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Echoes Drifting from the Hills: A Critical Analysis of Mizo Poetry

Submitted by:

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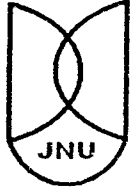
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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation titled *Echoes Drifting from the Hills: A Critical Analysis of Mizo Poetry* submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.



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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Grandparents, Tlangthanmawii and Khualluna, who have shared seventy years of blessed life. You are my inspiration. This is my gift to you as you celebrate your Platinum Jubilee.

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Seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

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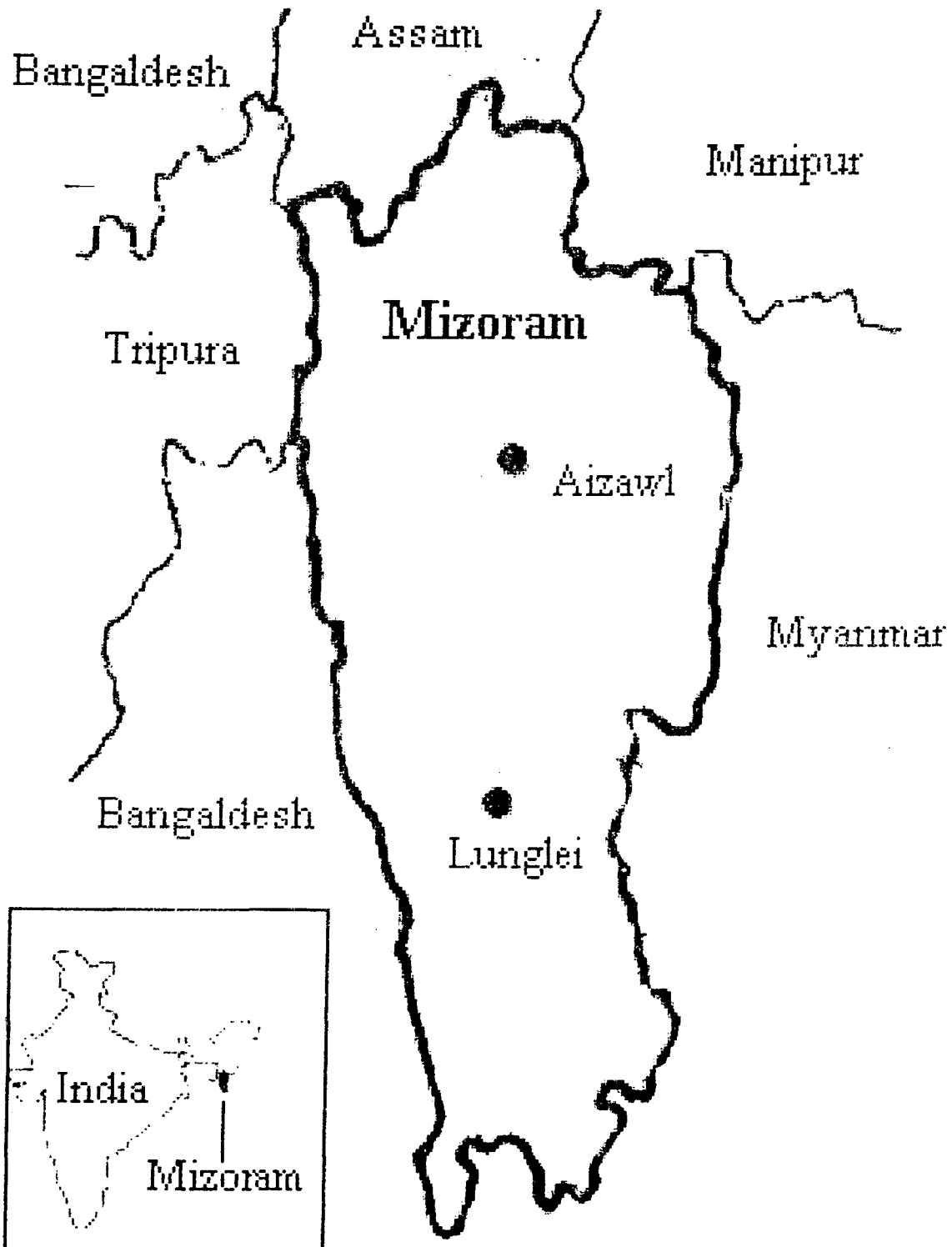
My mother, who has always been by my side through her prayers, my father, who has always supported me on my work and has also helped me in translating the old Mizo songs to English, my brothers and their spouses, and the newest addition to the family, Lalrinkimi, who all have made me feel that I have done a worthwhile deed. Thanks to the “P&H” who have always been there for me, especially for those special (frequent) occasions.

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MAP OF MIZORAM



<http://www.kamat.com//kalranga/nindia/mizoram/map.html>.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation 'Echoes Drifting from the Hills: A Critical Analysis of Mizo Poetry' acts as a means to open up Mizo poetry to the outside world. It is an analysis of Mizo poems written in English and in Mizo. There is a vast time difference in the years of composition of the poems. Some of the translated poems also have the features of a song; in the Mizo language, some of the selected compositions which have been included as "poems" are called "*hla*" or "song". This is due to the fact that the Mizo language has one word '*hla*' for both poetry and song. And so the songs composed by the earlier writers like Rokunga and Vankhama have been included along with four Mizo poets writing in English.

An Introduction to Mizoram

The Mizo poet Vankhama has called Mizoram a "Land of Sweet Sounds" (Khangte 2002: 35). Mizoram was formerly called Lushai Hills but it was changed to Mizo District in April 1954 by the Lushai Hills District Act of 1954. Mizoram attained the status of Union Territory on 21st January in 1972 and later, on 7th August, 1986, the Indian Parliament passed the State of Mizoram Bill which made Mizoram the twenty-third State of India on 20th February, 1987 (Lalrinawma 2005: xix). The abolition of the rights of the Mizo Chief in 1954 as a result of a meeting held on 1st October, 1947 was a great step towards the modernisation of the Mizo society. The Mizo Union, the oldest political party was founded on 9th April, 1946. In 1958 and 1959, there was a great famine in Mizoram because of the increase in the amount of rodents in the forests. Every fifty years bamboos flower in Mizoram. The flowers increase the fertility of the rodents when consumed and as a result of this the rodents increased in great numbers. The rodents entered the villages in search of food because the forest could not provide for their huge increase. The villages suffered famine and even the relief measures were

not enough and many people died. The Mizo National Front (MNF) was formed with the merger of the Mizo Union and the East India Tribal Union in 1959 (Lloyd 1991: 32). The Mizo National Front later emerged as a political party under the leadership of Laldenga. The Mizo National Front requested the Government of India for a separate statehood for Mizoram from 1964 (Lloyd 1991: 30). By 1966 the Mizo Movement led by the Mizo National Front attempted to take over the administration of Mizoram and so the Indian Army was called in to maintain peace. By 1970 many villages were made to settle down in groups; on an average, every three villages were made to settle into one village. In 1971, the Mizo District became the Union Territory of Mizoram according to the North-Eastern Area (Reorganisation) Act (Lloyd 1991:31). Even after the attainment of union territory-ship the Mizo Movement did not come to an end. The Delhi Peace Accord was signed in 1976 and the members of the Mizo Movement agreed to bring about peace in Mizoram with the help of the Indian Union (Lloyd 1991: 32).

Mizo, being one of the ethnic groups of North East India, has witnessed different phases of cultural change. Colonial modernity in the latter half of the nineteenth century to the first part of the twentieth century brought about immense change in the society. The most significant change was the change from orality to literacy which further brought about a new cultural identity. The best way for this transition to become manifest was through songs and poems. A close study of the songs and poems can lead to a better understanding of the cultural changes in the society. Music and poetry serves to explore the social, political, economic, religious and other inter-related aspects of the Mizos. These aspects of life have been changing within different eras and contexts. In the same way, musical forms have been composed and transmitted through time and space. The musical forms have adapted to the changing socio-economic and political conditions and have thus resulted in the creation of new identities. The Mizo language (*Duhlian/Lusei*) nurtured by the Christian missionaries became the common language of Mizoram by the post-independence period. This led to a gradual progress in Mizo literature.

The Origin of the Mizos

The first written history of the origin of the Mizos has been written by westerners in the early part of the twentieth century. There have been many conflicts in the facts about the origin of the Mizos as written by the West and the Mizo historians as there is not much evidence to prove either work more correct. Most of the Mizo historians have written that the Mizos had originated from a big rock called 'Chhinlung', and there are even some who are of the opinion that they are descended from the Tibeto-Burmans and even some say that they are of Mongoloid origin. The Mizos are a close-knit community held together by common traditions, language and culture. A song has been composed about the origin of the Mizos from the 'Chhinlung' rock:

Ka siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,

Ka nu ram ngai,

Chawngzil ang ko kir thei chang sien,

Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.

My motherland, famous Sinlung

Home of my ancestors,

Could it be called back like *Chawngsil*?

Home of my ancestors. (Thanmawia 1998: 7)

The earlier Mizo anthropologists came into being only after the colonial rule because it was the British who brought in education. These anthropologists would write about the struggles the British had with the Mizos. British officers like Major Shakespear and A.G. McCall who wrote during the colonial period did so in order to keep documents to report the procedures of the colonial rule to the Crown.

The Mizos, A Nomadic Tribe

The Mizos were a tribe who migrated from land to land. The history of their migration shows that the Mizo community once dwelt in the Tao Valley of Kansu province in the North West of China. The Mizos migrated in the same route taken by the Karens from Yunan to Burma (William 1977: 51). They migrated to Burma and settled in the Kabaw Valley which is now the present Shan State of Mizoram (Padhyay1993: 32). The Mizos, while living in the Kabaw Valley, built the first and the oldest Mizo town at Khampat (Thanmawia 1998: 10). It has been said that the Mizos were forced to leave the land because of a terrible famine called Thingpui Tam (Zawla 1980: 10). This misfortune had been put down in song by one of the poets of the tribe:

Shan khuoah len par a tla,

Mi raza tlan thiera.

A severe famine visited Shan

And it made people run (Thanmawia 1998: 10)

The journeys of migration have been written down in songs and passed on from generation to generation. Songs composed by Pi Hmuaki (who is considered to be the first Mizo song composer) show that the Mizos were a nomadic tribe who moved from village to village. One of her songs show the resettlement of the Ngente village, her village, to the west:

Kan Ngente khua khaw nun nuama kha,

Thla ki fam hunan ki nghil rual loh ve (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 3)

Our Ngente village where life is pleasant,

Never will I forget you until my dying day (my translation)

The meaning of the word ‘*Mizo*’ has always been debated. T. Gougin has written that, “...the real meaning of Zomi (or Mizo) is one who dwells on the hillside having the same bearing in manner and custom for ages together” (Gougin 1980: 12). It is believed that they have been called ‘*Mizo*’ after the name of Zopui, a town which was built around 1765 (Lalthangliana 2001:71). A song has been composed on this town of Zopui:

Zo khaw val hnam chem kan chawi,

Mangngul ar ang kan thahna,

Run kuamah aw e

We honour the swords of the young men of Zopui,

For we killed the Mangnguls like chickens,

On the banks of the river Run (Thanmawia 1998: 13)

The different Mizo tribes and sub-tribes had been scattered before they could be jointly called ‘*Mizo*’. They had migrated to Mizoram, Manipur, North Cachar, Tripura and parts of Burma and Bangladesh (Thanmawia 1998: 15). As a result of this scattered migration their cultures, traditions and way of living has become different. Earlier song composers and poets like Captain L.Z. Sailo and Rokunga have written about the necessity for all the Mizos to stand together united. The use of the word ‘*lungrual*’ (which means unity and peace) by the earlier composers of the 1960s is prevalent because the need to be united has arisen. The word ‘*Lushai*’ does not stand for the whole of the Mizo clan but instead only for a few clans. It could not represent the whole of the Mizo population. To become a more united state, the word ‘*Mizo*’ was proposed to be the name to represent all of them. It is believed that the Mizos had developed poetry before they entered the present Mizoram, some of the poems were chanted and some were sung. Since the Mizos are a tribe who used to migrate from one land to another, the years of their migration often act as a calendar for them. There are many reasons for the migration of the Mizos and some of them are:

- 1) The Mizo tribe was always at war with other tribes and sometimes even with neighbouring tribes. Even kings with same ancestry and of the same tribe often waged war with each other. Since they were always at war, the defeated tribe had to migrate to a more peaceful territory. There were even times when the defeated and weak tribes had to seek protection from a stronger king and had to move to that particular village.
- 2) The Mizo tribe used to depend on farming for their means of sustenance. After they had farmed on the land for two or three years, the soil was no longer fit for sowing. For the bigger villages wider and larger fields were needed and so these big villages had to migrate even sooner than the other small villages as they used larger areas of land. When they could not own the land which they wanted for cultivation, they migrated to other lands.
- 3) When there were epidemics, when a large number of the villagers become sick. This could happen as a result of the unclean water and also because the atmosphere and the environment of the village was unhealthy. The earlier Mizos considered it necessary to appease the angry spirits who have made their water impure and have inflicted diseases on them. Many dogs and chickens had to be sacrificed as a result of the sicknesses. And so they would be forced to go in search of better and healthier lands.
- 4) The earlier Mizos were religious and took things seriously. When there was an extraordinary happening in the village they would inspect things carefully. When the elder members had a bad dream or a premonition concerning the village, the villagers always moved to another place. Even if they were not doing well or they were being attacked, they would still try to move because of their intuition.
- 5) From earlier times, various types of famines have occurred in Mizoram. They are:
 - i. *Mautam Tam.*
 - ii. *Thingtam Tam.*
 - iii. *Tang Tam.*

As a result of these famines, the earlier Mizos were forced to migrate; sometimes they would seek the help of neighbouring kings and then go in search of new lands, where they would not be too far away to seek for help and not too near so as to disturb their agricultural produce. The king's house was built first and then the *Zawlbuk*, the house for the young men, as soon as they settled in a new land. The houses of the people who were the first to reach the new village were then built.

The Social Structure of the Earlier Mizos

The *Zawlbuk* is a house for the young men, where the young boys were taught how to be disciplined and how to respect their elders. The women were not allowed into the *Zawlbuk* but many of the married young men would still sleep at the *Zawlbuk*. It was given great importance as it was an institution which catered to the needs of the society. It sometimes even acted as a travellers' inn. At times of sickness and death, the young men of the *Zawlbuk* helped the people in need. *Zawlbuk* greatly united the people and organised the governance of the village. *Tlawmngaihna* was a code of conduct which was taught to all the young men in the *Zawlbuk*. The word *Tlawmngaihna* cannot be translated into a single English word. It means to be humble in all respects and at the same time, to be always ready to help. The term *Pasaltha* is closely linked with the word *Tlawmngaihna*. A *Pasaltha* is considered to be a man who is self-less and brave and wise and is always ready to sacrifice his life for others. *Tlawmngaihna* is a quality which is always found in a *Pasaltha*. He would build his house at the outskirts of the village so that he would be able to warn and protect the village in times of raids and other dangers. He was a great comfort for the villagers. The earlier Mizos had some customary laws and practices which they have preserved through the long years of their existence. One of the most important customary laws of the Mizos is the Marriage Law. Since the earliest times, young men could freely choose their brides; men and women could even court each other. The Mizos practice monogamy; polygamy was mainly for

the village Chiefs but even this was abolished by the British missionaries. Amongst the Mizos, the young men and women can freely mingle with each other as a result of many social activities. In the Mizo society the women have a somewhat higher status than many other women from other cultures. There is the 'bride price' in a traditional Mizo marriage. Until the groom pays at least half of the bride price, the marriage cannot happen. A mediator (*Palai*) is sent to the girl's family by the boy's family to ask for the girl's hand in marriage. The mediator(s) and the girl's family settle on a certain amount of money for the girl's hand in marriage. The bride-price had two parts: *Manpui* and *Mantang* (Lalrinawma 2005: 56). *Manpui* was considered to be exclusively for the bride's father and the wedding could not happen if it was not paid even though *Mantang* could be paid in parts. The marriage price was usually given in the form of Mithun in the earlier days. The bride price differs according to the clan and tribe of the bride. For example, the price of a Sailo girl was ten Mithuns and the price of the girls of the other clans or tribes was five Mithuns. The consent of the parents was of immense importance for the marriage to occur. The parents would look into the lineage of the suitor and even assess the characters of the parents and grandparents. The presence of any kind of hereditary diseases and character (with low morals) were analysed by the parents. These things were often the reasons which made the parents not agree to the marriage. So, very often, what was thought to be a very happy ending instead ended in grief. And this grief and sadness often becomes the theme of many songs and love poems.

The Earlier Mizo Songs as a Mirror of the Earlier Mizo Culture

In order to analyse the way the earlier Mizo songs related to their culture, it would be necessary to trace the origin of the earliest song. Thanpuii Pa has said that the earliest Mizo song used to be sung by a group of young men (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 1). The young men would put their arms around each other and when they moved uphill they would sing:

Ur ur tak-kai

Ur ur tak-kai,

Up up above,

Up up above (Khangte 2003: 3)

And when they moved downhill they would sing:

Hnuang hnuang tak-kai

Hnuang hnuang tak-kai

Down it rolls on

Down it rolls on (Khangte 2003: 3)

And when they moved on even ground they would sing:

Khawmhma pal a er an ti,

A duh duhin er rawh se,

A er leh lo an ti e

It is said that the fence is twisted,

Let it twist itself whichever way it wants,

And now they say that it is not twisted (Khangte 2003: 4)

Even this supposedly called “earliest song” does not seem to be very old because firstly, the words are not so ancient; the words are quite contemporary. Secondly, the words “*Khawmhma pal*” (*pal* means fence) show that they already had vegetable plots near their houses. It might just be that since they already had domestic animals grazing around, they needed fences to keep the animals away from the gardens. If they already had domestic animals and had sown their own food and had fenced their gardens to protect their vegetables, they seem to be quite advanced. Since they had their own domestic animals, produce of food and vegetables it can be supposed that they would have sold their animals and foodstuff. It shows clearly that they had a very developed way of living. Pi Hmuaki has been said to be the earliest amongst the Mizos to compose songs. But the previous highlighted song was not composed by Pi Hmuaki. And moreover, it cannot really be called a song. From tales and from Pi Hmuaki’s songs we

can find out that Pi Hmuaki's time was when the Mizos migrated from the Ngente village to the west (it is supposed that Ngente village is somewhere in Burma as they moved west from there to the present Mizoram). When they were going to move west from the Ngente village, it is said that Pi Hmuaki had been buried alive. A myth is that the people of her village buried her alive because since she was a prolific composer they were afraid that there would be nothing left for the younger generation to compose. Mona Zote has given an allusion to Pi Hmuaki in her poem 'Girl with Black guitar and Blue Hibiscus' (Sen 2006: 67). There is even a song that narrates the way she was buried alive:

Nauva te u nau haiate u,

Tha te te khan mi chhilh ru (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 23)

Young ones, young ones who have forgotten your young ones,

Bury me with some care (my translation)

Her other song was about the migration from Ngente village:

Kan Ngente khua ka nun nuama kha,

Thla ki fam hunan ka nghilhh rual loh ve (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997:23)

My Ngente village where life is pleasant,

Never will I forget until the day I die (my translation).

