as Mizo Heaven' (*Mizo Ethos* 98). '*Pial*' here means 'land or earth', '*ral*' means 'opposite side' or 'the other side' hence *Pialral* can be said as the land beyond the living

world. Though the exact place of *Pialral* is not known, but from the name there is a belief that it is to be situated outside of the present world. And as already mentioned before every soul passes through *Pawla kawtchhuah* so *Pialral* is considered to be the farthest place. It is also believed to be most luxurious place because here in *pialral* the inhabitant does not need to do anything. There is plenty of food to eat but did not have to work at all to earn their food and living. They just had to relax and enjoy the peaceful life with all that their new world could give. So the name given as Mizo Heaven is indeed an appropriate name.

As *Pialral* is considered to be the higher abode there are only few people who could enter it. Three types of people could enter *Pialral* after their death; the first one is *hlamzuih*. As already mentioned above in Paula feared *hlamzuih* because he is just a baby and Paula did not know what he will become when he grow up. He could become *thangchhuah-pa* when he grow up so he was never harmed or shot at by Paula instead he is given an entrance into *Pialral*.

The other type of person who could enter *Pialral* is *thangchhuah-pa*. Any man who attain the title *thangchhuah* is known as *thangchhuah-pa*. V.S Lalrinawma writes, “The word *thangchhuah* perhaps is derived from *thangkim* (all famous)” (*Mizo Ethos* 107). In other words *thang* means famous and *chhuah* means make known or publish. *Thangchhuah* here means that being popular among the community and be known by their act such as catering public feast several times and by killing numbers of fierce animals.

According to Hrangthiauva, “*Thangchhuah* is the highest status among the early Mizo community, they greatly appreciate it” (*Mizo Chanchin* 46). *Thangchhuah-pa* is

consider to be in a high position next to the chief, they earned respect from the community as well. They had different dress code which separated him from the others so he can be known very easily. V.S.Lalrinawma had written in his book about the clothes worn by *thangchhuah-pa*:

The person who attained *thangchhuah* had a special privilege of wearing a special shawl together with a special headgear called *Diartial* that was the special symbol for his special position in the society.

(*Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges* 107).

*Ram lama thangchhuah* is the third type of person who could enter *Pialral*. *Ram lama thangchhuah* are those brave knights who are excellent hunters who are famous for their hunting skills and can kill certain numbers of animals. By animals it means selected few which are considered fierce animals and by shooting or killing these animals then only can a man be called *thanchhuah-pa*. The animals include deer, red deer, bear, wild boar and mithun. Elephant may also be included which may not be absolutely necessary due to the unavailability in every place and time. Killing one of the animals cannot put man to the position of *thangchhuah*. But one had to kill all the animals mentioned to attain the title *ram lama thangchhuah*. Besides these, those who can *aih*<sup>1</sup> tiger, hawk and king cobra are considered higher than normal *thangchhuah*. The entrance made by *thangchhuah-pa* to *Pialral* is seen in the myth *Mitthi khua leh Pialral*:



The entrance to *mitthi khua* by the brave knight, *ram lama thangchhuah* is very majestic. The king cobra guard *thangchhuah-pa* from the horns of the matured red deer. The soul of hawk which he had killed will make hoarse sound screaming ‘*Kawk-kaw-lek!*’ while safe guarding him. Then followed by all the animals he had killed.

(*Mizo Hnahthlak Thawnthu* Vol-1 114)

The entrance of *thangchhuah-pa* to *Mitthi khua* is very glorious that the gate keeper Paula is afraid to shoot him. Hence, *thangchhuah-pa* can easily enter into *Pialral* which is beyond *Mitthi khua*.

*In lama thangchhuah* is the last person who can go to *Pialral*. The person who is wealthy enough to have public feast several times for the whole village is given the title *thangchhuah*. According to K.Zawla there are three reasons why our ancestors wanted to be *thangchhuah*:

- *After their death there would be abundant supply of clean rice anytime.*
- *They would be great and noble, favored by the chief and be respectable among the community*
- *Paula would not shoot at him on the road to Mitthi khua*

(*Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin* 40)

It can be seen that the Mizos wanted the title *thangchhuah* to earn respect from the community and most of their focus is on the afterlife. Both *ram lama thangchhuah* and *in lama thangchhuah*, their entrance to *Mitthi khua* is very glorious and the dress code they wore during their lifetime is still the dress worn when entering *Mitthi khua*. As already said before the unique dress code is a sign of their superiority amongst the whole community.

The soul of *in lama thangchhuah* was followed by every animal he had killed for all the public feast he cater. He wrapped himself with *thangchhuah puan* and his head with *thangchhuah diar*<sup>2</sup>, *vakul chang*<sup>3</sup> as head dress, carrying *fungki*<sup>4</sup> and a gun. All his male and female slaves guard him from harm using spear and armor, they follow him to *Pialral* to serve him, then enter *Pialral* with triumph.