This song seems to show that she was anxiously looking forth to their migration with a heavy heart. The migration of Ngente village is said to be the seventh resettlement by Pastor Vanchhunga (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 3). 'Khawmhma Pal er' which is said to be the first Mizo song seems to be composed after the Mizos had migrated from 'Run'. It is questionable that they would have had gardens and domestic animals while living on the banks of 'Run'. Therefore the songs which the Mizos had while they lived on the banks of 'Run' seem to be older than the 'Khawmhma Pal er' song and Pi

Hmuaki's songs. Moreover, it is more likely that Pi Hmuaki, instead of being the first Mizo song composer, is the first known Mizo song composer.

It is very difficult to trace the origin of the first Mizo song. The myth tells us that the Mizos originated from the *Chhinlung* rock and after this supposed origin, the first known account of them was the *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*. *Khuangchawi* is the name of a public feast given by Chiefs and other well-to-do Mizos. The myth is such that the living and the non-living beings in their preparation for enjoyment and pleasure were so excited that they even requested the sun not to shine for a while. It is said that even the pigs and chickens shook together to a rhythm. At first, even the sun granted them their request, but after he heard the sound of fun-making and pleasure-making he wanted to come out and watch. But when the sun came out the animals dispersed as they could not tolerate the heat. The earthworm writhed and wiggled on the ground because of the heat. In the conversation of the elderly members we find that the animal like *Sahuai* is still at war with the sun and till the present day, is unwilling to look at it. On the day of *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*, the animals beautified themselves with flowers and some even brought their drums along. The song goes like this:

Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi niin,
Tlaiberhin Pangpar a beh e,
That nan hmang e, (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 5)
On the day of *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*,
The Tlaiberh¹ wore a flower on her ears,
So as to look beautiful, (my translation)

And so it can be said that the first song that the Mizos had was the one which they sang on the day of *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*. They might even have had songs before this but there are no records or even mention of any songs before the day of *Thlanrawkpa*

¹ Tlaiberh is the bulbul, the common red-vented species (Lorrain: 509)

Khuanghcawi. The first known account of the Mizos clearly shows that the Mizos were a tribe who love to sing and dance. There are songs which are to be recited/chanted and songs which are to be sung. Among the Mizos the songs which are sung are more popular than the ones which are recited. The songs which are sung seem to be what is called *hla* (song). The Mizos prefer the songs which have tune and melody to the ones which are recited. The Mizos are a tribe who love to sing together and on the days of *Kut* (festival), they sing and dance together.

Children's songs are found among the earlier Mizo songs. This shows that the Mizos are inculcated in singing right from their childhood. Here are some of the children's songs:

Ka nu, ka pa, lo haw thuai thuai ang che,

Tlangah ruahpui a sur e,

Sakhi lam peng rawn zawh la,

Lo zangphar der der ang che.

Chhingmiti a tap e,

Rolenga a tap e,

Kamu mang mang chu ni sela ka zuk au na ral ral tur a
(Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 8)

Mother, father, come home soon,

A heavy rainfall has come down on the hills,

Take the path which the deer takes,

And lift up your shoulders,

Chhingmiti is crying,

Rolenga is crying,

If it were just a dream,

I would have loudly cried out to them (my translation)

Kawl aw sen sen,

Ka famghma aw tai tai,

Ka vai mim pum pum

Horizon be red red,

My cucumber be ripe ripe,

My maize/corn be whole whole (my translation)

There are many other songs but it is not possible to mention all of them. Most of these songs were chanted by the children while they played in the courtyards. The children's songs which were recited/chanted may be the earliest form of Mizo poetry. The life and ways of the Mizos can be seen from the children's songs. In the first quoted children songs we find the child wondering about the whereabouts of her/his parents. In the earlier Mizo society, the parents would go off to work in the fields early in the morning while the eldest child would stay at home to take care of the younger children. The parents would even leave their infant child at the hands of their eldest child. And so, the children would really long for their parents especially their mother. They would eagerly wait for the safe return of their parents and they would gaze at the hills and the fields for them. The children and the parents also had songs (which may be called lullabies) for rocking the infant child to sleep. Some of these lullabies are:

A khi ah khian lungpui a lum dawn e,

Ka nauvi kha a delh ang e suan rawh u,

A rock is going to roll down from a hill high up,

Move my little baby lest the rock crush her. (Khangte 2003: 3)

A khi ah khian rammu an au dial dial e,

Ka nauvi pa tel ve maw.

Yonder brave soldiers shout together,

Is my baby's father with them, would he have killed an enemy? (Khangte 2003: 3-4)

Every year the earlier Mizos would celebrate three festivals, of which *Chapchar Kut*² is the most important and it is still celebrated till the present day. *Chapchar Kut* is a very important day for young men and women. When this day arrives, the young men and women dress up in their best clothes and they hug their partners and cling on to each other's shoulders. With wine and food of all sorts they celebrate *Chapchar Kut* lavishly. The young and old come together on *Chapchar Kut*, and with their big drums and gongs they come out and sing and dance together on the open ground. With the sound of the big drums and gongs the young men and women would hold each other by the shoulders and dance and sing:

Kut pui kan ur khuangruah chiär nghian e,

Chappui rawh lovin a tul ngai lo,

Chappui rawh lovin a tul ngai lo,

Ka chung chhawr thla a vanglai lo maw (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 12)

It is raining as we prepare ourselves for the *Chapchar* feast,

We will still burn the jhoom which we have collected,

We will still burn the jhoom which we have collected,

And the full moon shines above me (my translation)

The songs which were sung during those times are called *Chai Hla*³ and there are different types of *Chai Hla* namely *Lalvunga Zai*⁴, *Thailungi Zai*, *Neihlaia Zai*, *Darlung Zai* and many others.

² *Chapchar Kut* is the name of Mizo spring festival which is held between the cutting and burning of the jhooms (Lorrain: 60)

³ *Chai Hla* is the name of the songs which are sung during a dance when young men and women form a circle around a man who serves rice beer with others who play a drum and beats the horn of a gayal. (Lorrain: 54)

⁴ *Lalvunga Zai* is a way of singing or a collection of songs named after Lalvunga and likewise with the other three namely *Thailungi Zai*, *Neihlaia Zai* and *Darlung Zai*. The suffix 'a' suggests a masculine name and the suffix 'i' suggests a feminine name.

As long as the tune of the song is appealing the people would not really be concerned with the lyrics of the song. When the songs are repeatedly sung with music and drums of all sorts they have an effect on the body making the people to dance to the sound of the music. Even in the present day, the Mizos use drums in the Church to sing along with and they also still dance in the Church but to the sound of the Christian songs. The earlier Mizos would sing the *Chawngchen Zai*⁵ on the nights of *chawngchen* when young women would sit cuddled with the young men and enjoy wine and dance together. *Chawngchen Zai* includes songs for the young men to serenade the young women, songs for the bereaved family and songs which narrate the story of the Mizo dance. The man of the festival (*Chawngpa*) stands up and says:

In chawngchen e, in par kan tlan e,

In siangah ar ang kan ngam ta e, (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 16)

Now that we have enjoyed the *Chawng* celebration,

We feel at home in your house, (my translation)

Then the people would reply:

A pawm kan awm a pawm lo kan awm,

A pawm lova te kan va riang em ve (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 16)

Some of us have someone to cuddle while some of us don't,

Those of us who don't have anyone to cuddle are so
forlorn (my translation)

On the moonlit night of *Khuangchawi*, the young men and women celebrate and enjoy, and they reluctantly look forth towards the end of the festival. *Chawngchen Zai* clearly shows the customs and traditions of the early Mizos and some of them are:

⁵ *Chawngchen Zai* is the name given to the songs which are sung on a three day festival of dancing and sacrifice conducted by earlier Mizo families to ensure entry to Paradise (Lorrain: 65)

- 1) Just like *Chai Hla*, *Chawngchen Hla* shows that the Mizos were a tribe who lived together harmoniously and shared each other's joys and sorrows
- 2) It shows that the Mizos were a tribe who would dance on happy occasions and even on sad occasions.
- 3) *Chawngchen Hla*, like *Bawhhla* and *Hlado*, shows that the earlier Mizos held the brave men (*Pasaltha*) in respect. The bravery of a man was determined by the amount of wild animals and enemies' heads they have taken.

After the Mizos had settled in the present Mizoram, the songs which were in collections were *Lianchhiari Zai*, *Darmani Zai*, *Darlenglehi Zai*, *Aikhiangi Zai*, *Laltheri Zai*, *Darpawngi Zai*, *Saikuti Zai*, *Awithangpa Zai* and *Zachana Zai*. *Lianchhiari Zai* shows that the royalty of Lianchhiari's time were not excluded from working. Lianchhiari, a princess, had to go and work in the fields and even had to help out her friends in their respective fields as it was the custom to do so. *Lianchhiari Zai* also shows that the young men and women fell in love with each other:

Kan va tih luatah

Lengin ka zir sual e,

Ka pa vanhnuaithang tur,

A thanni bang kir e, (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 17)

As we went and overindulged ourselves

My feminine wiles did me wrong,

Tainting my father's fame

A fame which would have reached every corner of the earth (my translation)

In Mizoram, among the songs which are named after people, the most popular and the largest in number is the *Saikuti Zai*. Rev. Vanchhunga says that *Saikuti Zai* is almost as many as there are words in a language and some are not even worth mention (Mizo

Academy of Letters 1997: 18). *Saikuti Zai* is the name given to the collection of songs which were composed by Saikuti but there were also some songs which were written by other composers even before her birth. Before Saikuti's birth, *Saikuti Zai* was called *Chhim Zai*, and also *Hlingvawm Zai* and *Khawnglung Zai*. It is because Saikuti had used the tune of the above mentioned collection of songs and since it became really popular after she used the style and the tune, *Chhim Zai*, *Hlingvawm Zai* and *Khawnglung Zai* became more widely known as *Saikuti Zai*. Rev. Vanchhunga said that *Saikuti Zai* was mainly for the younger members of the society and anyone who was interested would add whatever they wanted to the songs and it would still remain popular (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 19). *Saikuti Zai* illustrates that before the mainland Indians and the British entered India, the Mizos were a tribe who raided each other's villages and took the heads of their enemies and hung them on posts in their own villages. It also shows that the Mizos were a migrating tribe and also that in order to appease the anger of a discontented young man, the people he bothered were supposed to brew him wine. *Saikuti Zai* also includes the way the young people courted each other and also the way they got married. It moreover includes the way married couples lived and also the deep pain and sorrow the family of the bereaved suffered. The latest among the earlier Mizo songs is:

Milai fa leh Samthang zopui Awithangpa,

Sak hming tha khua vela lar ber mai (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 20)

Awithangpa, coming from a middle class family of Samthang,

Is the most reputed and popular of them all (my translation)

Awithangpa, mentioned in the song, was not a handsome man but because of the popularity of his songs, people wanted to meet him. He had a natural talent for composing beautiful verses and phrases. Awithangpa's songs were mainly used by the young men to serenade their loved ones. *Awithangpa Zai* shows the way the younger generation courted each other, the condition of the king and the village and his people,

the sad bereaved families, and that beautiful creations made the human heart pleased and happy. From the earlier songs we can observe that the Mizos were fun loving and enjoyed to dance and also enjoyed huge gatherings. Till the present day, the Mizos dance even in the Church. The first settlement of the Mizos in Mizoram goes back to the sixteenth century (Lalthangliana 2001: 200). Their settlement in Mizoram brought an end to their migrating.

Christianity and its Influence on the Mizo Songs

Religion and cultural traditions are embedded in the Mizo songs. Songs and poems play an important role in the study of the history and culture of particular societies. When a person moves from one place to another, from one culture to another, or has experienced changes in her/his life, the change is usually seen in her/his writings. Most of the people of the different sub-tribes of the Mizo have a reluctance to leave their homeland. Even at times when they raided the nearby mainland Indians (or non-Mizos), they would merely return to their homeland instead of making an abode for themselves in the foreign land. The young Mizo men even sang about their homesickness when they went to France during the First World War:

Vai vai tak kan thlen a ril tual tual,

Sappui siam sa riklum relah kan chuang e,

Hel lai Lalnemi a tel love.

Famkhua emaw ka luh dawn ka lung lam vai,

Ngaihban tlangpui a hnuai pialleng rem karah,

Dar lei a chiar nghian e.

Tap tapin chun nun mi ring lawm ni,

Fam ka hlau ve German ral kulhpui daiah,

A surin ngen mu a sur zung zung. (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 23)

How far we have gone as we enter deeper and deeper,

As we board the British-made train,
But my ladylove is not here.
My heart is confused thinking that it is entering the land
of the lifeless,
As we pass the tunnel of *Ngaihban*⁶ hill
And the wet steel bridges.
My mother would probably think that I would be crying,
Because I am terrified to die in a German war zone
Where bullets endlessly fall in showers (my translation)

The features of the earlier Mizo songs were changed by the new religion after it prevailed over the old religion and customs. Regarding the songs composed after the coming of the new religion, Christianity, Siamkima had said that the Jordan River, which the Mizos have not even seen, had flown into Mizoram (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 24). The Mizos who lived in the land of the *Rih Dil* (Rih Lake) began to have a longing for the Jordan River. Right from the beginning, the Jordan River had triumphed over the *Rih Dil*. Myth has it that when the deceased pass the *Rih Dil*, they cross over to Paradise and forget everything about the world which they have left behind. Among the Mizos it is difficult to differentiate between progress and the new religion. It is the Christian missionaries who gave the Mizos their alphabet and also the ones who helped them climb the ladder of progress. With the birth of the Mizo alphabet, the windows of the world were opened which introduced the Mizos to the Christian songs and writings. The book of the new religion, the Bible, has been called by Siamkima, "The boldest literature in the whole world" (Khawlhing 1986: 19). It has changed the outlook of the Mizos and wherever it goes it changes the nature of the songs and writings of the land. The Mizos speak in the language of the Bible and they

⁶ *Ngaihban* hill is situated near Haflong in the North Cachar Hills beyond Silchar in Assam.

long for those places which they have not even seen. Patea, the great song-composer has even written:

Hmanah pi leh puten an hmuh phak loh,

Saron par tlanin kan leng e (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 24)

We enjoy the flower of the *Saron*

Which our forefathers did not have a chance to perceive.

The songs and writings of the new religion had swept the world of the Mizos so hard that no one was able to fight it. The greatest number of changes in the indigenous Mizo religion, culture and traditions and the outlook and dress style of the Mizos occurred during the period between the dawn of the twentieth century and the Second World War. This period saw a great increase in the style and form of the Mizo songs and there was also a great increase in the number of the Christian songs. The first hymn book which came out in 1899 had only eighteen songs, and the hymn book which came out in 1908 already had two hundred and seventy three songs and the hymn book which was printed on 1919 had five hundred and fifty eight songs. After the soft rhythmic flowing Mizo songs and the English songs with very sophisticated and complicated tunes mingled, the early Mizo songs gradually started to lose their traits. Most important of all, the Mizo songs started losing their tune and harmony. The earlier Mizo songs usually consisted of two or three lines with a soft melody and were easy to sing. After the missionaries entered Mizoram in 1894, the Mizos were so engrossed in translating the English hymns to Mizo that for quite some time there were no original Mizo songs. Moreover, it was forbidden to give the newly composed hymns the tune of the earlier Mizo songs. The Church had also forbidden composing hymns in the style of the earlier Mizo songs (Lalsawma 1964: 2). By 1920, some of the Mizo composers attuned the songs of the western world with the Mizo songs. There were also some composers who tried to attract the new religion with the tunes of the earlier songs but they failed miserably.

The Dominance of the Christian Imagery

The influence of the English composers is seen in the use of imagery by the Mizo composers. The influence on the Mizos is so great that in a land where there are no deserts, not even a dry patch of land, the composers write about the dry desert land which they perceive in their thoughts:

Thlaler ram ro kal tlang turin,

I thu hian min hruai zel ang;

To pass this bare desert,

Thine words alone will be my guide (Khangte 2003: 16-17)

Bordered by Burma and Bangladesh, there are no large open water bodies near Mizoram. But composers like Rev. Liangkhaia have written about the wide oceans:

Khawvel tuifinriat zauvah hian,

Hlauthawnga kan len laiin (Khangte 2003: 17)

In the vast ocean of this world

We live in doubt (my translation)

The use of the desert and the ocean imagery for describing life and the world is the outcome of the influence of the translations of the English Christian songs to Mizo. The Mizo song composers began to share even the thoughts of the English missionaries. The new religion's influence on the Mizos was seen in the manner in which they perceived the spiritual world to exist. They discarded the rules of *Thangchhuah*⁷ and instead accepted the Cross. And so the people who once looked towards *Rih Dil* now looked towards the river Jordan. Death also began to be viewed differently by the people. The

⁷ *Thangchhuah* is the name given to a man who has distinguished himself by killing a certain number of animals or by giving a certain amount of feasts (Lorrain: 447)

earlier song-writers like Darpawngi and Awithangpa considered Death to be a ruthless king who heartlessly takes away their loved ones. Darpawngi writes:

Awmlai lengin tlangtin dung rawn zui,
Vanduai runah ser ang cham na e,
Ka tuai chawnbanah a kai e. (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 30)
Disease and sickness has reached every hill,
Wretched times leave painful scars,
As it takes away my little child (my translation)

And Awithangpa also writes similarly:

Ka sa maw nuar ka chuni nu, a i emaw kan sual e,
Ka tuai duh lai banah kai,
Awmlai a nun rawng mang e, (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 31)
Is it that our belief is entirely wrong mother, or that I
have done something seriously wrong,
Because my beloved child is taken away,
Sickness is just so unkind (my translation)

The Christian composers, on the other hand, viewed Death as a gateway to eternal life and an abode for rest. Kamlala has written :

Aw en teh, an nun a dang ta,
Chu ram ropui han thlengte zawng;
Aw lungngaihna lawmah a chang,
Thihna – Chatuan nunna nen (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 32)
Behold, their lives have changed,
Those people who have reached the wondrous land;

Grief and sorrow has turned to joy,
Death – And Life Eternal. (my translation)

Patea has written:

Ka taksain min dal, tihdanglam ni thleng se,
Keipawh ka chawl ve tawh ang a (Mizo Academy of Letters 1997: 32)
My body stands in the way, let the day of change come,
So that I may also be able to rest (my translation)

Enrichment of the Mizo Vocabulary

The composition of the new songs of praise has led to the increase in the number of phrases and means of expression in the Mizo language. These new expressions were created from their knowledge of the Bible and Bible language. Some new expressions which came into existence are:

Chanchin Tha (Good News), *Tidamtu* (Healer),
Chhandamtu (Redeemer), *Zawlnei* (Prophet), *Berampu*
(Shepherd), *Sipai* (Soldier), *Vantirhkoh* (Angel), *Thlarau*
Thianghlim (Holy Spirit), *Nunna Bu* (Book Of Life) and
Nunna Thing (Tree of Life).

Some of the names in the Bible are given a “Mizo pronunciation” and some are even brought into the Mizo language just the way they are. For example, words like:

Kraws (Cross), *Krista* (Christ), *Isu* (Jesus), *Kalvari*
(Calvary), *Hebrai* (Hebrew), *Martar* (Martyr), *Davida*
(David), *Ruthi* (Ruth), *Galili* (Galilee), *Kraun* (Crown).

These are some of the more frequently used words which have been given a Mizo spelling which is very close to the original English spelling.

The great difference between the earlier songs and the Christian songs is that the Christian song composers used symbolism whereas the earlier songs had no trace of the use of symbols. The symbols used in the Christian songs are mainly taken from the Bible. The use of metaphors is found widespread in the earlier Christian songs of the Mizos. The symbols which are used in the Mizo songs are usually Biblical symbols. Some of the more frequently used are:

- 1) *Hmar Arsi* (Northern Star) which symbolizes Jesus.
- 2) *Moneitu* (Bridegroom) which also symbolizes Jesus.
- 3) *Mo* (Bride) which signifies a Christian.
- 4) *Eden Thar* (New Eden) which signifies Heaven.
- 5) *Thim Lal* (King of Darkness) which signifies Satan.

Christianity in Mizoram has brought about many changes in the style and form of the songs especially in the early twentieth century. It gave birth to different types of songs and also improved the Mizo vocabulary which further led to the birth of figurative words.

A Patriarchal Mizo Society

Mizoram is often called the land of the hill people. The Mizos are quite different in their customs and traditions from the mainland of India. Even the social order of the Mizos is different in it being free from barriers and restrictions of the caste and class system. The Mizo society is a patriarchal society where the woman has no say in anything and has no share in the family property. Even though the women are more liberated than women from other cultures, there are still many derogatory sayings about women such as: "*Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, Chakai sa sa ni suh*" which means "A woman's word is no word (to be taken seriously) in the same way that crab's meat is not really meat." There is also another saying which says: "*Hmeichhe finin tuikhur ral a kai lo*" which means "A woman's wisdom does not reach beyond the village well." A Mizo woman works hard at home, gets up early in the morning and cooks for her husband and children but she is often still taken for granted. Moreover, a man helping a

woman in her chores is often seen as unmanly and is given the derogatory name “*Thaiboï*” as a way of mocking. Mizo men were and still are very protective about their women. An unmarried woman was and still is dominated by her father, mother and brothers. And a married woman is dominated by her father-in-law, mother-in-law and husband. In *Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges*, Rev. V.S. Lalrinawma has written that the Mizo women enjoyed great respect and protection in the society. In the earlier times, before the coming of the British, a man who committed rape had to cut off a part of his nose and ear as punishment and this made him an outcast. Intentional touching of a woman’s breast is considered an offence, the price which has to be paid with a mithun. The birth of a female child is considered to be a blessing as she is expected to acquire lots of gifts from her husband as ‘bride price’ during marriage. In spite of all this, the condition of women is still pathetic as her husband can divorce her by merely telling her, “*Ka ma a che*” which literally means “I divorce you.” In the earlier Mizo society, if the divorced woman had had children with the man, the man would have to pay back the bride price to the woman. Many attempts have been made to modify the customary laws in order to make the conditions between the men and women equal. The desired changes cannot be made merely by enacting new laws and removing the old laws. The Church plays an important role in the lives of the people. The people came to regard marriage as a sacred union between two people and so, this has somehow uplifted the condition of the women. In a study of the state of Mizoram it is just not possible to exclude the effects of Christianity as it plays a central role. Even in the study of the songs and poems of Mizoram, the social, political and religious aspects play an important role.

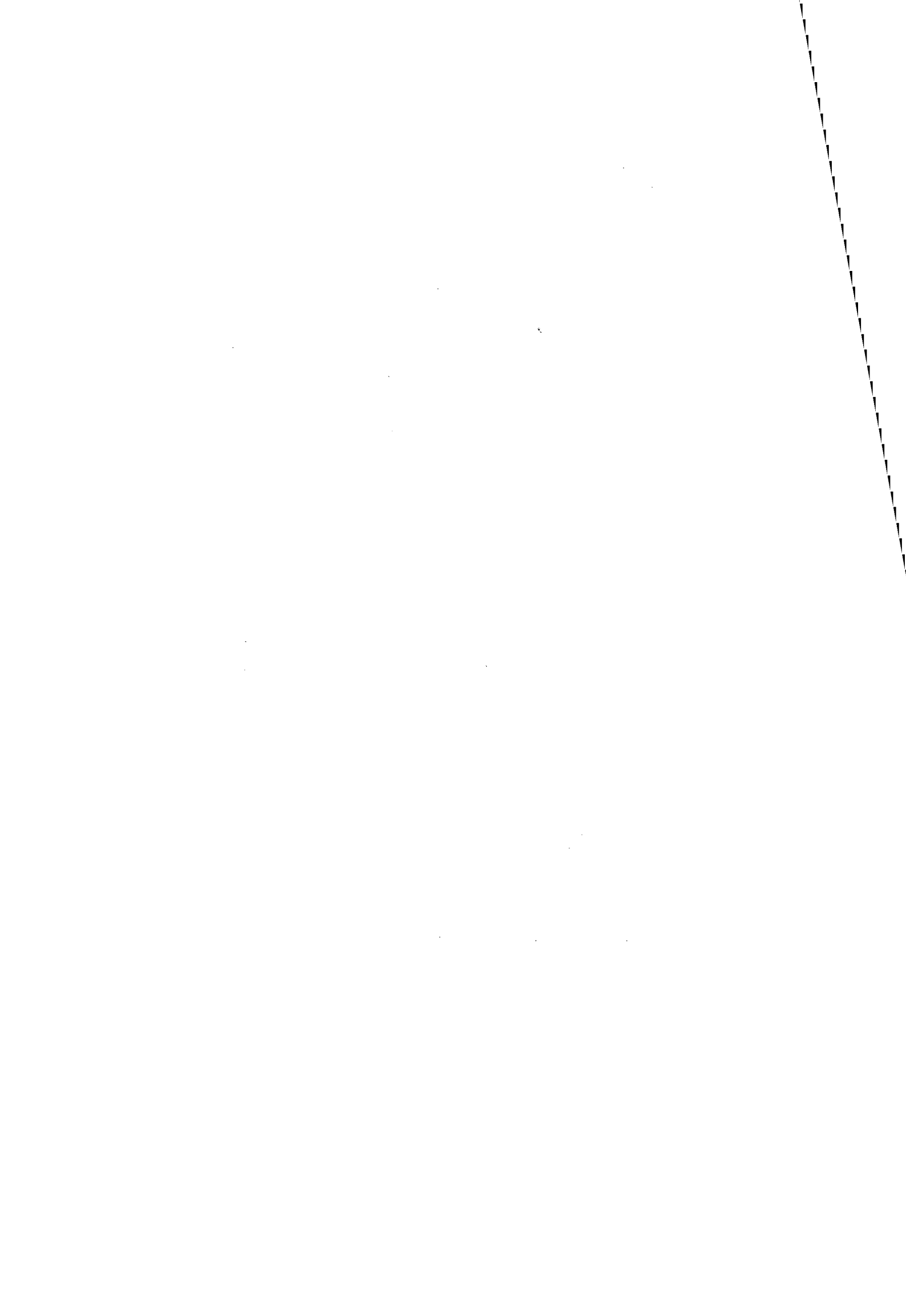
Chapterisation

The dissertation brings into perspective the varied themes which are embedded in Mizo poetry. This study of Mizo poetry brings to light the kind of poetry written by writers from the remote corners of the country. The second chapter starts with an introduction to the selected poets, emphasizing their different life-styles and

backgrounds. This chapter analyzes the different themes which are found in the works of all four poets. The first section discusses the portrayal of “the self” in the poems of the selected poets. In this section we find the poets’ need of space and solitude for self-expression. The body is seen as a space where a person’s identity is determined. In the second section is highlighted the woman’s space and place in society. The different approaches of the poets clearly portray the condition of women in their land. The theme of the ever-giving woman who merely is taken for granted by the patriarchal society is seen throughout the works of the poets. In the third section, the need for space becomes enlarged into the need to assert one’s identity. Identity and homeland go hand-in-hand. Language, culture and identity go together in defining a homeland.

The third chapter analyzes various themes which are found scattered in the works of the selected poets. The themes range from a person’s spiritual sojourn and one’s relationship with God to the love of Rock and Roll music to friendship, motherhood, the youth, Christianity in Mizoram, Reservation, the advancement of the cyber-world and the world-wide theme of multiculturalism. All these themes are not found in the works of all the poets. This chapter highlights the various writing styles and tactics employed by the Mizo poets writing in English. The first section is about Christianity and its limits. In this section, the poems of Jeremi Zobiaka, Malsawmi Jacob and Mona Zote about spirituality, one’s relationship with God and Christianity in Mizoram are analyzed. The effects of Christianity and the changes brought about by the missionaries are splattered across their poems. The abolition of the “pagan” practices and the power of the Church over the people religiously and socially are analyzed. The second section is about love, marriage and friendship. This section shows how the marriage system has been changed as an influence of Christianity. In Mizoram, the marriage custom is still traditional but the marriage system has been westernised. This section brings forth the contradicting views of marriage as seen through the eyes of a grown man and a grown woman and a teenage boy. But the shared view is that marriage brings up gender complexity. The third section is about the need of space in the life of the youth and, of course, the rebellious nature of the youth. The fourth section is about

Rock and Roll music and the role it plays in the life of Jeremi Zobiaka and the Mizo youth. Youth and Rock and Roll music are categorized to be rebellious and are separated from the elite culture. The world of Rock and Roll music and the youth is regarded to be different from the traditional world where power lies in the hands of the Church and the elder people. The fifth section analyzes the challenges faced in a multicultural world by a person living under Reservation. The loss of cultural roots results in a multi-cultural world where there is inter-racial mingling. The reality of living life in the hills and under reservation is viewed alongside the virtual world of cyber space where a person can do anything imaginable. The fourth chapter includes the earlier Mizo translated poems of Lalmama, Vankhama, Rokunga, James Dokhuma, Jimmy L. Chhangte and Capt. L.Z. Sailo alongside the poems written in English. Some of the works of the poets writing in Mizo are “*hla*” which literally translates to “song” in English. The first section gives an explanation of the use of one term “*hla*” to signify both song and poem in the Mizo language. The poems of the earlier writers are mainly about the praise of the beauty of nature and the need for unity among the Mizos. This chapter explores the gradual deterioration of the land which was once called a “beauteous land” (Khangte 2003: 45). The poems about the beauty and deterioration of the land highlight the poets’ rootedness to their land, a land where they live peacefully with their loved ones. The famine caused by the bamboo flowering and the insurgency brought about drastic changes in the lives of the Mizos. The ethnic identity crisis brought about by the insurgency further brought about an identity consciousness among the Mizos. The fifth chapter is the conclusion.



Chapter II

From the Self to the World: An analysis of the Common themes in the poems written in English

Introduction

Earlier song composers like Vankhama, Rokunga and James Dokhuma composed many songs on nature and their homeland. In Vankhama's song, '*Rimawi Ram*' which has been translated into English as 'The Land of Sweet Sounds' by Sangliana, we find a beautiful portrayal of the song-birds and cicadas which sing to the tune of the rustle of the leaves. The forest is filled with the hum and chirps of the insects and birds and the sweet smell of trees. And the poet has called his homeland "a land of sweet sounds and clean air" (Khiantge 2002: 36). Rokunga has also expressed his pride in his homeland in '*Kan Zotlang Ram Nuam*', which I roughly translate as 'Our Pleasant Land of Mizo Hills'. He emphasizes the beauty and harmony of his land. He moreover encourages the youth of his land to march forward and win in their journey in life. In '*Chhaktiang Thlifim*', James Dokhuma writes how the east wind has united the communities of Manipur, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura including that of Bengal, the host community. Through their Nature poems they have gone back to their roots in search of their identity. The earlier song composers were fond of composing patriotic songs which showed the love and the pride that they had in their homeland. Originating from the same land, many writers have been nurtured to compose songs and poems on more diverse subjects. Speaking the same language and sharing a common heritage, the writers have portrayed their culture and traditions to the world through their works. Earlier, it was through orature that the cultures and traditions of societies were handed down; the job of orature has been taken over by the writers in passing on the traditions to the generations to come:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by

which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. (Thiong'o 1986: 16)

I have chosen four Mizo poets writing in English. They are of different generations but they have certain common themes although they have different ways of approaching them. Malsawmi Jacob is fifty-two years old and is married. Mona Zote is thirty five years old and is unmarried like Laldinkima Sailo, who is twenty-five years old. Jeremi Zobiaka had started writing in 1969 when he composed his first Mizo song. On April 27th, 1998, he composed his last Mizo song and he passed away in 1999. His songs and poems have been compiled as *Jeremi Zobiaka Damlai Sulhnu* by his wife Ngurthankhumi in his memory and was published in the year 2000. The songs and poems included in this collection have been selected for study. The marital status of the poets has been mentioned so that it will be easier in understanding their works. Jeremi Zobiaka, better known as JB-a was born to Pazawna and Hrangkhami on April 18th, 1953 in Saitual. The eldest in his family JB-a had four brothers and a sister. When he turned nine he went to study in Kalimpong. Intelligent student as he was, his aptitude and skills improved even more. In 1970, after finishing his matriculation he continued his studies in Ahmednagar and Shillong. Around this time the Mizos were swept by a rebirth of music which was in the form of Rock and Roll. JB-a was also one among the many who were submerged by the flood of the rebirth of the new music. He is known for being the first among the Mizos to make western Rock music popular in Mizoram. He touches Rock music to Rhythm and Blues to Jazz music. He is also one of the first among the Mizos to have written poetry in English (Ngurthankhumi: 2000). Most of his songs are "lyrical verse," which are composed to be sung, and there are also some with an organized rhyme scheme. He has written more than one hundred and fifty English songs (some are poems) and about twenty Mizo songs which are of different styles from free verse to ballads. He was the leading man of six rock bands - 'Young Generation', 'Creation Flame', 'Exodus', 'Crimson Dust', 'JB and Friends' and 'Otto Band'. From 1994, he suffered liver cirrhosis and he sang for the last time in public on November 1995 in Aizawl. After undergoing intense treatment he passed away on 16th August, 1999 at the Civil Hospital in Aizawl. Most of his songs and poems are autobiographical.

Malsawmi Jacob and Jeremi Zobiaka have written both in English and in Mizo while the two other poets Mona Zote and Laldinkima Sailo have written only in English. Malsawmi Jacob is presently working with SPARROW (Sound and Picture Archives for Research On Women), which is Mumbai based. Malsawmi Jacob's poems have been taken from her collection of poems titled *Tinkim Dawn* which was published in the year 2003. Laldinkima Sailo's debut anthology of poems titled *Spectrum* has been chosen for study. This book is a collection of poems which he had written since he was twelve years old, studying class eight in Bishop Cotton School in Shimla. Laldinkima Sailo is the grandson of the former Chief Minister of Mizoram, Brigadier T. Sailo. He finished his twelfth standard from La Martiniere for Boys in Kolkata and did his graduation with Honours in History from St. Stephen's College in Delhi. He was even the Student President in St. Stephen's College. After finishing his Bachelors in 2005, he got a Scholarship and studied a course in Development in Singapore. Mona Zote has done most of her schooling in Bihar and in Shillong because of her father's posting. Mona Zote presently lives in Aizawl and she describes herself as a poet "disguised as a government employee" (Poetry – International Web). Mona Zote's poems have been taken from two books namely - *Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast* edited by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and Robin S. Ngangom which was published in 2003 and *Where the Sun Rises Where Shadows Fall The North-East* edited by Geeti Sen which was published in 2006. Her poem 'Rez' has been taken from the 2006 edition of the Sahitya Akademi journal *Indian Literature*. I have identified three common themes with which I will be linking the selected poems. The subject of woman (motherhood and/or sexuality), the homeland and the self are all seen in the works of the four poets. The writing style of these poets is totally different from one another. But the different writing styles have helped add colour to Mizo poetry in English. All these poets have at some point in their lives stayed outside Mizoram for various reasons. It may not be wrong to state that they all come from middle class families who are able to live outside Mizoram. Their writings can also be seen as writings of people who view the Mizoram scenario from outside.

The Self: The Need of Space and Solitude for Self-expression.

The selected poets will show the ways in which they need their own space for self-expression. A woman seizing the opportunity to “speak” brings forth her shocking and devastating entry into the history of the world in the same way that a man bringing about a change in the music culture becomes regarded as a bad influence. The change in their societal position depends upon what they do to improve it. The power lies in the hands of women to change the position which has always been reserved for women, silence. Women have to break free from the realm of silence (Cixous 1975: 166). The issue of subjugation and suppression is common for all women even though the extent to which they suffer it may be different. Writing and speaking is the ideal thing which a person has to do in order to make the world know “her / his world.” A woman writing about herself or another woman writes for the whole of womankind. A woman’s writing is never-ending, and does not have a hierarchy and even has the power to trigger emotions. The Mizo poets writing about themselves is about reasoning and interpretation, and also has a free flow of feelings and emotions.

Mona Zote’s poems ‘What Poetry Means to Ernestina in Peril’ (Sen 2006: 66-67) and ‘Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus’ (Sen 2006: 67-68) can be taken as a portrayal of the life of a woman poet from the hills. Malsawmi Jacob’s poem ‘Loneliness’, can also be taken as a portrayal of her lonely existence as a woman; her life, a woman’s life, is like being stranded on an island, far away from the mainland. A woman poet also needs her own space, which is free from the scrutiny of the masculine world. The protagonist in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* became mentally ill because she had no independence and this changed her mental, physical and emotional being. Her well-planned and monotonous life was not enough for her. She needed freedom from the closed walls of her room. In the same way, women writers/poets need space and a breathing room to express themselves and also need to have their desires and requirements acknowledged. We can consider ‘What Poetry Means to Ernestina in Peril’ as a portrayal of the life of the poet. The poem ends with the lines

Somewhere there is a desert waiting for me

and someday I will walk into it (Sen 2006: 67)

The above lines can have reference to the pregnant woman about to give birth who is “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head” whom we find in Revelation 12:1 (Holy Bible New International Version: 1984). The woman after giving birth to a son flees to the desert to “a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days” (Revelation 12:6). In the Holy Bible, we find that the woman is given two wings of a great eagle so that she will be able to fly away to the secure place prepared for her in the desert. The desert becomes a place of refuge and freedom for both women because the desert is “waiting” for them.

For a woman in the hills, the time has not come for her to write poetry. Her position is still as dry as a desert and it relies upon her to change this condition. It is difficult for a woman to stand forth and seize the opportunity to change her condition because of the scrutinizing eyes of society. It is just not acceptable for Mizo women to have a voice in the Mizo society and as mentioned in the introduction, the Mizo saying still goes on that ‘*Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, Chakai sa sa ni suh*’ which means ‘A woman’s word is no word (to be taken seriously) in the same way that a crab’s meat is no meat’. Malsawmi Jacob describes the lonesome existence of a woman in “Loneliness” (Jacob 2003: 63). Her life is away from the humans; they cannot hear her or see her and she can only hear their voices. Although women try hard to make their voices known, their words almost always fall on the “deaf male ear” (Cixous: 251). Until and unless she speaks in the language of the male she is always unheard. And as she stretches out her hands no one takes it because maybe she is still unwilling to speak in the masculine language. She wants someone (from the opposite sex) to share her world with but it cannot happen because “it is not to be” (Jacob 2002: 63).