To attain the title *thangchhuah* certain ceremonies and feasts had to be performed such as *chawng*, *sedawi chhun*, *mitthi rawp lam*, *zangkhoa* and *khuangchawi*. *Chawng* is the first step in the process of *Thangchhuah*, followed by the others and the most famous of the *thangchhuah* process is *khungchawi*. Of all the steps involve in *thangchhuah* there is a public feast which may demanded plenty of wine where the whole community participate with lots of singing and dancing. The man needs to be rich enough to provide abundant food. The quantity of rice they need to harvest in a year would also be very large in quantity for feast and for making lots of wine. Lots of meat is needed for the feast. Besides these, hen, pigs, boar, *mithun* is also needed for sacrificial purpose and for their entertainment such as *se-chaih*<sup>5</sup>. The man behind the feast made sacrifices to god, and other rituals done in memory of their ancestors. Only chief and wealthy people can afford to do it. It needed a lot of preparation and a lot of labor which will certainly include the community. Hence, each

celebration does not end in one day, usually it lasted for several days each. His award in achieving *thangchhuah* is that he can open his windows, and can have *Bahzar*<sup>6</sup> and *Vanlung*<sup>7</sup> which is mainly seen in the house of the chief and not in normal house.

There is a story which showcases the celebration of *khuangchawi* in the folktale *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*. Once upon a time there is a handsome gentleman who is very rich and intelligent. He was so rich and powerful that he was declared king. After his marriage to the daughter of Sabereka he planned on having *khuangchawi*. He was so rich that he could afford to have a grand feast every day. For the *khuangchawi* there were plenty of wine, food to eat and meat as well. He invited all the people and even the animals as well and during the celebration there were lots of singing and dancing and feasting was their main act. As seen in the story to be in *lama thangchhuang* one had to conduct *khuangchawi* which can only done by rich men and kings as the celebration involves plenty of food and wine which were to be supply by the king within several days.

*Thangchhuah-pa* spent lots and lots of harvest and their wealth in terms of domestic animals in public feast to attain the highest standard in the community. They are able to dress differently, renovate their house, and become respected by others and most importantly are able to enter *Pialral*. Likewise in *ram lama thangchhuah* also went through many hardship to attain the title. They may have the strength, ability, determination but of all the men out there in their community a person has to stand out, go an extra mile and went through many failures to achieve success.

Besides living a satisfactory and desirable life, the real goal is *Pialral*. There is so much pleasant and less daring actions such as hunting any kind of animals for food which may not be among the fierce animals. To attain the title *ram lama thangchhuah* hunting is not only a sport or a hobby, but also a real battle in the sense that the fiercest animals which are to be shot for *thangchhuah* are the most clever and hard to find in the deep jungle. In between their hard work, their energetic and enthusiastic mind point straight towards *pialral*.

#### 4.5 OBSERVATION ON THE ABODE OF THE DEAD

An abode of death is a presumption or an ideology so there is much to perceive which may be different from the living world. In location, settings and lifestyle, in different aspects it differs from the present life but may have some link in terms of tradition also. In the early Mizos ideal world of *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral*, there are certain things which are to be observed. The analysis of the ideal world which is to be seen in the following will show the nature of the early Mizo society as well.

The biggest achievement in the life of the early Mizos is to enter *pialral*. It can be said that *pialral* is about the afterlife, but everything they did in their lifetime is focused on the afterlife mainly *pialral*. Man strives to be the bravest among them and be the best hunter not only for fame but also it is the one ticket to *pialral*. The others work hard and spent their harvest and wealth on public feast and sacrifices for the title *thangchhuah* which is also the ticket to *Pialral*. Hence, the highest title and achievement in their lifetime turns out to be an assessment of judgment in entering *Pialral*.

It can be clearly seen that the wealthiest and the bravest knights can enter *Pialral*. But it will be impossible for most of the people because the attainment of the title *thangchhuah* is too hard to achieve. It seem that *Mitthi khua* is designed for every person but *Pialral* is for selected few. There is a wide distinction between the rich and the poor, the mighty and the weak.

Besides this, it is even harder for women to enter *Pialral* because women are never hunters and *khuangchawi* can never be done by women. Hence, it is indeed impossible for women to achieve the title *in lama thangchhuah* or *ram lama thangchhuah*. There can be one condition in which women can enter *Pialral* that is when they are married to *in lama thangchhuah*. As already said before when *in lama thangchhuah* enters *Pialral* he is followed by his family which would include his wife.

As their deeds in the living world direct their destination after their death, so there is a clear direction for them in which of the two abode they are going. In one way Pawla act as the one who made the final judgment separating folks who would go to either of the two abodes, yet on the other hand the place they will go to is known beforehand, so Pawla act as a gate keeper.

In *Mitthi khaw kawtchhuah* Pawla never shoot at *hlamzuih* as he did not know the future of the child weather he would be *thangchhuah* or not. It seems that children were not so much cared about in the early Mizo society there used to be a saying, '*Naupang te te uite rim in nam*', which means that children smell like dog. When adult did not want children to be around and wanted them away they would say these words. But here it can be seen that

children were not so much neglected. Though they did nothing to achieve *Pialral* still they were allowed to enter freely without any hard work.

The location of *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral* is not known as it is only an assumption which nobody is sure of. As seen in the earlier points of the same chapter, after death every soul first enters *Pawla kawtchhuah* which is like the main gate to the afterlife then into the *Mitthi khua*. In *Mitthi khua* most of the folks made their settlement and remain in it. Then the farthest place of the settlement of the souls is *Pialral*. It seems like the three places are located next to each other because the ones who enter had to pass through *Pawla kawtchhuah* first and then *Mitthi khua* and only after that they can enter into their destination which is *Pialral*.

In *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral* the people seem to live a normal life as in the living world in the sense that they have their own houses, go on hunting and fishing for their food and entertainment, cultivate lands and harvest food to eat. Though the life may look very similar to the physical world in the tales of *Tlingi and Ngama* everything they see and touch is different. For Ngama their bears were caterpillar, their fish were only dry leaves, the wood which were used for floor is only vegetables. The difference with *Mitthi khua* is that in *Pialral* where the people who live there need not to be work but eat *faisa*, which is a food ready for them to eat, not of their hard work but which is available just for them. When *thangchhuan* enters *Pialral* he is followed by his slaves who were to serve him in *Pialral*. His life is like a king having to do nothing but being serve instead. It looks like *thangchhuan-pa* can live the life of a king or chief in *Pialral* because of his slaves who are there to serve him.

#### 4.6. TRANSMIGRATION

Transmigration means the passing of a soul from one body to another. In the early Mizo folktales transmigration is seen much and not of incarnation. Transmigration seen in the folktale may be of different kind and of different purpose. The soul may pass on into anything, an animal, a tree, a star, a lake but never of human being. The folktales of *Mauruangi* and *Ngaiteii* can be seen from the book of *Mizo Hnahthlak thawnthu Vol.3*

##### 4.6.1. MAURUANGI

In the folktale *Mauruangi*, Mauruangi's mother is pushed into a river by her husband. As Mauruangi's mother is dead her father married another woman. Her step- mother is very rude and never give her enough food to eat and she used to be very hungry. Mauruangi's mother died but her soul passed on to a big fish and give her food to eat and Mauruangi is never hungry again. But her step mother knew that Mauruangi is fed by her mother, she then killed the fish with the help of others. Mauruangi was given only the fish bone. Mauruangi planted the bone in a soil, then it grows into a flower tree which is possessed by the soul of Mauruangi's mother. And from the flower juice Mauruangi can again fill her hunger. That tree was also cut down by her step mother so from that moment Mauruangi was not able to get in touch with her mother again.

#### 4.6.2. NGAITEII

In the early days they thought that every lake and mountain possesses a spirit which has some sort of power, so they are afraid of the spirit and try to please the spirit. In the story ‘*Ngaiteii*’ there is a young girl named Ngaiteii whose father drowned in a lake.

After a short time Ngaiteii’s grandmother never allowed her to go near the lake. One day when she fetched water from the lake she was gone. The spirit of the lake is Ngaiteii’s father who wanted his child to be with him so he took her alive. Her grandmother asked his permission to take her out of the lake but was not willing to return to the lake. But the spirit of Ngaiteii’s father missed her so much that the water of the lake overflowed onto the village. Ngaiteii’s different possession were thrown into the lake which calm the water but for a short period of time. Their last choice was to give Ngaiteii to the spirit of the lake so she was thrown into the lake and from that moment the flood was never seen again.

#### 4.6.3. TUALVUNGI LEH ZAWLPALA

As seen from the book *Mizo Thawnthu* by P.S.Dahrawka in the folktale *Tualvungi and Zawlpala*, Tualvungi and Zawlpala are a happily married couple. One day a man name Phuntia saw Tualvungi and wanted her as his wife, believing that she is the sister of Zawlpala. Phuntiha had enough wealth to give for marriage with Tualvungi Zawlpala demanded many things for the price. But Phuntiha is a wealthy man and could give anything Zawlpala demanded so Tualvungi finally married Phuntiha.



Zawlpala missed Tualvungi desperately that he went to visit her. When Phuntiha knew that they were not siblings he then poisoned Zawlpala and he died soon after reaching his home. As soon as Tualvungi heard the news of Zawlpala's death she went to his grave and cried. While she was crying an old lady came by and asked her the reason why she was crying. She told her everything and requested the lady to kill her on one condition that the lady could have all of her jewelry. The old lady agreed upon the pact they made so she then killed Tualvungi, and in the meantime Phuntiha was following Tualvungi all the way to the grave. On knowing that Tualvungi has died he too killed himself on the same spot. Both Tualvungi and Zawlpala turn into butterfly, Phuntiha also turned into a butterfly and followed them. There is a myth that when two butterflies are being followed by another one it is said to be Tualvungi and Zawlpala follow by Phuntiha from behind.