Life for a young man in his teens may be different from the lives of two middle-aged women and from the fast-life of a rocker. In ‘Wet Clay’ (Sailo 2002: 12), Laldinkima Sailo realizes that the life and thoughts of a youth is often confused. These

strange and confused thoughts have taken the shape of a poem. He clearly sees that the mind of the youth, including his, is like tumbling down from a hill. 'In conscientiousness' (Sailo 2002: 14) describes the kind of person the poet strives to become. He does not lie except under oppression and is not easily tempted. He is strong-hearted but not hard-hearted. He believes that the hardships of life are necessary in order to achieve greatness. His conscience makes him strive to become "a man whom men will say man" (Sailo 2002: 14). In 'Imagination', his dream and ambition is to be able "to make the Impossible – possible" (Sailo 2002: 20). He wishes to bring about a positive change. From his poems, we find the inventive and ingenious part of him. And it may just be possible for him to bring about the change he dreams for because of his young age and vigour.

Jeremi Zobiaka has widened the frontiers of music and poetry among the Mizos. It would be impossible to exclude his life as a rock artist because it defines his very being. In many of his songs and poems we find many description of his life as a rock-star. He calls himself a "stone wizard," a wizard who operates unseen. A rock-star's life-style does not allow him to be bored as it takes him "higher" and his blood has even become "unclean." The world of Rock music of the 1970s has also rocked the world of Jeremi Zobiaka. Music and women were very much a part of his life -

I'm gonna dance
To the beat of the music
I'm gonna let the music blow
Right through my soul
And I'm gonna ease my brain. (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 49)

The hypnotic power of rock music is gradually brought into light. Jeremi has confessed his belief in Rock and Roll –

I believe in Rock 'n' Roll
Like I believe in love

I believe in Rock 'n' Roll

I can't refuse its call

I believe in Rock 'n' Roll

It's here to stay forever. (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 65)

Rock and Roll occupied a large part of his life and he was one of the first Rock artistes in Mizoram. He somehow liberated Rock and Roll music in Mizoram at a time of orthodox Christianity and Christian songs. He was a part of the "popular culture" of the Rock and Roll world at a time when anything "popular" was considered to be "low" or "base." Jeremi's poems and songs clearly demonstrate his desire to openly express his feelings. He felt that the liberation of one's soul came through music when there is no room for any pretensions. The very idea of being a "man" is the essence of being a Rock artist. Even for the poet, Rock and Roll has become a marker of his manhood. The poet's belief in Rock is so great that he even writes that "Rock believers" are "Shock receivers" who are not easily fazed by the non-believers. Rock Music was for the masses and not only for a certain elitist group. It includes everyone; it does not discriminate. The Rock culture, being a popular culture, is a culture which has been formed by lovers of Rock music for themselves.

Some of Jeremi Zobiaka's songs portray life, the future, the present and also looks back to the past. The passing of a moment in time, when a person stands at the cross roads of life is seen in "Edge of the Storm." The choices and mistakes made in life often make the future ambiguous –

There I was - in the future

The me that wasn't there (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 43)

"Desperation" shows the poet's reluctance to let go of the past and his fear to step into the future. In the end "desperation" makes the poet go back to dreaming and

reminiscing about the times past and friends and lost loves. His anxiety to cross the threshold to the future makes his life go round in circles where he goes back to the past.

Satisfaction and contentment is rarely found in life. In 'In my own little world', Jeremi Zobiaka expresses his discontentment with the world and with the things he has. He easily says that he can never be satisfied with what he has but that at the same time he tries to make things better. Even without contentment and satisfaction he is happy because he "tries" his best to make things "alright again" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 52).

In 'I'm in Love', the poet has confessed that after having found his love he has become "a new born babe / In love" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 55). Most of Jeremi's love poems are about loneliness and heartbreak. For Jeremi, "Loneliness / Is a never ending road" because his "lovers" are "dead and gone" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 66). Love envelopes a large part of the poet's life. Loneliness, which occurs as a result of his lost love(s), paints his poetry with a sombre light. He has even written a poem titled 'Loneliness', where he strongly believes that their "Love will never turn to dust" although "...the miles do separate us" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 68). His loneliness arises out of his unfulfilled desires when he is "Always dreaming / Never there" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 90). His desperate search for fulfillment makes him –

Heading for a heartbreak

Like I've always done before (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 59)

Mona Zote and Malsawmi Jacob, their being women makes them subdued beings who are restrained by the patriarchal society. Their existence is explained in contradiction to the existence of the opposite sex. Laldinkima Sailo, being a youth, stands for the younger generation. The younger generation are always seen in conflict with the older generation; they are always blamed for having an attitude, which is often thought to be against the norms laid out by the world controlled by the older generation. The life of Jeremi Zobiaka can be separated into two eras: the earlier one where he was

a Rock artist and the later one when he is a born again Christian and composes only Christian songs. Rock music has always been considered to be satanic and so always regarded to be in conflict with the Church and the Gospel songs. The Church acts as an elitist institution in Mizoram because it exercises a dominant discourse. The identity of each poet is being subdued by the dominant institutions which are in the form of society, traditions and the Church. All the poets share the same plight in having their voices suppressed by authority greater than theirs.

The ever-giving Woman

Every one
Takes her for granted
...
Do they ever ask
How the pot feels
On the fire,
How the dustpan feels
Scooping dirt? (Jacob 2003: 83)

The woman theme is beautifully portrayed by Malsawmi Jacob in several poems: 'What do you do?', 'Little Sparrow', 'The Dust of Years', 'Caught in a Whirlpool', 'Hands' and 'Why Lord?'. The poems studied are taken from Malsawmi Jacob's collection of poems titled '*Tinkim Dawn*'. In 'What do you do?' the woman is compared to a bird which is "...caged in a / Dry coconut shell / Cramped, immobile" (Jacob 2003: 66). A dry coconut shell has no sustenance; it is hard and has no space. The woman is not given space; instead she is smothered by the people around her. Cixous is of the opinion that writing gives pleasure and fulfillment to a woman only within her own space and time. Even though women from Northeast India are

considered to be more liberated than the mainland women, there are still many prejudices based on a person's sex (National Commission for Women 2004: 1)¹. But the discrimination against the Northeast women on the basis of their sex has more to do with social and cultural traditions which have been somehow accepted by the women. The condition of life which is compared to a dry coconut shell is true of all Indian women. The woman is asked the question "What do you do?" ("What do you do?") after she is being "Discarded as a / Dead sap" ("What do you do?"). Malsawmi Jacob uses different life forms to signify the woman in a style similar to the way Ted Hughes uses animal imagery. The fact that she was born a woman makes her guilty. A woman is guilty of everything –

...guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being "too hot"; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having children; for nursing and for not nursing... (Cixous 1975: 165)

The above lines clearly speak out for the woman who is subjugated and even one who does not regard herself to be subjugated. Her body and her sexuality, the very state of her being, are the elements which make her a subjugated being. In 'Little Sparrow', the woman becomes a sparrow which "Never was intended / Far to fly". The woman is not allowed to soar high in her career and status. She is only allowed to exist on the "ground", as she is bound to the soil to toil and to provide. Woman's derangement, often as a result of mental experiences, serves to set up a contest with the conditions of social expectations and commonly accepted norms (Martin 1987: 4). Ecofeminists like Donna Haraway², Sandra Harding³, Greta Gaard⁴ and many others are of the opinion

¹ Violence against women North East India: An enquiry, Report by the North East Network, 2004, National Commission for Women, New Delhi.

² Haraway, Donna; *The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, New York, 1991.

³ Harding, Sandra (ed); *Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity" in The Feminist Standpoint theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, Routledge, 2004, p. 127-140.

that the patriarchal dualism of nature and culture links women with nature. Woman is seen as an all-giving being, a mother and in the same way nature is also viewed as an all-giving Mother. Both the woman (mother) and nature (also a mother figure) provide unconditionally without expecting anything in return. Malsawmi Jacob has also compared her condition, a woman's condition, to a sparrow's who can only "hobble and hop" as her "wings are clipped" ('Little Sparrow'). The sparrow's condition of being captured and kept in cages and being mutilated are also found in the life of women. Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway propose that science is masculine and patriarchal where the knowledge of women is hardly ever approved. A woman is defined by her relation to man, by her characteristics that do not make her a man. She is the "Other" of man and not the other way round. In 'The Dust of Years', the theme of the 'invisible' woman is depicted clearly. When she dies, she is "...unmourned, unmissed" ('The Dust of Years') as she is not known by the world. 'Caught in Whirlpool' exposes how impossible it is for a woman to escape her fate. Since man is the superior being who is defined by his difference from the woman, all his qualities of maleness are seen as positive qualities. The woman is seen, or is not even seen at all as the man overshadows her with his masculinity. Woman is always seen as the invisible and lacking "Other." In *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Juliet Mitchell uses the words, "cultural utilisation as exchange objects" in her explanation of the condition of women. She is fated to be crushed in the "whirlpool, / Churned round and round" ('Caught in Whirlpool') of the expected norms and conditions put forth by society and culture. Society views a woman as a means of exchange for the continuation of relationships between societies and cultures. Mona Zote also writes about the condition of women in the hills in 'What poetry means to Ernestina in Peril' which opens with the line "What should poetry mean to a woman in the hills". Mona goes on to say that ignoring the condition of the women and the things enfolding their world will not solve the problem they are faced with. Even if the woman (Ernestina) does not exist in the world of men, she still has to be given a chance to speak. She has to speak out because she is different as a result of

⁴ Gaard, Greta Claire; *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, USA, 1993.

which she has already been marked. In 'Girl with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus', the woman (Hmuaki) stands forth and accuses the world for the wrong it has done to her. Since poetry written by women and concerning women always becomes personalized, Hmuaki⁵ becomes the accusing "subterranean gong" who will go on accusing for all the wronged women.

The sad subterranean gong will go on accusing

...

Until the gong is quiet and the woman in the earth goes to sleep. (Sen 2006: 68)

The learned and talented woman is also being silenced against her will by the world. But the woman no longer stays silent and merely submits to the expectations of the world. She will go on accusing until justice is provided to the whole of womanfolk. Helene Cixous is of the opinion that the reservation of writing for the privileged "great men" is silly. She has even come up with the term '*écriture féminine*' where she expresses her belief that "woman must write woman. And man, man" (Cixous 1975: 162). The accusing and wronged woman has to write so that the world will be able to realize the true state of her condition. The problem faced by women is the likes of "smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses [who] don't like the true texts of women – female-sexed texts. That kind scares them" (Cixous 1975: 162).

The woman figure is never far away from the mother figure where the mother figure is seen as a giver/provider of everything. In 'Why Lord?', Malsawmi Jacob writes how Jesus has chosen to be a part of the family of women like Tamar, Rahab, Bath-Sheba and Mary, who were not by any means "great ladies" (Jacob 2003: 91). These women were not astonishing and outstanding women; they were subdued by society but they are still remembered in the Bible. Malsawmi Jacob has beautifully

⁵ Hmuaki was considered to be the first Mizo poet and legend has it that since she was such a prolific writer, the people of her village buried her alive with her gong so that the younger generations would be left with something to write about.

depicted a mother's desire in 'Holding Hands' (Jacob 2003: 84) and 'Kisses' (Jacob 2003: 84). In 'Holding Hands', a son lets go of his mother's helping hands as he feels that he no longer needs them. The mother is sad but hopes that he will hold her hand to steady her when she grows old. In 'Kisses', the mother's fear is that her daughter will outgrow the kisses which she reserved for her mother, in the same way that her brother outgrew them. A mother's world revolves around her children and family. Interestingly, Laldinkima Sailo too has poems on motherhood and children. Sailo's poem 'Tragedy' shows how an ungrateful child "will never be forgotten and forgiven" (Sailo 2002: 32). When a mother is slogging for her son, the son does not appreciate the parental/motherly love showered upon him. In 'Justice for my Mother' (Sailo 2002: 56), the loving son stands forth, and speaks out his anger when the love of his mother is merely given a "worldly worth." This son acknowledges the tears shed by his mother. He values his mother's caring touches and the love which flows deep from her heart. The love of his mother is so great that nothing of this world could ever measure up to its value for him. The figure of the unconditionally giving woman, the mother, is seen in both the cases. In the same manner as in the above mentioned cases, the mother is always taken for granted to be the ever-providing figure. The acknowledgement of her deed merely makes her deed more satisfying. In 'Behold the Reflection' (Sailo 2002: 55), Laldinkima Sailo writes about the utter importance of beauty for a woman. Although the well-known phrase is that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, the outward appearance is the first thing which attracts a person. The poet says that the beauty which is hidden deep down always tends to get reflected in the outward appearance. And so the beauty of a mother lies deep down and will always be seen in the deeds she has done unconditionally for her family. Malsawmi Jacob's poems show the love a mother has for her children and Laldinkima Sailo in turn shows the deeds a child has to show as signs of appreciation of her/his mother's love.

In 'Housewife's Plight' (Jacob 2003: 83), people take the woman/the mother for granted. No one cares about her feelings as she is expected to always slave and slog for her husband and family. Her fulfillment is no longer in the outside world as she is no

longer allowed to have a life outside the one she has with her family. The deeds the woman has performed and the provisions she has supplied unconditionally have all been taken for granted as it is always expected that "...there is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk" (Cixous 1975: 251) which will be provided at any time it is demanded. The poet has used strong words like caged, cramped, immobile, slog, slave, bound, unmourned and unmissed for describing the condition of woman. Cixous has justified the use of "strong words" by saying that it is a reaction to the oppression faced by the women as a result of which they have to become the "taker and initiator." The woman is a figure which is willing to suffer and face any tribulations for the safety of her son.

Jeremi Zobiaka's poems are mostly about love and the pain he has endured as a result of being in love with a woman. He placed women in a higher pedestal from where they control the lives and the hearts of men. His poems discussed here have been taken from his collection of poems '*Damlai Sulhnu*'. The joy which he has experienced is never without sadness. In "Queen of the Universe," he writes,

A thousand years of loneliness

Is crammed inside my brain (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 41)

even though he has found happiness with his loved one. His loneliness is an outcome of his longing for his loved one, a woman. He is in a condition where he has no one with whom he can share his loneliness and his tears. In 'Only Me', he has written,

Only myself and the sunshine

Only myself and my dreams...

...Longing for your sweet caress

Lonely forever more

Me and my destiny. (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 48)

He has been turned into “one lonely man” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 48) by a woman. A woman’s love has been compared to “magic” and “sunshine” in “Freezing Heart” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 101). In *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet has written that sexuality merely becomes an instrument for the stereotyping of women as prostitutes, pure virgins, or promiscuous. The woman is either seen as being frigid and cold to sexual encounters or a thoroughly promiscuous and immoral person in relation to sexuality. She is never placed in a position between the two; it is society which defines her sexuality where her wishes do not have any authority to be represented. Woman has always been regarded to be “sexuality itself” having “no definite individual limits” (Weininger 1975: 111). Jeremi has even endowed his woman with the power to cast a spell to melt his frozen heart. While endowing them with this power he has also endowed them with a character which is seen as promiscuous and wanton. Most of his love poems are about loneliness and sadness in being apart from one’s loved ones. In “Mabel I,” he has even confessed that

I’ve never really got over you (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 131)

Most of the love poems written by Mizo poets portray sadness and grief over having lost one’s loved ones. Among the Mizos, until and unless a poet or song-writer has not written about grief, s/he is usually not considered to be an exceptional writer. In Mizo literature, it is usually in the poems that the male writers place their women in pedestals above them. The women are often given a power over the men in the love poems. The men are often twirled around by the tiny fingers of the women. The men usually find themselves in a dilemma where they love their women far too much as a result of which they merely have to submit.

Jeremi’s writing style is different from his contemporaries in the way he portrays women and their bodies. In “Campus Dolly,” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 47) Dolly is his love, his “soul’s desire” because she is able to make him want her. She is seen as a beautiful being and the poet wants to own her, make her his possession. The poet further says,

Campus Dolly – I wanna feel you

Campus Dolly – I wanna touch you (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 47)

The feeling and the desire for bodily contact which the poet mentions is rarely found in Mizo poetry. The desire to possess a woman comes out of a desire to become physically intimate with each other. It is the physical appearance of a woman which captures attention. In “No Man’s Without Blame,” the poet confesses -

But all I see is the woman in you (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 53)

even after the woman gives him “...love and hope of salvation” (53) and is even seen as “Christ personified” (53). In “Heartbreak,” the poet’s loved one is seen as “an angel in white” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 59) with a natural aura around her. In “Defence of Poetry,” Shelley has written that, “The freedom of women produced the poetry of sexual love.”

In Jeremi’s poems, women are often seen as having superior power. In his poems a love-struck man is no match for a woman. He has no power over himself as his very being is directed by the woman he loves. In “Can’t hide it no more,” he has said, “Common sense is fighting with my nature” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 72). A relationship with a woman is compared with the losing of one’s sense. A woman is seen as a being which has to be fought for and even more as the cause of many problems. The poet gives sexual power to the women; they are the ones who leave the men “undone” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 97) after they have had their fun. There is a role reversal of the sexes in Jeremi’s love poems. In “Female Casanova,” the woman and not the man is the one who tries to “increase the score” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 100). She is the one who discards the men and leaves them heartbroken after “using” them for fulfilling her desires. The physical appearance of a woman is the power she has over a man. Woman has often been associated with life, virginity, beauty, purity and nature and on some occasions she is seen as an evil seductress, a corrupter whose evil deeds often lead to

destruction. In 'Moonlight Lover', we find an expression which is used by almost every man –

Sexy legs

Don't make me beg (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 87).

Jeremi's description is quite physical and he also uses language which is quite uncommon from the other Mizo writers and composers. We find lines like

Move your body to the rhythm of love...

...You drive me crazy

You feel so mighty fine...

...I'm gonna take you higher. (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 87)

The poet begs his love to give him one last chance to kiss her and hold her before she leaves him and finally "break him." A woman has the power to bring out the sexual desires in a man and she can therefore use this power and use it against the man as a means to enslave him to her whims. She has the ability to make a man –

...think

Of forbidden things –

Of hidden desires –

Undying fires

And deep down yearnings

That need releasing (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 140)

If a woman knows how to use the power which is in her hand she can make a man feel that

Your love has made me

A man again...

...from that moment

You made me live again. (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 145)

She can use her femininity to define a man's manhood for him and so in turn becomes in power if she has the knowledge to give satisfaction and fulfillment to a man. The man also has the desire to fulfill the woman's yearnings because his expertise in doing so defines his being in power. In "Let me be your Lover," the poet wishes to make his woman "shiver with delight" (107).

The very fact that the poet being a man and his lover being a woman is the one factor which makes misunderstanding crop up in their relationship –

It's not easy

For you're a woman and I'm a man

And I'm hoping that you will understand (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 72)

Even though a woman's love has made him "a man again" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 145), it is this power which a woman has over a man which makes her an outcast in society as a wanton woman. Promiscuous and "experienced" women are there to give pleasure to men merely to be "Discarded as a / Dead sap" (Malsawmi Jacob 2003: 67).

Space, Identity and Homeland.

"It is never too late to come home."