In both the story *Ngaiteii* and *Mauruangi* the parents of Ngaiteii and Mauruangi are seen with a purpose. First the spirit of Ngaiteii's father was still remaining in the physical world because he did not want to go by himself and he wanted to take Ngaiteii with him. After doing so he did never disturb the village again. In the case of Mauruangi's mother the spirit still linger in the world and turned herself into a fish and then a banyan tree so that she could look after her poor daughter Mauruangi. The spirit of Mauruangi's mother fed her daughter until she was gone. These stories may be the reason why there is a belief in the early Mizos that the soul of the dead still roam about for three months.

In the story of *Tualvungi and Zawlpala* they transform themselves into butterflies and no further story was there on the life of the butterflies. The souls may transform into butterflies but the story ends here or it can be said the story ends with a myth. Their

transformation into an insect does not mean that in the early Mizo society the people belief in rebirth or incarnation.

#### 4.7. MYTH OF THE STARS

Some of the stars which can be seen at night sky were given names and behind every name of the stars there is a story to tell. Like every other culture the Mizos have myth of how world began and how the earth assumed its form. The early Mizos believes that before some of the stars were formed they used to be human beings and for different reasons they turned into stars. Some of the stories of the stars are contained in the book of *Mizo Hnahthlak Thawnthu Vol. 1* in the tale of *Arsi Thawnthu*, such stories are seen below.

##### 4.7.1 SIRUK (THE PLEIADES)

Once upon a time not very far at the outskirts of a village was a spot where there was a very fine quality of clay. The clay was ideal for making pots and other useful items. The clay was also very fine for making pellets for sling shots, for it was easy to beat and molded. So, it was frequently visited by the villagers.

One day six men from the village came to this spot and dug for clay at the hole that had been created with constant digging for clay. Since everyone used to come and dig for clay, the hole was big and deep and was room enough for the six men to all enter at once. While they were happily digging for clay, the hole

suddenly collapsed. The six friends died instantly. Mizo elders believe that the spirit of the dead friends flew up to heaven and turned into stars.

#### 4.7.2 KHIANGTE-ZAWNG-ZIM :

*Khiangte-Zawng-Zim* is the name of a constellation: a group of stars in Taurus. This is the story of the evolution of the *Khiangte-zawng-zim*.

Long time back, along with their Chief seven braves who were of the Khiangte tribe set out to hunt monkeys. Along with them they took a hunting dog. They spotted a huge male monkey and began to surround it. Within their circle they sent the hunting dog to chase out the monkey from where it was perched. As the hunting dog set out to do its job, the monkey gave a fierce fight, and within the circle of the braves the monkey and the dog fought fiercely. Just at this moment darkness fell over the earth and they all turned into stars.

When a circle of seven bright stars with a distinct bright one at the bottom of the circle are seen in the sky it is called the Khiangte-zawng-zim. The distinct brighter star at the bottom of the circle is believed to be the Chief. Two stars within the circle which are not very bright are said to be the hunting dog and the huge male monkey.

#### 4.7.3. CHHOHREIVUNG (PART OF THE CONSTELLATION OF ORION)

Once upon a time a man wanted to catch a mouse and so he dug a mouse hole. While he was digging the hole his mouth began to feel sour and wanted to light his pipe. He realized that he had forgotten his stone lighter to light his pipe so he went back home to fetch his stone lighter. On his way back he was bitten by a tiger.

As soon as the news spread brave hunters came together to circle and kill the tiger. However, the tiger had left the spot and the brave hunters missed the tiger. The tiger had taken a spot outside the circle made by the brave hunters. Just at that moment darkness prevailed on the earth and the tiger and the brave hunters all turned into stars and took their place in the sky.

*Chhohreivung* means a mouse hole. The first three brighter stars are said to be the other holes where the mouse can exit beside the main hole. The other stars which are in line are said to be different mouse holes. The brightest star at the bottom of the line is said to be a lump of soil deposited by the mouse while digging its hole. A little on the north side of this group of stars shines a circle of stars believed to be the brave hunters who had circled the tiger. At the bottom of the circle shines a bright reddish star which is called the *Sisakei* or *Sikeisen*. Near the *Sikeisen* shines three smaller stars which forms like a fire hearth. This group of stars is called the *Simeitalh*.

#### 4.7.4. DINGDI PUAN TAH

*Dingdi-puan-tah* – constellation comprising Capella and three other stars in Auriga which form an isosceles triangle. The star at the apex of the triangle represents a young woman named Dingdi engaged in weaving a cloth which is affixed to the wall at the two points marked by the base stars. Capella represents a young man making love to the weaver.

(Lorrain:116)

Once upon a time, there lived a beautiful maiden. The son of the village Chief fell in love with this beautiful maiden and he courted her during the traditional hour of courting at night time. Not satisfied with the traditional hour, he courted her even during day time. If the maiden sat on her loom weaving during the day, the Chief's son would neglect his work at the jhum and sit beside her loom all day.