But I need a homeland

where I can recognize myself,

just a map or even a tree or a stone,

to mark a spot I could return to

like an animal (Ngangom, Robin S, 'Poem for Joseph' in Nongkynrih and Ngangom (eds.), *Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast*, 2003: 152)

The idea of the homeland is a preoccupation for the writers coming from the Northeast. Mizoram being in the farthest corner of India and being bordered by Bangladesh and Myanmar often becomes disconnected from the mainland India. A longing for the homeland and for ancestors is felt by the inhabitants. Malsawmi Jacob brings to light the condition of life in her homeland in her poem 'My Land'. Her land has become a dark land where dawn is much awaited. She mourns when she looks at the pathetic condition of her land. Mona Zote looks at her land and sees a "land where babies are ripped out of their graves," where "religion has made drunks of us all" ('What poetry means to Ernestina in peril'). Her land has become "an incestuous land," where "we are killing ourselves" ('What poetry means to Ernestina in peril'). No matter how wretched the condition may be in their land, Malsawmi Jacob still thinks of it and does not forget it. Awaiting her turn to be drawn into the life of crime in her land, she weeps for her "...dark land / Where the sun does not rise!" ('My Land'). Malsawmi Jacob has brought out the exact condition of life in her homeland in her poem 'The Dog's Complaint' (Jacob 2003: 82). The relationship between the Central Indian Government and the Mizoram State Government (also the other state governments in the Northeast) is clearly depicted in this poem. The poem opens like this

My master throws the bones
I thought should be for me
To other dogs. (Jacob 2003: 82)

And when the dog grumbles and growls in complaint, the master punishes the dog because he has the power to do so. The poet goes on saying

And how can I, a dumb dog
Make him see
How I feel? (Jacob 2003: 82).

The Northeast is still a dense area where the condition of life is still very backward in many places. The Mizos are a people who are still closely linked to their cultural roots and may even appear backward to the outside world because of their traditional beliefs which they cannot so easily rid themselves of. But they also have a right to having their needs fulfilled. It is sometimes impossible for the natives to make the people in power hear their voices. The representatives of the natives indirectly become the voice of the people. The natives depend on them for their voices to be heard and for their identity to be completed and given a place. The power construction is placed in such a manner that the voice of the natives most often tends to be drowned out by the voices of those representatives in power. In the power ladder, the natives are in the lowest position where they are often deceived by false ideologies.

Laldinkima Sailo brings us back to the villages of his homeland in 'A Call to Unite' (Sailo 2002: 46). A state situated in a remote corner of the country has seen many changes with the turn of the twenty-first century. He looks back to the time when his ignorant forefathers learned how to read and write. The mind becomes nurtured and within a century, the once ignorant ancestors are able to read the statutes of the land. The seeds are sown and the people are awakened to unite as

One voice one call, One name one country

One spirit one India. (Sailo 2002: 46)

In 'The Schizophrenic Imagination,' Nayantara Sehgal writes that nationalism produces a plural culture where the divided self needs a balancing act. The seeds of literacy which were gradually sown in Mizoram and which enabled the once illiterate to read the statutes of the land acted as the balancing act. In 'The Language of African Literature,' Ngugi wa Thiong'o has mentioned the undervaluing of a people's language, culture, art, history, orature, literature and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. In "A Call to Unite," it is most probable that the "call" has been made in the foreign language and not in the language of the natives. The elevation of the foreign

language is somewhat subtly imposed on the natives as it was considered to be the “real language of life” (Thiong’o 1986: 13). The foreign language could not triumph over the native language as a means of communication. So the foreign language, “the real language of life” was used in the written form (Thiong’o 1986: 13). The natives have to succumb to the superiority of the foreign language in the world and so start using it to write about their own cultures in order to avoid circumstances “when the colonial child was exposed to images of his world as mirrored in the written languages of his coloniser” (Thiong’o 1986: 18). In ‘The Circle of Recoilation’, the poet has written about the influence of the missionaries on the people of Mizoram. The “happy village” (Sailo 2002: 62) learns new ways and adopts new traits. The “ball” which the foreigners have given to the villagers is lost in due time. This loss of the “ball” is returned with a “heartless hollow smile.” The villagers are unable to fully lose themselves to the ways of the foreigners. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha articulates that it is the authority of the coloniser which has made the natives mimic the colonisers. The native can only become a deformed image of the coloniser because s/he is caught right in the middle where s/he cannot let go of her/his “Otherness.”

The writing style of Mona Zote is a bit different from the other three poets. She also writes about her homeland but she is bitter when she brings forth the condition of life. She does not beat around the bush while she explains the real condition of life in her homeland. In ‘The Whores of August’ (Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 200-201), she writes about the hypocritical existence of her people. It is tragic to find that a Christian state has become obsessed with the loving of the “succubus and incubus” (200) of the land. In ‘This is so’ (Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 202-203), she warns of the “bomb” which is inside every person. This “bomb” can bring about the downfall of the people as it will fall on them when they are unaware. In *Decolonising the Mind*, Thiong’o mentions the term “cultural bomb,” which destroys the belief of the natives in their culture, abilities and their very being. The multicultural world has caught up with their land when they had led a blissful life of peace and unity. The need to identify themselves with the language and culture of other people came to be felt by the natives.

The sound of "... a hundred footsteps / Tramping by..." (Mona Zote, 'This is so') becomes a threat for her people. There were some natives who were still adamant on maintaining a pure culture, free from the adulteration of the outside world. Some natives seemed to adapt quite well to the "bomb" of the new age. In 'Lilyum', Mona Zote voices the fear of the people of the hills which is that "The hybrids shall inherit the land" (Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 204). The "hybrids" who do not realise the value of being a part of a culture will soon take hold of the land. She warns her people of the crisis brought about by their schizophrenic thoughts and imaginations. Some of the natives who had once been adamant on driving out the outsiders have gradually forgotten the main reason of their agitation. The question, "Who am I?" becomes linked with the ambivalent thoughts of the natives. The ambivalence of their thoughts produces the 'hybrid' that is neither fully like the colonial master nor has maintained the state of being a native. The threat posed by the entry of the "outsiders" makes the people more aware of the "bomb" which will take them out very soon if they are not prepared. During the colonial rule, the Mizos were isolated from the outside world. The colonial rulers convinced the outsiders that the Mizos were a blood-thirsty warring tribe and the need for an Inner Line Permit (ILP) for the outsiders to enter Mizoram was made. The Inner Line Permit was again re-enforced in 1935 and was further validated after the Indian independence. The issuing of this law became a marker in the further isolation of the state of Mizoram and its people from the outside world. Being surrounded on both sides by Bangladesh and Burma, the Inner Line Permit law has not decreased the problems faced in the borders. A great number of people from Bangladesh, especially the Chakma tribe, have migrated to Mizoram from the eastern border. Their migration and their population in Mizoram is so great that there is even a Chakma District Council in Mizoram. At the same time, a large number of people from Burma have migrated to Mizoram from the western border. The Chins from Burma and the Mizos are from the same ethnic group and so they are a Mizo-cognate tribe. But the Mizo identity is now defined from the angle of geography as the Mizoram identity. Even though the Mizos and the Chins from Burma may be cognate tribes, their differences do not allow them to share an identity when it comes to sharing a homeland. Mona Zote tries to bring about

awareness about the annihilation of tribal cultures and traditions and the gradual extinction of belonging. Belonging becomes a big issue which is faced where multiculturalism is imposed on the people.

In “No Chance to Get Old,” Jeremi writes on homeland. He compares his homeland to Rome but the only difference is that “...this time the Rome is your home” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 91). The cause of the ruin of his homeland lay in the hands of the “Name.” The condition of his homeland was such that “Black gold and blood flows free at your feet” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 91). Like the saying “Home is where the heart is,” Jeremi has also written that when he is without his loved one he feels “...like a babe who’s lost his ma / A long way from home” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 94). Every other person needs to feel a sense of belonging to a place which they can call their own. For Jeremi, home is where one resides with the loved ones. In “Rock Edict number Thirteen,” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 95) Jeremi has written about India, his India. He takes us back to the time of King Ashoka, a wise king who saw through the follies of war. It was wiser to win over the hearts of the men than to ruthlessly conquer their homelands. Jeremi had felt a great need for peace and prosperity in his homeland. Peace and prosperity makes a person secure and further provides a situation for love to flourish. In “When,” the poet has written

With peace
comes
a longing for
someone
to feel and
share with (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 136).

The peace and prosperity of one’s homeland lies in the hands of the leaders. Hypocrisy and lust for power does not leave room for peace and love to flourish. It instead spreads hatred in the fight for power. What has been thought to be a figment of one’s

imagination has become as real as can be imagined. But the danger of it all lies in the fact that

You speak of Peace and Harmony

But extermination is your game...

...Telling the world it's for mankind

Behind the scenes it's something else (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 134).

In "A Message to the Nuclear Athletes," (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 134) the poet writes of the importance of a true leader who is free of hypocrisy and corruption. And he has also given a subtle warning to the people who have the power to play god. Jeremi Zobiaka has clearly written about the workings of false ideology.

Jeremi Zobiaka has written a birthday poem on the hundredth year of his home town, Aizawl. In "Sweet Centenary dear Aizawl Town," he has pleaded his home town to

Be our home sweet home

For centuries more to come. (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 146)

Gradually coming into a multi-cultural world where there are no longer any boundaries, the poet seems glad to be able to confidently say that he has a hometown. In 'Step Across this Line', Rushdie writes, "From the air, there are no frontiers."⁶ Multiculturalism has made even the freest of the free societies subdued by fear of the outside world as frontiers can no longer be built.

⁶ the lines have been quoted from T.H. White, *The Sword in the Stone*, Collins, 1938.

All the major poets seem to move from the Self to the World. Three themes figure prominently in this larger concern: Self, Woman, the Homeland. The first is about the individual self. The second shifts the focus to a stereotype, a character and an example of Mizo society, and thus moves into the world. Finally talking about the people and the homeland, the poets enlarge their concerns. They use the idea of homeland in their search for identity. Their concern is about the reconstruction of land where the reconstruction of the Church and society is clearly highlighted. In the three themes, there is the centrality of identity; a larger picture where there is a search for some kind of identity.

Chapter III

Spirituality to Multiculturalism – A Study of the diverse themes found in Mizo Poetry in English

This chapter takes into study some exceptional themes like a person's spiritual sojourn and the preaching of Good News, Rock and Roll music, love, friendship, marriage, youth, motherhood, one's relationship with God, Christianity in Mizoram, Reservation, Multiculturalism and the advancement of the cyber world which are presented in the poems of the selected poets. Some of the themes may be present in the works of more than one poet but the perspectives they bring to the themes are quite different. This chapter analyzes an assortment of various poems by poets who are quite different from each other. Laldinkima Sailo has written much on friendship and marriage and on being merry and cheerful and on the thoughts of the youth. Malsawmi Jacob has written about the love a woman has for a man and the pleasures and heartbreak thus brought forth by it. She also writes about motherhood and her spiritual relationship with God. Mona Zote writes about the dominating influence of Christianity in Mizoram. She even writes about Reservation, Multiculturalism and the advancement of the cyber world. Jeremi Zobiaka has written on diverse themes and has analyzed different stages of life. There is a note of harmony in his poems and many of his songs have slow flowing rhythmic lines. His songs portray the various stages of his life. He has written on his spiritual sojourn, followed by the preaching of Good News and then on Rock and Roll music and on the theme of love.

Spirituality, Christianity and its Bounds

Christianity has played a central role in the lives of the Mizos. Spirituality acts as a measuring scale in the existence of the Mizos. Late in his life Jeremi Zobiaka went through a Christian phase after he was born again in the year 1991. He became a "Gospel" singer and worked with Harvest Ministry, a Christian musical organization and also joined Servants of God Evangelical Team as a preacher of the Good News. It

was during his Christian phase that he composed his Christian and spiritual songs. In Jeremi's songs like 'My Testimony', 'The Only Road to Heaven' and 'Born without Intention' we find his life's journey towards Christ. In his journey in search of happiness and fulfillment, lust for fame and fortune and hunger for "unholy mirth" does not exclude him from their clutches. His search for the road that leads to Heaven had all been in vain because the map he had kept with him was all wrong. He had selfishly searched for "Love" when he found out that he was heading for a place called Hell. He was living in a "false paradise" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 7). After being swept by "the waves of sorrow and misery / ...of this false paradise" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 7), he longs for the joy that is not of this world. In his search he has found God and so his search has ended. His experience with Christianity has changed his outlook of the world. A world which once had its attractions has merely become a world occupied by people with "distorted minds." The world of the "Stone-Age Wizard" has turned into a sinking ship, a ship which has been touched by famine; there is a hunger for the word of God. The world has become a place which stinks of "war and hate" (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 11). Humankind's thirst for greatness arises out of selfishness which only drags them into "the depths of despair."

Malsawmi Jacob also writes sincerely about her relationship with God and her poems always end with one thing in mind, Jesus. In 'There Came a Knocking', she ends with the line,

He is my Lord, my Love, my Love (Jacob 2003: 89).

This knocking is similar to the knocking which we find in the Bible where the doors have to be opened to "...the King of Love!" (Jacob 2003: 89). In 'Forgiving', she writes about the forgiving nature of Christ even after He was tortured and humiliated. She fully commits herself to Him as she pleads to him to

Make me your slave that I may enjoy

True liberty. (Jacob 2003:92)

In 'My Heart', she goes on saying, "This heart is Yours by right" (Jacob 2003: 95) as she gives herself wholly to her "King." She prays to the "friend of sinners" to set her free from herself so that she may be able to follow Him "Down to the depths of / Degradation" ('My Heart'). In 'Debts', she writes about how she worries over the worldly debts which other people owe her when she owes so much to the One who has provided for her in abundance. In 'Confession' and 'Prayer for Love', she confesses her negligence and incompetence when it comes to worshipping her "Lord". She offers her love and prays for a loving heart and "a loving tongue / That heals, not hurt" (Jacob 2003: 101). The fight to be free from sin and oppression is present in the every-day life of an individual. Oppression and sin comes in all forms; sometimes it takes up the form of the dreaded person of Satan and sometimes it is the self.

From being a simple society with a primitive culture, the Mizos were suddenly hurled into the chaotic world of the twentieth century. Christianity, the new religion, with all its appeal had been preached to everyone. In 'Lilyum', Mona Zote writes about the large number of Churches in Mizoram, where "Churchdrums busily advertise / The high percentage of faith" (Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 204). Her use of the word "advertise" seems to materialize the thoughts of the Church-goers who attend service only for the praise and the glory.

The wait for time to end and eternal life to begin is present in most of the Christian songs and poems of the Mizos. They have been taught that their duty is to serve to the needs of others "with a happy / heart and with a willing hand" (Jeremi Zobiaka, 'The Test'). The Christian teaching to do "service to the outside world" (Jeremi Zobiaka, 'The Test') has been accepted unwittingly by the Mizos ever since the coming of the missionaries. In "Day After Day," we find the narrator speaking about the self-less life he has led after he has found Christ. Jeremi has written –

Day after day
My world is getting smaller
What can I say?

His world is growing in me! (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 21)

In 1898-1899, J. Shakespeare, the then British Superintendent of Mizoram, had introduced 'Land Settlement' for each and every chief's land. As a result of this, the Mizos had faced problems with the imposition of forced labour by the British. Shakespeare said that it was their right to impose the taxes which was merely a price the Mizos had to pay as a result of the British occupation of their land (Lalrinawma 2005: 173). The British had made many expeditions to subjugate the power of the chiefs so that they would be able to attain supremacy. The chiefs were punished by the people who had entered from "the outside world." The British had made the Mizos believe that their "interference" with their land was merely to improve the condition of life in their land. All their "interference" had been nicely camouflaged by the missionaries with their "Good News Missions." The British had transformed the land through their policies of improvement. By the turn of the twentieth century, the British had taken drastic measures to suppress the traditional customs and practices within the community. The pre-Christian Mizo society was spurned by the Church and it started to detach itself from many popular pre-colonial practices. Moreover, the natives were taught to disengage themselves from the earlier "pagan" practices which was once a part of their lived reality. The Church defined the very being of the natives. Christianity acted as a form of social control which would further convince the natives to willingly remain under the power of the British. Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, a Khasi poet, wrote in 'The Conquest' –

Later came the British
with gifts of bullets, blood-money
and religion. (Sen 2003: 134)

Jeremi Zobiaka has written about the timelessness of eternal life. In his spiritual sojourn, he believes that –

...everyday

The Mizo Christians have been taught to believe in a life after death; an eternal life through Christ. The British missionaries have taught them to willingly serve the “others.” There was a great revival among the Mizo Christians in the mid-nineteen-thirties and many converts were “Speaking with Tongues” (Lloyd 1991: 296). This revival was very extreme and some Church leaders considered it to be “unscriptural” due to the lack of interpretation. The Church leaders and the Assembly could not accept the extreme course of revival and even wished for them to end because the people were out of control. The Christian missionaries taught that it was either the Church on one side or disorderly behaviour, which is often the outcome of drinking *Zu*, on the other side. The two could never be together and a person had to choose either one and never both. The idle man, who has nothing better to do, has lost his sense of balance in the whirlpool. Mona Zote criticizes the schizophrenic mind of the people. The minds and thoughts of the people were split between what is acceptable and what is not. She writes about the pious women who go to church and know “the sexual ecstasy of dance” (Mona Zote, ‘What poetry means to Ernestina in peril’). Earlier, in the Mizo society, the women who danced in the church were regarded to be the ones who were more “marginalized”¹ in society like vegetable vendors and women from the poorer section. These women would often be regarded “extreme” as they “intrude” on the masculine space of the Church. In the present Mizo society it is not only the “marginalized” women who dance in the Church; the educated and affluent women now dance with men, who earlier were never expected to dance in the Church. Mona Zote writes about how power is wielded by “short men with a Bible and five big knuckles on their righteous hands” (Sen 2006: 67). In the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, women cannot be ordained as Church elders and Pastors because of their being “woman” even though there are instances where they have been elected. The superiority of the Church in Mizoram is seen in the above quoted lines. The Church often acts as a determining

¹ I use this term to refer to women who do not have a voice both in the society and in the Church.

factor in the every-day lives of the Mizos. Mona Zote writes, “Religion has made drunks of us all” (‘What poetry means to Ernestina in peril’). The members of the society are scrutinized by their performances and contributions to the Church and also on the level of their spirituality. Christianity becomes the ethical guiding factor. Instead of building up the individual character, Christianity can turn out to restrain and suppress individuals. Till the present day, the revivals of the extreme manner still happen and it sometimes even makes people blind to their conscience. “Spirituality” becomes a guiding factor in defining the community. In the early part of the twentieth century, the Church revivals turned out to be instruments of indigenization. Even though this was disapproved by the missionaries it was not possible for them to resist what was regarded to be “the leading of the Holy Spirit” in the revivals (Downs 1983: 125). The Mizo revivals and the popular movements in the Church had and still carry on alongside the democratic and religious traditions of the people. In almost all the churches (Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church etc.) in Mizoram, all the church-members could participate and even have leadership roles. The extreme ecstatic and emotional feelings of many people created tension between many revivalists and the official leaders of the churches which further resulted in division of Church denominations. The resultant division of denominations further formed a division among the people. A person’s outward appearance has been given much importance and sometimes the internal and hidden thoughts of a person are overlooked. Mona Zote has even written that Mizoram has become a land –

...where the church
leads to practical results like illegitimate children and bad
marriages (‘What poetry means to Ernestina in peril’)

Her use of imagery is clearly portrayed and the imagery stares right at the reader. In “What Poetry Means To Ernestina In Peril,” Mona Zote writes,

The lizard in her blinks and thinks. She will answer. (Sen 2006: 66)

A lizard is a reptile which can climb on walls and it is often undetected because of its small size and soundless behaviour. It is a being which does not disrupt the atmosphere of its surroundings by its presence. It instead silently watches and observes the demeanour of the people around it from a “safe” distance. The woman is compared to a silent observing lizard which “thinks.” She is an observer but initially she does not do anything. After she is ready, she shows what she has observed to the whole world and this creates a ripple and even a “rustle.” The woman, Ernestina, smiles and submits but all the time her smile is merely a façade which she wears to be rid of the terrible things happening around her in “...a land where babies / are ripped out of their graves” (Sen 2006: 67). In the same way, the position of a woman in the Church is that of an observer who thinks and observes from a distance.