One day as usual while the maiden was weaving, the Chief's son sat beside her loom again. He began to steal closer and closer towards her that the maiden said to him, "you are sitting too close that I cannot wet my brush to brush my loom. Move away!"

The Chief's son moved away a bit, but as he sat and became lost in his conversation he again moved closer and closer. Again the maiden said to him. "You are sitting too close that I cannot wet my brush to brush my loom. Move away!"

The Chief's son away a little bit again. Just at this moment darkness prevailed over the earth and they say that they turned into stars.

#### 4.7.5. ZANGKHUA (THE GREAT BEAR CONSTELLATION).

*Zangkhua bungbu means to be upside down as the Great Bear constellation when high in heavens. Metaphorically used for 'the tables being turned'.*

(Lorrain: 559)

Once upon a time in the village of Neihbawih lived a man named Kawlawia. One night Kawlawia had a dream. When he awoke he felt that his dream was a bad dream which could indicate either death or calamity, so he had a bad feeling for he felt a premonition of approaching danger.

During this time, his maternal uncle lived in Sairum village with his family. Since the village was not so far away from Neihbawih, he set out on a trip to his uncle's village. He wanted his uncle to make a sacrificial ceremony by killing a hen to hold back his soul to his body.

His uncle welcomed him and is willing to prepare the sacrifice to hold back his soul to his body. By killing their young fowl, he did the sacrificial ceremony to hold back his nephew's soul to his body. After his uncle performed the ceremony, without staying the night since his own village was not so far away, he went back to his village.

A little distance from his uncle's village, he reached a spot called Berhvakawn. There he met a band of enemy warriors. Though he tried to run away, he was surrounded by the band of enemies. His uncle's family thought that Khawlawia had gone on his way peacefully and had reached home. At his village, his family thought that his uncle had retained him at his village. So, no one thought to be worried about Kaulawia.

A number of days later a bulbul bird perched on top of Kaulawia's uncle's front door and chipped, "At Berhvakawn, Kaulawia lies dead." Those who heard the bird singing remarked, "How strange is the song of that bird?" They listened to the bird more intently till all could understand what the bird was singing about, "At Berhvakawn, Kaulawia lies dead."

So the villagers of Sairum were not at ease. They set out to inquire about the well-being of Kaulawia. Near Berhvakawn they found his dead body. Those who had killed him had cut his head from his body and had taken his head away. His legs had also been cut at the knee. A wasp was flying about his wounded knee.

Just at that moment darkness fell on the earth. Kaulawia's soul flew to the sky and turned into a star. It is said that he turned into the star called Zangkhua and it is said that till today the wasp which was circling his wounded knee still flutters around him.

#### 4.7.6. HRANGKHUPA SELU

Once upon a time in the north at a village presently called Biate lived a strong and chivalrous man called Hrangkhupa. He was regarded as the saviour of Zialung village. Hrangkhupa owned a huge and daring bull mithun. The mithun was big and strong enough to dare wander in the jungles alone.

It is said that once a tiger was silly enough to dare attack the huge mithun. The mithun hit back at the tiger with its huge horns and nailed it on the slope of the hilly pathway. The tiger tried to release himself with all its might and created scratches and dents on the earth of the hilly slope. The tiger's struggles were in vain and so it died in the process.

However, the huge mithun did not realize that the tiger was dead, for whenever it loosened its weight on the tiger, the tiger would move a little. So for days on end he kept on nailing the tiger on the hill slope without eating anything. He himself became very tired. When the villagers spotted him he had already died.

The people of the village had high esteem for the mithun. They also believed that after its death it turned into a star. On the spot he had nailed the tiger; they have drawn a sketch of its head and made a distinct dent in his memory.



#### 4.7.7. SIKAWIKAP

Sikawikap is the name of a constellation with three stars in Aquila and four stars in Delphin.

Once upon a time in a village some boys were playing with beans. Amongst them was the son of their village Chief. The team on the side of the Chief's son placed their beans erected on the ground and stood behind the beans in a row. At a little distance, the boys of the other team took their position to hit the beans of the other team. Just at that moment darkness prevailed over the earth and it is said they all turned into stars.

#### 4.7.8. CHAWNGMAWII LEH HRANGCHHUANA

In the book of Tribal Research the tale of *Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana* is seen. As in there were two young and beautiful lovers name Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana. Though the couple were very fond of each other, they were from a rival villages. Hence for Hrangchhuana, the only time for him to see Chawngmawii was during the night. He went to Chawngmawii in the middle of the night and went back before dawn.

After a while he had more confidence and went to Chawngmawii's house earlier in the night. On his way to Chawngmawii's house he used to kill people of her village. The folks were very upset by these that they tried to catch the killer. They suspected the killer to be from outside the village.