It has often been preached that after receiving the Good News, the Christian’s duty is to preach the Good News to the ones who are not fortunate enough to have heard it. In ‘Salvation for Everyone’, Jeremi Zobiaka writes about the duties of a “true” Christian –

It’s your duty to know

It’s your duty to show

God’s salvation to everyone

It’s your duty to preach

It’s your duty to teach

God’s salvation to everyone (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 12)

Christianity has shown them the “light,” the way of life. The “non-believers” are considered to be “lost” and need to be shown the way to salvation. Christianity has included the Mizos in the wider global picture where they are almost in the same level as the ones who had preached the Good News and shown them the “way.” With Christianity and a close relationship with the British missionaries, the Mizos have become “Almost the same but not white” (Bhabha 2009: 128).

Love, Marriage and Family

Even though Jeremi Zobiaka was a mighty rocker, he did not have any power over his own heart when it came to love. For him, the love of his lover is magic and sunshine which can bring his freezing heart to life. Fun, laughter, desire, fire and freedom somehow add up to mean “Love.” The image of the desirable woman who wishes for freedom is seen in most of his love poems. In his poems, it is usually the woman, and not the man, who leaves the other person behind. Images of a woman leaving her lover, breaking him because ‘...tomorrow you’ll be gone with another’ (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 112) are seen in most of his poems. It is the man who pretends about the relationship, the one who tries to “make it last” although he knows for certain that the woman has gone right out of his life. In ‘Moonlight Lover’ Jeremi Zobiaka writes –

The night’s on fire

I’m gonna take you higher (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 87)

This song is about a lover’s desire to spend the night with his loved one. Jeremi Zobiaka has explicitly written on the fulfillment of the sexual desires which no poet or song composer of his time and place had done. Love, for the song composer/poet is “time-forbidden” which is “wracked with pain” and the narrator’s eyes are -

...filled with unshed tears

For a love that can never be mine (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 110).

Malsawmi Jacob has also written a lot on love. She writes about the love a woman has for a man. Like Jeremi Zobiaka, she is the one who is waiting for her love even when the night grows late in ‘The Frozen Stars’. The love she feels is like the cold night which wraps her in its caress and so she has to find a way out in ‘Winter Evening’. In ‘Double Deception’, the title of the poem itself gives the reader an idea of

what the poem is about. Even with the passing of time she cannot forget the deception of her lover. Like many other women, she has also been deceived by the art of a man. In 'Nostalgia', she is still not with her lover but the poet does not seem to be in pain anymore. She longs for her lover and even the mere thought of him and of days gone by can still make her heart go wild. In all these love poems, we find the superior power of man over woman and likewise, in the poems written by men we find that the women have power over the men. Lack in woman as the anthropologist Lionel Tiger discovered is testosterone, "the male hormone of bonding" (Tiger 1979). It is this which always places power in the hands of man. The man has the power to make the woman long for him even after it is clear that their relationship will never work out. Since the man has the knowledge, the art, the woman cannot stop thinking about him. It is a relationship of binary opposites but there is always a superior one in this relationship. Woman is defined by her character which makes her different from man. And man, although he is placed in a higher pedestal in the hierarchy, is also defined by his character which makes him different from a woman. Characteristics such as being detached from love, being loose in terms of sexual relations and inability to commit oneself to love are often considered to be linked with man. It is often the woman who falls for the sexually experienced man and gets heart-broken. In 'The Ghost', she is still haunted by the love she had lost to another woman. She is haunted by the fact that she is no longer his "heart's desire" (Jacob 2003: 81). Love for her is a battle between the sexes.

In 'Love', she writes about the changes brought about by marriage. But through it all, she says,

Yet our love has not waned,

It goes from strength to strength (Jacob 2003: 79).

A woman who has been through "fifteen years of wedded life" has seen the changes and the closeness that results from more time spent together. She has realized that with age, a person needs her partner even more than before. On the other hand, Laldinkima Sailo

compares friendship to “the marriage of two forces” (‘Duties and Friendship’). He says that the bond of friendship is not at all different from the bond of marriage which is often thought to be of a higher status. He concludes saying that one’s duty on earth is fulfilled by friendship. Friendship and love is central to the existence of humans. Love is also a part of the adult world. In ‘Twist and Sham’, he gives the disillusioned perception of the youth on marriage. Marriage is seen as mere “complications of an attachment” (Sailo 2002: 47). The youth believes that the promise and the vows made are easily broken. The bond becomes so disrupted that it seems as though “a promise must be broken” (Sailo, 2002, 48). The perspective of the strength of a marriage is something which has never been pictured by the youth. It is only the decay of it which interests people. The youth are disillusioned by the many vows which have been broken and so become embittered towards the idea of marriage. Laldinkima Sailo has written about the wreckage which the so-called love has brought about in the mind of the youth. Friendship holds an important place for Laldinkima Sailo. In ‘A Secret Wish’, he confesses that it is “A divine friendship / my heart seeks it” (Sailo 2002: 17). It is his heart who has become his true friend in his time of need because it has been seeking for his happiness. He sings praises of his friend in ‘My Friend: A Science Student’. Even though he may be called an “unbalanced” child, in reality he is “a creature yet to be a worth” (Sailo 2002: 27). Laldinkima is a young man who has a lot to say on friendship. In ‘Buddy’, he again praises his “buddy” with whom he has shared everything including his “little wealth”. Their friendship is so great because it has its foundation on love.

Motherhood is the fruit of love. It is clearly portrayed by Malsawmi Jacob in ‘Holding Hands’ and ‘Kisses’. In ‘Holding Hands’, a son lets go of his mother’s helping hands as he feels that he no longer needs them. The mother is sad but hopes that he at least will hold her hand to steady her when she grows old. In ‘Kisses’, the mother’s fear is that her daughter will outgrow the kisses which she used to reserve for her mother, in the same way that her brother outgrew them. A mother’s world revolves around her children and family. Her fear is that her children, her family will not love her back in the way she unconditionally loves them. She prays for “all that is best” (Jacob 2003:

104) for her son and her daughter. She prays that her son will have “heavenly truth, wisdom divine” (Jacob 2003: 104) and asks that he has “perfect rest” (Malsawmi Jacob 2003: 104). She prays that her daughter will be “unmarred by affectations, / Womanly vanities” (Jacob 2003: 105). She prays that her daughter will be strong-willed with a firm purpose in life. She also prays that she is not selfish and self-willed, but will be “a woman of character / Her heart and eyes fixed on You” (Jacob 2003: 105). The love that a mother has for her children is unconditional. She unconditionally provides for her family without any complaint in the same way that Mother Nature has unconditionally provided for her children. Even if they hurt her and so not love her back, she still goes on loving them and provides for their needs.

Space, Disobedience and Freedom in the Youth

In ‘Bunking to Town’, Laldinkima Sailo writes about the carefree life of the youth when they still enjoy “The sweet pleasure of disobedience” (Sailo 2002: 41). They find excitement in doing the forbidden with their “self imposed freedom”. Even though he and his friends have been warned not to “bunk to town” again, they did not repent from doing the forbidden. They ran far away from what liberty granted them. What the institution granted them was quite minimal as they were young boys who needed and loved the freedom and liberty even more. In ‘You Will Be’, he calls on the youth to be “...a master of yourself / to strive to be good citizen in adulthood” (Sailo 2002: 42). For the present time, he beckons the youth to be tough and to be ready to strike back when being unjustly treated. The poet believes that the power lies in the hands of the unconscious youth and that it is them who can bring about change when united. The youth live in a stereotyped space where society regards them to be emotionally reckless and are often not taken seriously. There is always a conflict between the younger generation and the older, more traditional generation. Because of their difference from the older generation, they are blamed for acting the way they are naturally supposed to act. Living in a closed space defined by the older generation, they fight for the “self-imposed freedom.”

The Psychedelic, the Super-natural and Rock and Roll

The world of Rock music is entrenched with power, women and a little bit of craze and insanity. The Rock music of the seventies was much about sex, philosophy, drugs, fast automobiles and freedom. Rock music is different in the sense that it attempts to inspire, arouse and at the same time excite (*American Quarterly*, Sept 2001). The tradition of Rock music intensifies the psychedelic and supernatural intensity of music. Jeremi Zobiaka was the pioneer of Rock music in Mizoram during the early seventies, a time when Rock music swept the world, not leaving out even the farthest corners of India. He is the only one among the chosen poets who has written on Rock music. The music which he composed made him “drift away.” He invites –

Hey! Come taste the music (come on)

Drift away with me (hey)

Come taste the music (come on)

Sacrifice your blues (come on) ('Midnight Dancer')

His music has the power to give him “soul fever.” His Rock music brings with it a magic stallion which can fly up to the sky of “High Fantasy” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 90). The song and the bed of consummation of sexual desires and even the sun are all “magic.” Rock artists are often reduced to a cultural cliché where they are viewed as heart-breakers, who have a long line of sexual conquests, and drifters who drift through life with drugs and alcohol. In ‘Rock N Roll Journey’ (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 77), Jeremi Zobiaka has written about the embarrassment of “the taxman” when

...He tried to read us the rule

...He soon realized that we had been to school (Ngurthankhumi 2000:77)

The cliché is such that Rock artists are viewed to be drop-outs from educational institutions who have gained fame and popularity over-night. A “Rock believer” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 102) cannot be “fazed” by the non-believers as s/he can see far beyond the life-style and money. They can also work out things by themselves and cannot be easily fooled by the non-believers who cannot see “beyond (their) your nose.” Charisma, rebellion, freedom and pandemonium maybe one aspect of Rock culture but the other aspect of Rock culture/music has also strived for “Respect” and an acceptance by the mainstream. The sexual explosion was a part of the Rock culture where sex is taken to be a driving force which has the power to enslave.

Challenges Faced in a Multicultural World

Mona Zote’s poem “Rez” (*Indian Literature*, 2006) has numerous themes embedded in it of which almost all are not found in the poems of the other three poets. The first section of the poem refers to a school shooting which took place in March 2005 on the Red Lake Indian Reservation, Minnesota - the 'boy and his gun' being, in this context, Jeff Weise. The lines in italic are excerpts from his online journal and interviews carried out in the aftermath of the shooting. 'Todesengel' is German for Angel of Death, and was a nickname Jeff Weise used during his cyber-activities.² The poem can also be taken into the context of Mizoram, the poet’s hometown. She starts off with the image of “A boy and his gun” which she says will “sum up our times.” She gives harsh images of “red lakes” and “razor blade hills of our mind.” The minds and thoughts of the people have become so corrupted that they have exchanged “cash for peace.” They have taunted God so much that He has looked at them with a “grin of despair.” The money and the benefits, most of which they get from “Reservation,” have driven the people, most of all the ones in power, so mad that they have chosen “bad roads” and “alcohol over friendship, cash for peace.” The tone of the poet is sad when she says,

² From an interview with the poet, herself.

...Out here *this place never changes, never will*³

The kid Jeff Weise has said about himself - "I'm not a white supremecist, can't even spell it, I'm a Native American, Ojibwa, living on the Redlake Indian Reservation in Minnesota, and lets not have this turn into a hardcore political discussion about my political ideals, ok?"⁴ In one post, he put up, dated July 13, 2004, he even claimed:

As a result of cultural dominance and interracial mixing there is barely any full blooded Natives left. Where I live less than 1% of all the people on the Reservation can speak their own language, and among the youth wanting to be black has run rampant...Under a National Socialist government, things for us would improve vastly... and that is why I am pro-Nazi.

The poet mentions a "trenchcoat todesengel" who brings "*meaning to life thru death*" which can be taken to represent Jeff Weise. Being a kid living within the realms of "Reservation," he has brought recognition to himself and the people on the "Reservation" by a brutal "demonstration." The word "reservation" which the poet uses can be taken to mean two things namely the Red Lake Indian Reservation as the place itself and also the reservation of the tribals. The poet has written -

...if they ask you about life on the reservation
if they say they want to hear about stilt houses
and the dry clack of rain on bamboo
and the preservation of tribal ways
give them a slaughter

³ The italics are the poet's own.

⁴ < www.francesfarmersrevenge.com/stuff/serialkillers/JeffWeise.html > 15. 03. 09.

The fact that the people living in the “Reservation” and in Mizoram are both tribals makes them share a common heritage. The poet clearly portrays the outside world’s view of the tribal as the “other,” as something to be fascinated with. In the second part of the poem, the poet gives a Biblical image of Jacob’s fight/wrestle with God, the super-power. But the poet continues -

...I can’t forget Yaqob,...
man’s champ or scapegoat

Like Yaqob who has fought with the super-power, the tribals living in the “Reservation” and on the benefits of reservation in places like Mizoram who fight the higher powers while being honoured and praised by their fellowmen may at the same time also be mere “scapegoats” for the amusement of the powerful.

I nailed his dreams to the cold ground

In the Bible we find in Genesis 28:12 how in his dream Jacob was blessed –

Your descendents will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. (International Bible Society 1984: 22)

As a result of multiculturalism and inter-racial mingling the tribals have gradually lost their cultural roots where many have even forgotten their own language. The people with power have gained ultimate authority with the help of degenerating of tribal unity and the dominance of “superior” cultures. The power situation between the weak and the powerful is disguised and the dependence of the stronger power on the weaker party is concealed (Said 1994). From the mention of Biblical “Yaqob” the poet goes on to mention that –

*Your warriors are gone with Billy Bowlegs⁵
and Billy Budd⁶ swings from the mast.*

The poet's mention of characters like Billy Bowlegs and Billy Budd who are/were both leaders of uprisings is quite interesting. Further down the poet writes –

Swaraj⁷: acid anthem in our veins.

“Swaraj,” the idea of self-governance has been reduced to “acid” which corrodes and burns the hearts of the tribal people. Living life “on a reservation” results in

A mindless year of mindless action.

The charm of life seems to be taken away by the fact that one is living one's life “on a reservation.” The poet ends with the lines –

The things you have to say, no one can say them for you

The places you have to go, no one can go there for you

The hills you have to burn, no one can burn them for you

The quoted lines may most probably be the much needed words which “will do to sum up our times,” for the people who live in and under the benefits of “Reservation.” The obsession of the Mizos is “Mizoneess” and the imperative is to keep Mizoram “Mizo.” The core values of monoculturalism still continue to bring forth the possibility of cultural insurgency as a result of suppression. Monoculturalism also indirectly appropriates threats to cultural homogeneity. Patricia Waugh is of the opinion that

⁵ “**Billy Bowlegs**” **Bolek** also known as **Holata Micco** or **Halpatter-Micco** or **Halbutta Micco** or **Halpuda Mikko** in Seminole which means “Alligator Chief” who was born on 1810 was a leader of the Seminoles in Florida during the Second and Third Seminole Wars against the United States. He is one of the last Seminole leaders to resist but he eventually moved to “Indian Territory” which is now the present Oklahoma.

⁶ Billy Budd is a novella written by Herman Melville. In the story, John Claghart, the ships master-at-arms of HMS Bellipotent has discovered a plot among the inferior section of the ship crew led by William Budd. William Budd is accused of initialising a plot among the inferior section of the ship (HMS Bellipotent)'s crew by Claghart, the ship's master-at-arms. He is convicted for the murder of Claghart by the captain of the ship and he is hung the following morning at sunrise.

⁷ *Swa* means “self” and *raj* means “rule.” So, generally “Swaraj” means “self-governance” or “home-rule.”

Henry Louis Gates and Said embrace the idea that, in modernity, culture is hybrid and interactive (Waugh 2007: 382). As a result of this, modernity is rarely restrained purely in the form of ethnic groups and it moreover travels between groups, multiplying and continually mutating. In the words of Paul Scott, Mizoram has merely become "...a comfortable and warming concept, a splendid example to the world of interracial cooperation, and parts of it even offer salubrious homes-from-home to anyone who is inclined to have a change of scene and climate and so emigrate" (Reece: 123) in a multicultural world. The Red Indians and the Mizos are people who are race conscious because of the intolerance they have faced in the hands of the "Supreme One" as a result of their inability to convert them from their traditional beliefs. Both have been used and exploited by the powerful alike and have also been discarded in similar manner:

Reality is what actually happens in a factory, in a school,
in barracks, in a prison, in a police station. (C. Nelson and
L. Grossberg 1988: 206)

Mona Zote has given a picture of what is real alongside the virtual world of cyber space. She writes about "Wumpus" and "Alphaman" which are computer games. *Hunt the Wumpus* is a computer game where the wumpus is a monster lurking in the dark and has to be killed by the player. *Alphaman* is a post-apocalyptic computer game where the player is being transported into the ruins of central New York. The "Alphaman," or the last man alive has to beat the enemy, the Grinch at his fortress. The cyber world is made to look and feel as real as possible. Like the animation titled "Target Practice" which Jeff Weise had made where a person shoots three people with a rifle and then blows up a police car with a bomb and then shoots a member of a Ku Klux Klan and in the end shoots himself isn't the real thing. Even though it may be very horrifying to watch it and might even send a chill through the viewer's spines it is still not the real thing. The real thing is what actually happened in Red Lake High School, where Jeff Weise fatally

shot seven people including one teacher and a guard after he had killed his grandfather and his girlfriend at their house. After he had killed nine people he died on the very spot where he shot himself in the head. The cyber- world may be a refuge for a kid who is dejected and lost in the world. It is the reality of living in an “Indian Reservation” which makes things unbearable for the kid and has led him to seek refuge in the cyber-world. The only solution which he has found for triumphing over the powerful and make his voice heard was to “give them a slaughter,” and turn spring into a “brutal spring” which will continue “into a cold-blooded summer,” one which they will never forget.

This chapter brings out the diverse qualities of poetry from a place hidden in the hills, far away from the mainland. Varied themes such as spirituality which comes with the new religion, love, marriage and family, life as a person living under reservation in a multicultural world, and the need for freedom and one’s own space are enmeshed in Mizo poetry in English. The struggle of the poets for identity is somehow brought out in their spirituality, in their love-lives, in their marriages and in their attempts in building families of their own in the same way as their living in a multicultural world describes their struggles in maintaining an ethnic identity. The move from the native world, where spiritualism still exist, to the multicultural world may be gradual but it is a change which cannot be avoided even with the help of precautions and “safety measures.”

CHAPTER IV

Life, Beauty and Death: A Portrayal of the Natural Picturesque in Mizo Poems

This chapter will analyse the portrayal of nature in the Mizo poems written in English and in Mizo. The early Mizo poems are mainly about nature and the landscape where the changing seasons bring about change in the lives of the animals living in the wilderness and also the humans who had earlier lived in the forests and country-side. Nature and landscape give a picture of the untainted wilderness with the serene rivers and brooks where the roar of animals and the chirps of birds can be heard. The pure scents of the untainted wilderness bring tranquility to the people. The poems clearly depict the poets' love for their land. For a proper study of the Mizo "poems" it would not be fair if we exclude the "songs." A clear differentiation and explanation of the poems and songs will make it possible to study the two together under the title "poetry."