Hrangchhuana was brilliant enough to fool the people by going backward into the village and out of the village. The folks could not catch him from his footprint and so they guarded their village and caught him at last. He was then killed and their next task was try to find out the person whom he had a relation with. By letting all the women in the village walk over the dead body they found out it was Chawngmawii. Chawngmawii could not control herself seeing the dead body of Hrangchhuana so she cried and covered the dead body with her best cloth.

The folk were not happy with Chawngmawii but spared her life. Hrangchhuana's head was cut and hung on a tree on the entrance of their village. While nobody was watching Chawngmawii secretly took the head and gave it to Hrangchhuana's parents just as she had promised Hrangchhuana. When the folk knew what Chawngmawii did to the head of Hrangchhuana they were very angry and finally killed Chawngmawii. The souls of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana flew to the sky and both turned into stars. Chawngmawii is Venus as the evening star and Hrangchhuana is Jupiter.

Except for the folktale *Hrangkhupa selu* and *Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana*, the human beings suddenly turn into stars due to darkness which prevailed over the earth. The darkness which happen in an instant is due to a solar eclipse known as *Thimzing*. In the Myth *Thimzing* one day a solar eclipse happened which took longer than the day. Nobody could work or do anything so everyone stop their work.

Suddenly during the solar eclipse a sudden transformation took place. Some people changed into monkey, some into gorilla, and some as birds. Some men who were wrestling

turn into bears, some who carry torch turn into fireflies and some who wear pattern veil turn into tiger. All their domestic animals were included and turn in wild animals and birds.

During this moment the people in the above folktales also transform but not as wild animals and birds but into a star. The chief, the men and all the ladies, the dog, the monkey, the mouse holes and even the lump of the soil turned into star. So the transformation due to *thimzing* is just a sudden change and not of rebirth or incarnation as in other religious beliefs.

In the case of '*Hrangkhupa selu*' the mithun turns into a star because of the popularity and the admiration the mighty and strong mithun got from the people. It seems that some constellation of the star are named after the mithun who can defeat a fierce tiger so that no one would forget the big and strong mithun. The transformation seen in the case of *thimzing* is not the same as here in *Hrangkhupa Selu*.

The transformation of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana into a star is also not the same as *thimzing*. The love story between Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana is very interesting and touching. Chawngmawii's act of honesty and faithfulness shown even after the dead of her lover is also admirable. Thus, the legendary story of '*Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana*' is unforgettable which gave them a high status by giving a star name after them. Here also the transformation which may be seen if it is also cannot be the same as a rebirth or incarnation.

## END NOTES

1. When someone shoot wild animals they celebrate it with a feast and wine which is known as aih. They belief that in Pialral the animal would guard them, fetch food for them and do anything his master wishes.
2. The name of a veil worn by *thangchhuah pa* which is distinct from others
3. A long tail feather of Vakul or bhimraj which is worn by *thangchhuah pa*
4. A horn made for storage of gun powder
5. The sport of chasing a gayal from place to place before it is sacrificed.
6. An enclosed balcony with a rise of floor at the back of the house
7. The front room in the house of the chief which is made for their slaves.

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## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Almost all religions have belief in afterlife, but the nature of the continued existence always differed from one to another. From the present study, the following observations and conclusions on the Mizo religious dogma, the belief of afterlife in particular may be made.

The Mizos firmly believed that death is not the end of human existence. This ideology can be found either from their mythological tales or from their religious traditions. However, Mizo traditional belief is primarily focused on the life the physical world rather than on the life after death. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, they believed in the existence of soul in two worlds beyond life, namely *Mitthi Khua* and the higher abode *Pialral*. The life after death have been mentioned in their oral traditions, but they made no detailed deliberations on it. The main themes and subjects of interests seems to be on the real life situations. The traditions mentioned more detail about the way to the two worlds of spirit, but the life at *Mitthi Khua* and *Pialral* have been discussed in brief.

In most religious beliefs, life in this world means suffering and death while afterlife means freedom of soul. But this ideology is mentioned in Mizo religious teaching. The reason may be taken for granted that Mizo community is a closed society, the whole villagers shared in many things, for example, if a *pasaltha* (animal hunter) killed big animals like wild mithun, deer, boar etc. the whole villagers have to share in equal portion, except the killer and the chief who have better shares than others. Even when they have community fishing,

they used to distribute in equal shares including the *hmeithai* (widow) who have no representatives in the fishing. It was found that there was no much distinctions between rich and poor, and there was no class distinction as well which is still continued in the present society. Since this was the life of the Mizo community in the past, their philosophical messages never presented the life in this world as a place of distress and miseries.

As millions of people around the world experience for themselves communication with their loved ones who have expired, the Mizos too believed communication with the dead spirits. There are some people who claimed to have speciality in communicating with spirits of the death called *Mitthi Thluk Thiam*. Usually those people who recently lost their loved ones approached *Mitthi Thluk Thiam* to their house. This man covered himself by blanket chanting in unknown language, and he claimed to have interaction with the deceased spirit, and he proclaimed demand made by the spirit. The concerned family therefore hurriedly collected those items mentioned by the spirit specialist, and offered to their love ones through him. After doing this, the family members are very happy for they can communicate with their beloved spirits, for they are able to supply the needs of the deceased spirits.