Differentiating the terms "song" and "poem"

Songs can make a mind sleep blissfully and soften the hardest of hearts. In Mizoram, there are many instances when the people proclaim that they have achieved their spiritual conviction through songs, many of which have been popularized during the revival movements in the Churches. The rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram is attributed to a series of revival movements (Downs 1983: 122). Revival movements in the Churches are still a present-day happening. The song lyrics have won over the heart and these songs which conquer the hearts become the ones liked the most. It seems as though song is closely linked to music. When music merges with song, the appeal of the song lyrics become even more enhanced even more. Music and song cover a great part of the lives of the Mizos. So writers tend to compose more songs than poems because of the dominant popularity of songs among the Mizos. The song lyrics which are properly

arranged like a flowing river touches the mind be it songs which are sung or songs which are recited / chanted.

Let us ask ourselves what really it is that we call “recited songs?” Let us first discuss the term which has been defined as “poetry” or “poem” by the English. In the study of Literature, the term “poetry” can include the various kinds of songs. Poetry has been defined by Wordsworth as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term “poem” as “a literary composition that is given intensity by particular attention to diction (sometimes involving rhyme), rhythm and imagery (COED 1999: 1103). The term “poetry” has been defined as “a quality of beauty and intensity of emotion regarded as characteristic of poetry” (COED 1999: 1104). The term “poetry” is even used in the realm of larger studies. It includes songs, recited songs, songs which are chanted and other things which are related with it.

The term “poetry” can be referred to as song “which is chanted.” Earlier song composers like Rokunga and Vankhama used the term “song” (*hla*) most of the time. The term can be put as “song which is recited” and also as Psalms. The use of the term “poetry”, roughly translated, as “song which is recited / chanted” may benefit the general people:

What our elders have written as “song” has been written as “recited songs.” The usage of the term “recited songs” (*hlahril*) has even become widespread. But when we analyze the form, the term “chanted songs” (*chhamhla*) seems to be a better term. The meaning seems to be brought out better by the term “chanted songs.” So let us try out the use of the word *Chhamhla*. (Khangte 2006: 2¹)

The term “poem” indicates the single chanted song (*chhamhla*). The term “Poem” denotes a chanted/recited song (*chhamhla/hlahril*) which can be read on its own. In this

¹ all translations are my own.

world, there are some people who are considered to have an inborn talent for composing poems. Whatever kind of song they compose, whatever the tone of the song, as long as they compose songs which can be sung, they are straight-away considered good song composers among the Mizos. The Mizo language has the term “song composer” (*hlahphuahtu*) for the English term “poet.” Instead of using two words *hla* and *phuahtu*, combining the two words as *hlahphauhtu* makes it easier for the younger generation to understand (Khangte 2006: 3). The term *hla-siamtu* (song creator/maker) which was given by the older generation stands for what the English have termed as “Hymn-writer.” The older generations would never declare that they are the ones who compose (*phuah*) their songs; instead they would say that it is “God’s gift” or “a song which they made.” Their humble words are valuable and their attitudes must be honoured, so the best term to use on behalf of them can be “Hymn writer” (*hla-siamtu*). A close study of the great cultures of earlier times show us that the composers who composed only religious(Christian) songs were called “Hymn writers” and sometimes were also called “song-writer.” They are sometimes called “Hymn composers” or “Sacred Poem writers.” Other composers who compose songs to tunes, songs which can be sung, are called “song writers.” It is used for those composers who compose “worldly” songs. The songs which have been distinguished as “Love songs” and “Pop songs” are not included in the realm of Literature. Even some of the Mizo songs which are included in the realm of Literature are very few in number.

The composers who have composed songs, which are recited or chanted, and Psalms, which are strongly considered to be read out are the ones who are called “poets” (*hlahphuahtu*). Those poets are greatly admired throughout the world, and some people even consider them to be unconscious rulers of the world. Poets become greatly admired because their poems silently strike at the minds of the readers and thus become greatly valued. Almost all the Mizo poets write about nature, about the beauty and the deterioration of it. This chapter will analyse the poems originally written in Mizo (and translated into English) and the poems written in English in their depiction of the landscape. The aesthetic beauty of the landscape is brought out by the earlier Mizo

poets whose works have been translated. The translated poems of Vankhama (1906-1970), Rokunga (1914-1969), James Dokhuma (1932-2007), Jimmy L. Chhangte and Capt. L.Z. Sailo (1924-2008) will be studied. The atmosphere of the poems itself give a sense of peace to the reader as the reader is taken to “the fairest dream-land” (Khangte 2004: 37).

In Mizo history, the period from 1920 to 1950 was called the “Patea Age,” Patea (1894-1950) being the most prominent writer of this age. During this period most of the poems/songs were written in terms of the Mizo tradition of song-writing. This tradition of song-writing has been carried on till the present day. Most of the songs and poems written from the 1920s to 1960s were about the Christian God. Between the later 1960s to the 1980s, the songs and poems were mainly about the land, the people and patriotism. The Mizo poets follow a certain style for each specific period. The insurgencies of the 1960s disheartened the people and made them alienate themselves from the “outside” world. The Mizo poets have come to realize how valuable their land is where “...flowers bloom, the sweet scent of joy blows in breeze” (Khangte 2002: 37).

The Natural Picturesque

The picturesque is a way of framing the landscape where history is not portrayed as time but as a glimpse. It is the regulation of distance from where the viewer is viewing. In Mizo poetry, especially in the nature poems, a clear image of nature is seen from a distance. In the picturesque, there is a kind of control on the viewer’s distance. This distancing is necessary for appreciating the landscape. In the picturesque, different objects having some connection are assembled together. The question of distance and variety is all about detail. The politics of the picturesque is about the position of the viewer, the view point. The picturesque of the Mizo poems is rooted in the land in the same way that the picturesque of Price² was grounded in the land. The aesthetics of the

² Stephen Copley and Peter Garside 1994: 20.

picturesque was regarded by Price to comprise all rough objects and abrupt deviations. Knight³ declares that a matter of association is needed for the appreciation of the rugged objects. In the mind of the poets, twisted roots, fallen trees and leaves, and dried up and shaggy weeds appeared beautiful. The use of the term “picturesque” is to bring forth the framing and portrayal of the landscape by the Mizo poets and to further study the politics which lies therein.

Life, Beauty and Nature

In the earlier Mizo poems there is a vivid description of nature. In Vankhama's *'Rimawi Ram'* translated as 'The Land of Sweet Sounds' by Sangliana we find various names of trees and insects which are unique to the land. The scents of “*herhse*,⁴ *khiang*⁵ and *ngiau*⁶” (Khiangte 2002: 36) fill the forest. The chirps of the crickets, the love-call of “*Katchat*”⁷ fills the moonlit forest and morning is welcomed by “*Chinrang*” and “*Rengchal-pa*” from the deep forest. Rokunga's “*Kan Zotlang Ram Nuam*” translated as “Our Fair Mizo Hill” by Lalthankima praises the “...land of beauty; our Mizo land” (Khiangte 2002: 37). Rokunga goes back into time, when “...in day of yore we dwelt in fear of spirits, / Here we passed the dark ages in fear of foes,” (Khiangte 2002: 38). Nature is portrayed as a picture where everything is beautifully exhibited. He goes on to challenge the youth of his time to pave the way for them and for the ones to come after them. He also prays that the blessings of the Heavenly Father would never leave them. Jimmy L. Chhangte has translated his poem “*Kan Lenna Zo Hmunsang*” as “Our Beauteous Land” (Khiangte 2002: 45). In this poem, he writes about the land where “...the gentle breeze keeps blowing free” and also where “lovely flora and fauna abound” (Khiangte 2002: 45). He calls his people “children of the Lord” (Khiangte 2002: 45) because the blessings of the Lord are so bountiful.

³ Mavis Batey 1994: 123

⁴ Botanical name is *Messua ferrea* and its common name is *Nahor* or *Nageswar*.

⁵ Botanical name is *Schima wallichii* and its common name is *Chilauni*.

⁶ Name of a tree.

⁷ This and the following italicized words are names of insects

In his '*Naubanpar*' (the Orchid) P.S. Chawngthu admires the blooming of the orchid. The orchid can even soothe the poet's aching heart even when he merely looks at its "unfading beauty" (Khangte 2002: 39). Vankhama has written a poem on the wild cherry tree '*Tlaizawng Par*' where he describes the short time when the flower of the wild cherry sprouts till its full bloom; it is nursed by winter's light and clear dew. Bees and butterflies are attracted by its beauty. It is sad for a flower so beautiful to fade and die so quickly. The beauty of the cherry is worthy of eternal life but it is not the way Mother Nature works. However, human intervention has worsened the situation. Nature and the landscape which is being portrayed as beautiful can no longer be beautiful for all time. The landscape, nature and the wild-life have gradually deteriorated. The poets have written about the beauty of nature and the importance of preserving it. There is a transformation of the land with the entry of humans. Nature can no longer maintain its unpolluted condition but instead becomes contaminated with the different measures made towards the improvement of the landscape.

Nostalgia, Rootedness and Unity

In most of the Mizo poetry, there is a formation of an "intertwined community" (term taken from Dubois 1903) of feeling. This formation of a community of feeling arises out of a shared feeling of nostalgia for the past and for one's ancestors. A common ancestry becomes the guiding factor for the unity of the people. Fred Lee Hord and Jonathan Scott Lee, two well-known theorists of Black Aesthetics and literary theory have written that identity is constructed by sharing beliefs and ideas, set of deeds and the expected outcome (Hord and Lee 1995). The Black thinkers and artists take it upon themselves to write about the collective identity and the problems of the Blacks as a whole. Hord and Lee have put forth the principle that "I am because we are" to explain their views on the notion of collective race/identity which they regard to be the outcome of a notion of culture. The principle of "I am because we are" has been and is still being used by the Mizo poets in their assertion that the individual, especially in the Mizo society, can never be separated from the social and cultural atmosphere s/he lives

in. The Mizo poets feel the need to revive the traditions and culture which have been lost and buried in the past.

Capt. L.Z. Sailo, a prominent Mizo poet who has even been awarded the Padma Bhushan Award, has been called “Mr. Chhinlunga” (*Pu Chhinlunga*) because of the many efforts he has made to bring together the different tribes of Mizo who, myth has it, originated from the Chhinlung rock. Most of his poems which he has written in praise of Mizoram and its people reflects his anxiety to bring about the different tribes and sub-tribes of Mizo from all regions together. Sailo believes that through his poetry he can carry the message of the much needed unity of the Mizos to all the Mizos. Since the Mizos are still a small ethnic community the need to unite is felt even more. W. E. B. DuBois has mentioned the “intertwined community of souls” of the Blacks (Dubois, 1903). Sailo writes about the “intertwined community of souls” of the Mizos in his poems like ‘*Zoram ka Hmangaih Che*’ (Zoram⁸ I love you) where he writes

Zofa chi tin zalengte kan lenna (L.Z. Sailo, 2008, 6)

A place where all tribes of Mizo live together (my translation)

In ‘*Kan Zotlang Ram Nuam*’ (Our Pleasant Mizo Hill), Rokunga has also written that his land is a place where all the Mizos from the different places come together united. The unity of the land is kept so that the younger generations will be able to live in peace and furthermore carry on the message of peace and unity. He writes that the beauty of his land is like “the fairest dreamland” (Khiangte 2002: 37). James Dokhuma in his poem ‘*Siamtu Khuarel*’ (Creator’s Perfect Plan), writes also about the unity of the people. They have a shared “community of feeling” where –

We share the same joys and sorrows,

Both rich and poor. (Khiangte 2002: 44)

In ‘*Chhaktiang Thlifim*’ (‘*Purvaiya* – The East Wind’), it is the *Purvaiya* which unites the North-eastern states together because it touches each and every one of them. James

⁸ *Zoram* is a Mizo way of saying Mizoram.

Dokhuma writes not only about the unity of the Mizos but also about the unity of the Mizos with the other North-eastern states. The Assamese, Manipuri, Mizos, Tripuris and the host community of West Bengal are all brought together by the *Purvaiya*. They are the tributaries of the East wind which all flow together to join the “National Mainstream” (Khangte 2002: 47). It is the *Purvaiya*, which does not blow in the other parts of the country, which makes the northeastern states share a common phenomenon. It is nature which brings the Northeastern states together. In ‘*Chhinlung Naufa Kan Ni*’ (‘We are the Children of Chhinlung’) L.Z. Sailo writes

...

Unau inhai inpumkhat lohna hi,

Kan ram leh hnam hmelma a nih hriain;

Hmakhawsanga chung Pathian ruat ang khan,

Lungrualtea len zai i rel ang u. (L.Z. Sailo 2008: 16)

Remembering that disregard for one’s kinfolk and disunity,

Are the enemies of our land and culture;

In the way the God above has intended,

Let us try to live together in peace. (my translation)

and in ‘*Zoluti Tuallenna*’ (The Playground of Zoluti) he writes –

...

Kawr vai hnawlin nunkhua an lo hmang thin (L.Z. Sailo 2008: 104)

They would spend their life separating themselves from

the mainlanders (my translation).

Most of the Mizo poets prefer the use of “We” over “I.” The word “We” signifies a unity and a bond and a feeling which is shared. It is fear of the “strange” and “alien” and fear of losing one’s sense of identity which causes “like to cling to like” (Reece: 127).

Life and the untainted wilderness

L.Z. Sailo has written about the beauty of the setting sun on the sky after rain during monsoon in 'Fur Khaw Thiang' which means clear monsoon sky. In his poem 'Buannel⁹ Ram' he writes about the unpolluted woods and forests where all sorts of flowers and animals live together in harmony. He reminisces about the times when his ancestors had once lived together in their clean and unpolluted woodlands:

*Aw thang leh tharten engtin ngai ve tak ang maw,
Pi pu lenlai tawnmang iang thamral tawh hnu;
Awm har lunglen dawn chang ni hian,
Thang leh tharten engtin ngai ve ang maw,
Buannel, Buannel, Chawngtinleri run remna,
Zuksial chungah chuangin lenlai engtin hmang ve ang
maw. (L.Z. Sailo 2003: 10)*

What will the younger generations think of this,
The days of our ancestors which have faded away just like
a dream;
When in deep thought in times of loneliness,
How will the younger generations think of this
Buannel, Buannel, a place where Chawngtinleri¹⁰ finds serenity,
Riding on top of a deer-bull, how would she have spent
her life (my translation)

The Mizos believe that Nature is feminine and, as seen in the quoted lines above, also believe in a female deity, *Chawngtinlerhi*, to be the protector of Nature. Tlangrokhuma,

⁹ Buannel means a forest or woodland which hasn't been tainted by humans.

¹⁰ In Mizo Mythology, Chawngtinleri is considered to be a fairy or deity who protects wildlife, the animals and plants. Legend has it that she would frequent the hills and valleys between *Phawngpui Tlang* (Phawngpui Hill) situated in the southern Mizoram and *Tan Tlang* (Tan Hill) situated in the western part of Mizoram.

a well-known Mizo artist has given a beautiful description of the untainted wilds with clear skies and *Chawngtinlerhi* riding on an animal in his painting ‘*Buannel Ram Dai*’ (‘The Cool Untainted Forest’). Edward Carpenter has mentioned that woman is the more “primitive, the more intuitive, the more emotional” and that she is somehow situated nearer to “the great unconscious and cosmic processes of Nature” (Carpenter 1894: 8-9). In ‘*Chhimbai Mawi Zamna*’ (‘Where the Beautiful Rainbow Spreads Over the Sky’), L.Z. Sailo calls Mizoram a place “where the beautiful rainbow spreads over the sky.” He wishes that all the Mizos would live together in this beautiful place where the scents of flowers fill the air and the grasses are green and orchids bloom. He even writes –

Hmanah Eden hlimthla liam hnu min ngaihtir thin (L.Z. Sailo 2003: 14)

It makes me long for the shadow of Eden which has faded away a long time ago. (my translation)

Vankhama also muses over the days gone by as he “...roam[s] the old fields in pensive memory” (Khangte 2002: 36). According to Mona Zote the Mizos are

...a gregarious people with a congenital antipathy toward solitude...who have elevated the introverted quality of melancholy, *lunglenna*, to lyrical superstatus (‘Heaven in Hell’, Sen 2006: 206)

In Mizo poetry the term and the very being of ‘*lunglenna*’ (which signifies a feeling of melancholy and loneliness) is seen quite frequently. In ‘*Rimawi Ram*’ (The Land of Sweet Sounds), Vankhama writes –

Lung ti leng thal romei a lo Zam a (Khangte 2002: 35)

Dreamy haze spreads awakening old memories (translated
by Sangliana; Khiangte 2002: 36)

He has written about the cycle of life in nature where the sound of the birds chirping, together with the sounds of the insects in the green forests, brings back fond memories for the poet. The falling of the old leaves is followed by the budding of the new shoots which come alive in spring-time. Jimmy L. Chhangte has also written about the different seasons in his land which is there for the delight of the people. He has defined Mizoram as “*hmangaih ram*,” (Khiangte 2002: 44) a land of love. The poet and his people express their joy through songs which echoes throughout the hills. Nature and the wild-life are for him blessings from above which are poured down as a sign of immense love. For the Mizo poets, nature has the power to evoke nostalgia and long-gone feelings. The earlier poets write a lot on the soothing appeal of nature.

The immense praise of their land by the Mizo poets shows their contentment in their land. Rokunga’s ‘*Kan Zotlang Ram Nuam*’ (‘Our Pleasant Mizo Hill’) also brings forth the beauty of nature and the purity of the woodlands. He writes –

I mawi em e, kan Zoram hmun sang,

Fiara tui thiang kan dawnna;

Tlang tina thing tin zar mawi leh romei zam karah

...

Aw i mawi chuang e, kan lenna Zo tlang ram nuam.

...

Hei ang ram nuam reng hi ram dang awm ve maw,

...

Hei ai ram nuam zawk hi awm chuangin ka ring nem maw (Khiangte 2002: 37)

You are so beautiful, our *Zoram* of the highlands,

Where we receive the pure sweet drink of joy;

Amidst the branching trees of the hills and the spreading haze

...

You are beautiful beyond compare, our pleasant Mizo hill.

...

Is there any land as pleasant as this land,

...

I believe that there is no other land as pleasant as this land
(my translation)

This poem clearly portrays the contentment of the people of Mizoram in their land. L.Z Sailo has also emphasized on the beauty of his land. The land is portrayed like a beautiful scene with exquisite rainbows, and sweet smelling flowers and wild animals and plants of all kinds. Using this attractive portrayal of the land he writes about living together peacefully in that land. However, this portrayal is not shared by the outsiders. In '*Hnam Lungphum*' ('A Nation's Foundation Stone') he writes –

Kan tlangram leh zo lui luangte,

Thlangkawrvai lengte chuan;

Hnuchhawn ram ianga hnawl zelin,

Thlaler ram ro an lo ti maw? (L.Z Sailo 2003: 62)

The mainlanders from the west perceive

Our hilly land and flowing rivers

To be a forsaken land and have rejected it,

How could they have called it a dry desert land? (my translation)

The hills and the woodlands do not seem to attract the mainlanders as it does the inhabitants. The Mizo poets have written a lot on the beauty of their land as they feel that it is the place where they want to be. In the end, it is always one's homeland which

holds more sway to one's heart. Even though, as already discussed, the mainlanders have rejected their land as a forsaken land, the natives do not stop praising its various beauties. Even though their land may be covered with hills and may not have as much resources as the plains, the presence of trees and plants and wild animals makes them value their land even more. Their immense praise of their land shows their contentment with their land which is their rightful property.

Transformation of the Land

...to recall the landscape is to trigger affection,
melancholia and anger (Nayar 2008: 11)

Malsawmi Jacob regards Nature and the whole of Creation to be related to God. She considers the sunshine, the blue sky, the trees, the wind, the flowers, the seas, the waves, lightning and thunder, rocks and mountains to be speaking of God's kindness, power and love. In "There Came a Knocking," the poet writes that the beauty of early dawn and noon day sun, the mountain rock and summer breeze are all inside God, created by God. The total landscape including the vast oceans and all of the living beings are considered to be gifts. The earth has to be cared for as "she" is "your life's sap" (Jacob 2002: 77). In "Go Gentle," Jacob considers the plants and trees to be precious because they are Nature's gifts. The wealth of Nature is being seized, abused and squandered by the humans. The earth is compared to a woman who carries the living beings on her lap. In 'Ram Humhalh Hla' (Song for the Preservation of Land/Wildlife), L.Z. Sailo writes that the inhabitants have to change the land back to a place where flowers and trees of all kind blossom and bloom instead of merely writing about the beauty of the land. The inhabitants have to take upon themselves to maintain the beauty of their land which they regard is a work of Mother Nature. He writes –

Thing leh maurua kan ram timawitu,

Pi pu chena an hril ram nuam;

Sen mei hrang nen suat iangin maw,

Thlaler ram ro kan va hnaih ta em ve. (L.Z. Sailo 2003: 87)

Trees and bamboos which beautify our land,

A land which has been said to be pleasant from the time
of our ancestors;

Destroying like the red fire,

The land is nearing to become a desert land. (my translation)

There was a time when the beauty of Nature could not fade. But with the coming of humans, the landscape of beauty starts deteriorating with the different transformations. There was a time when the earlier Mizos had lived in peace with the wild animals. With the changes brought about by so-called ‘development’, land is destroyed and animals and plants are mowed down ruthlessly by technology.

In Jimmy L. Chhange’s “Our Beauteous Land,” the creatures inhabiting the land are trampled upon by the humans. The cries of the creatures are heard deep in the forest as they have been destroyed by the race of Humankind. The different species of creatures have cried out as they are slowly being wiped out from the face of the living world. Jimmy L. Chhange has portrayed Humankind’s pursuit of the beauties of nature and the wildlife for mere selfish benefits. In “Our Beauteous Land,” he writes –

Malsawmna ropui dawng chung hian,

Ngai teh! Kawng bovin hnutiang kan chhawn;

Nungchate tilunghnurtu kan ni,

Siamtu Lal thinlai a na lua e;

Ram daiah luaithli nul au ri chuan,

Khawngaihna min ngen e, ngui nghiaiin! (Khiangte 2002: 45)

While being bestowed the great blessing,

Look at us! Losing our way we depart;
We have disturbed the wild-life,
The Creator God is heart-broken;
The cry of the wind in the cool lands,
Miserably begs for sympathy (my translation)

The picturesque of beauty is gradually transformed into a picturesque of deterioration.

In 'Death and Life', Malsawmi Jacob has defined "life" as –

Sunshine and rainbow,
White peaks and blue sea,
Eagle's wings and music. (Jacob 2003: 73)

In 'Death and Life', she depicts the kind of life in a world where death reigns. She also depicts the cycle of life where the indifference of nature to its own is clearly portrayed. Even the worm which faithfully does its duty in the cycle of life simply becomes "snuffed out" as it is too tiny to be acknowledged by the humans. A homeless street dog dies and is "laid out cold." A bird is killed and its song is no longer heard. At the same time, the humans have become too busy with "life" that they do not have time to be concerned about the continuation of "life." To breathe, to move, to sleep and to wake up, to eat and drink is not what life is all about. It is the creations which define life. It is no longer the nearby scenery which reminds one of "life" but the distant scenery which

–

Looks fresh and green,
Washed clean and plain
By summer rain ('Summer Noon', Jacob 2002: 72)

which takes one back to feel the presence of "life." The land which the earlier poets have depicted as "beauteous" has become a –

...dark land,

Where the sun does not rise! ('My Land', Jacob 2002: 74)

The land where the "sweet song-birds and cicadas unite" (Khangte 2002: 36) has turned into a place where –

Crime is the order of the day,

Justice is a mockery,

Each day's news

Is a horror story ('My Land', Jacob 2002: 74)

The voice is an angry cry which "weeps tears of blood" (Jacob 2002: 74). As the poet looks back, she recalls in anger the situations which have changed their land into a "dark land." The love for her land makes her look back to the past and again look into the present condition of life with a disillusioned heart. The poems of Jeremi Zobiaka also depict the deterioration of humanity where life has started to wither away. In 'Why Can't We', he writes –

I see tomorrow coming to meet us

Without a patch of green

...

I see the flowers, green fields and meadows

Wither away so soon

And man tomorrow – weeping in so slow

Beneath the scorching sun (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 44)

His works cover a wide period of time from the post-insurgency period to the coming of the new millennium. He wrote at a time when the effects of insurgencies and immense deforestation had taken place. The Government of India had launched an operation “Operation Security” where villages were being regrouped so that they would be able to maintain a military operation as the interior villages had been controlled by the underground forces. The villages would be re-grouped and many of the villagers had to leave their villages. On an average, every five villages would be re-grouped into two. There were many ghost-towns/villages as they had to be left behind as it was for the “security” of the people. The security forces would burn down the nearest village where an encounter happened between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the security forces. The uncontrolled burning of the villages led to uncontrolled deforestation which further led to the decrease of forest area and forest produce (Hmingthanzuali and Rekha Pande, *Asian Agri-History* Vol. 13 no. 2, 2009, 140). Jeremi Zobiaka further writes –

Why can't we stop it coming to meet us

Why don't we open our minds? (Ngurthankhumi, 2000, 44)

It is deforestation which slowly sweeps across Mizoram and which brings about the destruction of the land. In the year 1966, the entire Mizo District was declared as a disturbed area under the Assam Disturbed Area Act and the Assam and Manipur Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (Lalnithanga 2005:34). The re-grouping of the villages was followed by the process of urbanization where the villages were transformed into townships within a short span of time. People started moving to the towns for a “better” life. With the process of urbanization, there was a decrease of population in the country-side. The country-side becomes a place which is admired for its “picturesque beauty.” The picturesque is about a countryside which is slipping away. The rich land-owners have built country-houses where they spend their holidays away from the hustle and bustle of the city-life. Living in the country has become a “romantic” dream where one is in touch with nature and with one's purest thoughts. Jeremi Zobiaka writes -

Imagine living in the country!

Sharing the big beautiful land! (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 46)

The world changes rapidly. At a time when people are flocking towards the cities and towns, the poet longs for a life in the country where the “big beautiful land” can be shared with loved ones. The country-side is romanticized; it is no longer seen as a backward place but instead is seen as a beautiful and calm and serene place. The fact that it is away from civilization makes it even more attractive. In the same way that Wordsworth has romanticized the lives of the farmers and the peasants, Jeremi Zobiaka has also viewed the country-side as a picture which is yet to be explored. He lies in wonder thinking about the country-side, a place where “...nobody has been / And nobody has seen” (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 45). The country-side puts a person’s mind in excited suspense thinking about the things or living beings which may be present there. The mind becomes elevated by the admiration of the beautiful scenes which are often viewed for the first time. Life can never be “normal” in the country-side and woodlands because no one knows what is going to happen next and nothing can be planned much ahead.

The immense migration to the towns and cities has made life unsafe. The change has happened so fast that life itself has become uncertain. Peace and unity is a far-cry in the lives of the people as the poet writes –

I can hear wailings from the streets

Black gold and blood flows free at your feet

The blood is thicker than the gold (Ngurthankhumi 2000: 91)

In a world where people are racing to have the latest gadgets and achieve the greatest knowledge, the Mizos are still practicing ‘Jhum’ cultivation which is also known as ‘Shifting’ cultivation. In ‘Jhum Cultivation’, large patches of land are burnt as a means

of preparing the land for cultivation. In Mizoram, during the months of November and December, the land is cleared and made ready and by the month of March the land is burnt. The ashes and the cinders are considered to provide nutrients to the soil which acts as good fertilizers. After the plants are sowed and reaped, the harvesters would shift to another land for cultivation and this process goes on and on following a certain cultivation cycle of around 20 years. With the increase in population, the cultivation cycle has become shortened a great deal. Some poor farmers even have to cultivate on the same land after two or three years due to the pressure of population increase and the decrease in land availability. The land produce decreases as a result of the pressured use of the land. A cycle of two to three years can only do damage to the land because even a cycle of 10 to 12 years will no longer be an economic form of agriculture (International Journal of Social Economics 1997: 787). The ecological balance is destroyed by 'Shifting Cultivation' and even causes soil erosion. While burning the land for cultivation, the burnt land area is always larger than the actual cultivated area. This type of cultivation is practised till the present day and so large numbers of animals, insects, birds, trees and plants are killed till the present day. There are often times when the burning becomes uncontrolled as a result of which private lands get burnt. Every year during the month of March, the State Government gives permission to the farmers to burn their lands. Due to immense burning the flights are often unable to land and there are times when the flights are cancelled even for one whole week. This in turn brings about problems for the people especially in case of emergency.

The scenery where "Lovely flora and fauna abound / On the hills and down the vales" (Khangte 2002: 45) has been replaced by the image of "A boy and his gun" (*Indian Literature*, 2006). The time when Nature is seen as a source of beauty and serenity is gradually disappearing. Nature and life itself is seen as something intimidating because one does not know what it is going to bring forth. In 'The Whores of August', Mona Zote writes –

I see the moon beneath the leaves

And cower, cower. (Nongkynrih and Ngangom, 2003, 201)

The image of “green trees,” “gentle breeze,” “smiling flowers” and butterflies has disappeared. Nature and the heavenly bodies and forces of nature are now being viewed as the unknown. They are seen as forces which cannot be tamed or maneuvered by humankind. The admirer of nature looks at nature and sees the peaceful scenery and is filled with a complacency of mind. In ‘*Kan Zotlang Ram Nuam*’ (‘Our Pleasant Mizo Hill’), Rokunga writes –

O'er thy hills and dales reigneth abiding peace,
Here flowers bloom, the scent of joy blows in breeze,
'Tis of thee we sing, land of beauty; our Mizo land.
(Khangte 2002: 37)

The forests and country-side have been exploited to fulfill the selfish demands of the humans in order to further their possessions. The songs about the “land of beauty” have been smothered by the plaintive cries of the animals from the woods. The “land of beauty; our Mizo land” is gradually turning into “holy mothworm ground” (Mona Zote’s ‘The Whore’s of August’, Nongkynrih and Ngangom 201). The image of “a hundred footsteps / Tramping by” is the warning of impending doom for both the humans and the wild-life alike. It is the “hundred footsteps” coming in from the outside which uproot the very essence of the land. With their teaching of religion and progress, the outsiders have brought with them various ideas which have infiltrated the minds of the natives. Progress and development suggested a discontinuity with one’s ethnic ancestry and more over suggested a newer and “better” style of living. The mannerisms of the outsiders were being slowly practiced by the natives. The traditions have gradually changed and the once merry and unified people have taken on the habits and characters of the “better” people. They have been led to the point where their personal loneliness which is “held at bay by a smile or a stone” (‘This is so’, 202) smothers

them. In 'This is So,' Mona Zote describes the dilapidated condition of life as being "curled up on the wet rags of humanity" (Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 202).

In 'What Poetry Means to Ernestina in Peril', Mona Zote gives a picture of a woman smoking a cigarillo in the hills on a summer evening. In 'Girl, with Black Guitar and Blue Hibiscus', Mona Zote mentions the sorrow of the pigeons and the looming clouds which "will be noble and distant as always" (Sen 2006: 67). The scents of the citrus flowers fade away but the image of the young girl who puts a flower in her hair remains. The flowers and the evening sky are linked with woman as she finds serenity and fulfillment in them as she always lifts "her teacup / in friendly greeting to the hills and loquacious stars" (Sen 2006: 66).

Zote's 'Rez' is a poem which depicts

pictures of war

people getting shot (poet's italics)

houses pulled down

heads shorn (*Indian Literature*, 2006)

In this poem, Mona Zote portrays the picturesque of deterioration where we find "the red lakes / and razor blade hills of our mind." With the change of the picturesque comes a change where spring becomes "brutal" and even the summer becomes "cold-blooded." The beauty of the lilies is no longer realized; they are seen as a force which will "bind" a person. The landscape of beauty has turned into a landscape of suffering where the suffering of the people is linked with the suffering of nature.

The landscape of beauty deteriorates and humankind's use of the land for selfish benefits becomes the factor for the gradual destruction of the landscape. The entry of humans into the forests is not necessarily the indisputable factor for the destruction of land. It is when the humans do not consider the life of the other living creatures that they end up destroying them forgetting that their survival depends on their harmony

with nature. Nature may nurture them for the present time but if they do not nurture it back, the survival of the both of them may diminish. Nature and the landscape which was pictured as beautiful will and has started to be seen as a picturesque of suffering and deterioration.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Varied themes have been discussed and analysed from different levels in the dissertation. The Mizo poets of different backgrounds and varied lifestyles have brought forth the ingenuity of Mizo poetry. Their differences are forgotten in their discussion of identity. Although analysed from different levels, the issue of identity, the search for Mizo identity is central to all the Mizo poets. The analysis may be from the angle of one's analysis of the self, one's analysis of the woman and the land. The Nature poems talk of life, beauty and death. The identity of a person is linked with her/his land. The immense praise of the homeland by the Mizo poets writing in English can also be taken to be the praise of the people inhabiting the land. The beauty of the land is replaced by deterioration because of the misuse of the land for selfish purposes by the humans. There is a link between the poet and his land as it is his land which defines his identity and his very being.

Christianity is followed by the majority of people in Mizoram. The entry of Christianity in the late nineteenth century brought along with it a new identity for the Mizos. Religion also becomes a part of identity creation. Mona Zote writes that "religion has made drunks of us all" ('What Poetry means to Ernestina in Peril', Sen, 67). Revivalism is one of the markers of the Mizo Christians. There are a large number of Revival speakers who are invited to preach in respective churches who feel the need for revivalism. Speaking in tongues and spiritual dancing became "popular" especially during the revivals. This new religion brought with it literacy and gradually modernity came in touch with the people. The "cultural bomb" ('This is so' 202) is brought in by the British, "...a hundred footsteps / Tramping" ('This is so' 202). As a result of this, the Mizos gradually become introduced to the outside world and with it comes the impossibility of living secluded from the outside world. Multiculturalism brings to light the insecurities of the ethnic identity of the Mizos. Reservation swoops in as the saving factor. Reservation is also one big factor which separates the Mizos from the people

who are not under reservation. There is a re-construction of a new ethnic identity based on multiculturalism. The representation of the Mizo people, a people who have been secluded from the outside world by law in the form of an Inner Line Permit (ILP), is compared to the power play between the master and the pet by Malsawmi Jacob. Because of this ILP, the Mizos have become secluded from the mainland of India. The Mizos are a tribe who need representation before the Central Government. Even though the Mizos also elect their own representatives, it is the poets who voice the difficulties of representing a large group of people by a few representatives. The Mizos come under the group of Scheduled Tribes under the Indian Government where they are given “reservations” in matters of application to Government jobs and admission to Government institutions. This “reservation” even gives concession in the travelling charge to “tribal” or “reserved” students travelling in the second class sleeper trains. To be named a Scheduled tribe brings with it many advantages but being the smaller and socially isolated tribe they are still the ones who are denied attention and representation.

Woman has always been regarded to be “sexuality itself” having “no definite individual limits” (Weininger 1975: 111). Jeremi Zobiaka uses this portrayal of women in his poetry, where the women are the ones who have sexual power over him. At the same time, woman has a desire to be protected by her husband which is repaid in turn by her devotion to the man’s every needs and desires. The 1990s brought about a change in the outlook of many feminists as a result of a discussion which concluded that women were in a stronger position to take control of their intimate lives with men (Bristow 2007: 54). Feelings such as imbalance of the passions as a result of behavioural and historical causes are always endowed to woman. Woman is often seen as “unreason” where her unreason can be read as a refusal to enter the patriarchal world, sometimes protesting unknowingly. Displacement of woman from her space and subjugation of woman may often lead to her unreason and derangement. Woman is a fragment of a whole life, a life which is completed by a husband and children whom she believes will provide for her (Martin 1987: 63). It is the imbalance of passions which make woman unstable and as a result of this woman is being silenced through the

“language of madness and obsession” (Martin 1987: 64). The Mizo poets have portrayed the woman as a sexual person, as a person who needs a man to attain wholeness in body and in mind and also as interlinked with nature. This worldwide perspective needs to be changed from various angles.

This dissertation studied the poems of Malsawmi Jacob, Mona Zote, Laldinkima Sailo and Jeremi Zobiaka which were all written in English and the poems of Vankhama, Rokunga, James Dokhuma, Jimmy L. Chhangte and Capt. L.Z Sailo which were all written in Mizo, some of which were translated into English by me. The Mizos live in a community where song and poetry takes up a prominent position. The study of Mizo poetry cannot exclude the songs because it is the songs which popularize the writing of songs and poems. Some of the Mizo songs, such as the ones included in *Mizo Songs and Folktales*, are included in the realm of poetry. The objective of this dissertation is to bring about some knowledge of the kind of poetry written in the hills, which is still somehow secluded from the world in many ways. Among the four poets writing in English, one male poet and one woman poet is married. The poets are also of different ages where the youngest is as young as sixteen years when he published his collection of poems and the oldest is fifty-two years old. Their different backgrounds and age-groups give a wide perspective to the kind of poetry written by Mizo poets as a result of which a wide reading and interpretation is required. This dissertation brings forth the different observations of different Mizo poets which brings about a better understanding of the lives lived by the Mizos. The kind of society and the culture and lifestyle of the people are also clearly studied through the poems. The influence of the changes brought in from the outside world on the people is seen in the selected poems. The selected poets position a mirror where the outsiders and the mainlanders may easily look and see the lives and emotions of the people they portray. Many of the Mizo poets writing in Mizo have been excluded because of insufficient space for their study. The poems and songs of the poets writing in Mizo will provide a large topic where a separate and wider study can be made. This dissertation acts as a means to introduce Mizo poetry to the outside world.

Even though the realm of translation has been included, an in depth study has not been made. A study of translated Mizo literary works will provide a new sphere of study free of any barriers. Translated Mizo literary works provide a virgin territory which awaits to be researched on. The study of translated works is required in order to establish facts and reach new and further conclusions. Mizo literature has more works written in Mizo rather than in English and so, translation furthermore provides a wider sphere for research which will also enrich Mizo literature at the same time.

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