Some religion like Hinduism believe in incarnation, and these religions have a similar idea of where they believe an individual ends up after this life, despite slight variations concerning how someone gets to in the next incarnation. In both the tales of the *Mauruangi* and *Ngaiteii* the spirit of their family who had passed away did not go straight to the world of the afterlife. The spirit or the soul of their family stay in the physical world in different forms for a

purpose. To give a helping hand to their loved ones and to take with them their property, but this is for a short period of time, not as a rebirth as seen in other religious beliefs.

In Mizo mythological tales, we have seen some kinds of re-birth or incarnation or transformation especially in the tales on Stars. One of the tales said that while six of the men in a villagers were happily digging for clay, the hole suddenly collapsed. The six friends died instantly. But they believed that the spirit of the dead friends flew up to heaven and turned into stars called *Siruk* (Constellation). The Mizos have seven stories in connection with the origin of the stars which have an idea of incarnation or rebirth. So, in the Mizo folk narrative where different worlds with its odd inhabitants performing incarnation, transformation and shape-shifting are in fact divergence from what their religious belief. It seems that these tales may be the influence of the Buddhism or Hindu philosophy in their early contact with the plain people, or the idea of transformation may be taken from other tribes during their long life journey from Central Asia to their present settlement.

As most of the Indian people, Mizos also believed that animals possessed souls. The Britannica records the South East Indian believed about animal souls, “Slain animals sought vengeance against humanity through the agency of their “species chief,” a supernatural animal with great power. The Deer Chief, for instance, was able to exact revenge on humans who dishonoured his people—the deer—during the hunt.” (943971) Many Mizo tales testified the belief in animal souls, however, more and meaningful descriptions regarding the belief of animal souls have been depicted in the drama of the *Thangchhuah-pa* whose spirit triumphantly march on the way to *Pialral*. To achieve *ram lama thangchhuah* a hunter needed to kill prescribed wild animals such as wild bison, bear, stag, barking deer, wild boar



and beside these elephant, eagle, flying lemur and king cobra were to be killed. After killing all these, and if he performed ceremonies called *Ai* for each of these animals, he became this great title. If a person did not perform this ceremony, the spirit of a tiger would haunt him or he could not have power over the spirit of the tiger. After his death, his soul would sit between the two horns of the big deer followed by the spirits of other animals on the way to *Pialral*. The eagle would show the way, and the snake was expected to coil around the deer's horns to protect *Thangchhuah-pa* from any probable attack. One of the folksong also reflected as under:

*Sailian e, nang hmasa aw,*  
*Kawla fungtial a zuitu e;*  
*A sa e, hrangkim thiau ve,*  
*Vawmphuai e, hnutiang ka daltir e*

Great elephant you go first,  
 Mithun will follow;  
 All the animals are present,  
 Bear will be at the end.

In this song, the *thangchhuah-pa* arranged in such a way that all the animals he had killed for the great title, placing the big elephant in the front, wild gayal and other animal would follow, placing wild boar in the hind most.

As entering *Pialrial* is difficult for average people, it is even more difficult to enter *Pialral* for woman. The only way for a woman to enter *Pialral* is when her husband is in

*lama thangchhuah* then she can rightly enter *Pialral* with the ticket of her husband. There is no solo way for a woman to fight for *Pialral* which is the higher abode in the afterlife. Thus, for the woman there can be no aims and goals in their life to achieve during their lifetime for the rewards of the afterlife. Woman will be found mostly in *Mitthi khua*. As a patriarchal society the belief of the world of the afterlife also depicts the status of man as so much higher as compare to the woman. Woman did not participate in the administration of their community, they were also not allowed to have any voice or make judgement to any circumstances happening outside their home. Hence, it is not surprising for woman to enter *Pialral* only through their husband.

Besides woman, children can also enter *Pialral* only as they are part of the *thangchhuah* family just as woman. There is no other way for children to enter *Pialral* when person die at young age except for *hlamzuih* who can freely enter *Pialral*. Yet children of *thangchhuah* and *hlamzuih* would be very less in number. Hence these also shows that in the early Mizo society adult did not gave much attention to children.

According to various ideas about the afterlife, the essential aspect of the individual that lives on after death may be continued which carries with it and may confer personal identity. According to Mizo religious belief, souls in the afterlife will continue to retain their individuality and consciousness and will be able to recognize and communicate spiritually with other souls whom they have made deep profound friendships with, such as their spouses. They believed that all the habits in this physical world will continue like fishing, jhuming, animal hunting etc.

In Christianity heaven is a condition of reward for the righteous to go after they die, traditionally defined as eternal union with God. It is generally held that one goes to hell or

heaven depending on one's deeds or faith while on earth. The Abrahamic tradition hold that the spirit of the dead go to a specific plane of existence after death, as determined by God, or other divine judgment, based on their actions or beliefs during life. However, as in the theory of reincarnation, such as those in the Hindu religions, the nature of the afterlife is determined directly by the actions of the individual in the ended life, rather than through the decision of another being. In contrast to the above two theories, *Mizo* belief that the two spiritual worlds such as *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral* are meant for the commoners and for the few *Thangchhuah* people respectively. They believe that their destiny is neither determined by divine judgement nor by the actions of the individual during life time. There is no conception of underworld as in Greek mythology, retribution, relentless suffering as is confabulation of hell; in simple description *Mitthi khua* is an inevitable destiny of all souls, excluding few who attained *Thangchhuah*, regardless of sins or virtues. *Mitthi Khua* is not regarded as a place of punishment for the wicked but it is a place of spiritual abode for common souls. The life in *Mitthi khua* is believed to be uncomfortable and worse than that of physical world. All the eatable things are duplicate of human life that they always suffered deficiency and food problems. Death and afterlife was miserable for them. Therefore, system of offerings to the dead was practiced so that the spirits of their loved ones may enjoy their offerings from *Mitthi Khua*.

*Pialrâl* is the ultimate paradise according to the folk myth of the Mizo tribes. Unlike Heaven in Christianity and Nirvana in Buddhism, it is not the final resting place of the spirits of the good and the righteous, nor is there a role for god or any super-naturals things to be found, but it simply is a reservation for extraordinary achievers during their lifetime to enjoy

eternal bliss and luxury. There is no chance for simply righteous men who had done good deeds during his lifetime.

Unlike Christian and Muslim doctrine, divine judgment for soul have not been clearly mentioned in the Mizo belief of afterlife. The ideology of the afterlife never reveal about god who would rule over the world of the afterlife, and who would make the final judgement on entering the after world and giving rewards for their good deeds during their lifelitime. *Mitthi Khua* is not as a place of punishment for the wicked but it is a place of spiritual abode for common souls. Even if they are good or bad during their lifetime their final reward is still the same, which is *Mitthi khua*. Since there is no judgement in the afterlife, there is no reward. *Pialral* may be the higher abode but the place is already earned during their lifetime not the judgement after their death or because of their good deeds during their lifetime.

Nor is *Pialral* an imperialistic kingdom of god with eternal worship as in other religions; it simply is a place of luxury and comfort for those who had made special deeds in life, called *thangchhuah*. The ultimate reward is simple: to be relieved from labour and be served with ready-made food. In fact the quintessential element of *Pialrâl* is an ever availability of milled rice for eternity (*faisa ring*, a common metaphorical expression in Mizo even today)

The concept of *Pialrâl* itself sums up very well the entire spiritual belief system in the animistic folk religion of the Mizo ancestors. It encompasses not only the spiritual realm, but also all the pathways for entry and services required to attain access. At the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity made its way into the heart of the Mizos and by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the whole society of the Mizos accepted Christianity as their new religion.

With the conversion into a new religion the early Mizo religious belief and that of the afterlife which is *Mitthi khua* and *Pialral* has been substituted by the concept of heaven.

Although the traditional Mizo religion had been completely overshadowed by Christianity since the turn of the 20th century, the notion of *Pialrâl* still survives as a remnant in a Christian metaphor of paradise among modern Mizos, especially vivid in their songs of praise. In one of the songs of C.Z. Huala it is the belief of the early Mizos and their later belief is clearly portrayed.

*Hmana kan lawmna Pialral chan mah ila,*

*Kalvariah khuua var leh ta, (Hla Thar Bu 397)*

Even though the gladness brought by Pialral may be lost,

Calvary brings a new dawn.

The two lines clearly convey the change of the whole belief of the Mizo society. As already known before the early Mizo belief in *Pialral* which is their ultimate goal but with the coming of Christianity their belief in *Pialral* is over shadowed. But with the change of their religion the belief of *Pialral* transforms into Heaven. In the song it is stated that even though *Pialral* which used to be their fantasy and which is their marvellous destination is over but they have a new belief which is focused on heaven. Calvary here means the belief in Jesus who died on Calvary is the way to heaven.

The concept of the afterlife especially with the *Pialral* and the way to achieve it during their lifetime can be so much in common as that for the achievement of heaven. There is some similarity for a Christian in doing good and working hard for Christ and the reward in Heaven and all the hard work and the sacrifices made by man to achieve the title

*thangchhuah* for the reward of *Pialral*. The supreme god of the early Mizo is known as *pathian*, and after Christianity came into Mizo society, God the heavenly father is also known as *Pathian*. Hence, these may be the reason why the Mizos find it not so much difficult in converting into Christianity. Not only a small group or a small part of the Mizo community, but the entire people of Mizo can be affected by the waves of Christianity.

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