

Mizo Folklore- 1

FOLKTALES OF MIZORAM



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Dr.Laltluangliana Khiangte

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Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte

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Laltluangliana Khiangte, M.A.; Ph.D.; FUWAI

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INTRODUCTION

The first volume of **Mizo Folklore** that is, *Folktales of Mizoram* has been prepared for the interest of non-Mizo friends who would like to know more about the tribal culture, literature and folktales of the Mizos. The second and third volume of **Mizo folklore** will also be published in the following years.

In all the these volumes my main aim is to let other people know about tales of the tribe, heroes and heroines and their achievements, oral literature and their culture and folklore of the tribe of Mizo. I know that many scholars would like to examine the rich folkloristic and cultural heritage of the Mizo tribe.

If my finding is correct, Lt. Col. T.H. Lewin B.S.C., whom the Mizos called Thangliana, the then Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hills was the first man to reduce Mizo language into writing.

In his **Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language**, published in 1874, T.H. Lewin had written down a good number of Mizo vocabularies with sentences and also annotated three of the popular folk tales in Mizo. That was the first ever printed materials of Mizo folk literature.

T.H.Lewin wrote the three folk tales very briefly as told by Chama, a boy of 14 year old from the village of Chief Rothangpuia. T.H.Lewin recorded how he came to know about the story of Chemtatrawta as below:

.....During the narration we were surrounded by a circle of children who listened with great delight, although they must have heard the tale often before. Like Squire Hardcastle's story of 'grouse in the gun room' however the story had not lost flavour by age or repetition-but the climax was reached when I afterwards read out from my note book what had been related, and the shouts of laughter brought the chief out of his house to see what was the matter.....

It happens that the story of Chemtatrawta finds a parallel in the English nursery tale of*'how....then the cat began to kill the rat, the rat began to gnaw the robe, the robe began to hang the butcher, the butcher began to kill the ox, the ox began to drink the water, the water began to quench the fire, the fire began to burn the stick, the stick began to beat the pig, and thus enabled the old woman to get home before night-fall....*

I think this is not the only one. One may expect several other folk tales which may be more or less identical to the folk tales of the neighbouring tribes or other nations. In order to compare or having a better knowledge of what our forefathers had handed down to us through oral literature, the present collection of tales will help us while examining folklore of different tribes.

After T.H. Lewin, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills J. Shakespear published a few of Mizo folktales and non-Mizo tales in Mizo language in his **Mizo and Non-Mizo Tales**, published in 1898. There are six Mizo folktales, which were narrated briefly and three non-Mizo tales. Another man called Rev. F.J. Sandy, a Welsh Missionary to the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, published **A legend of old Lushai** in 1919. In this book Rev. Sandy collected twenty two short tales, the same book got second print in 1926.

In all these three books, the story teller were non-Mizos. The way they narrated those tales and the manner of writing is a bit different from the original version as told by some aged persons of the tribe.

After a long period of time Mrs Nuchhungi of Serkawn also narrated some Mizo folk tales for children and she published those tales in **Serkawn Graded** text book. It was P.S. Dahrawka who collected a good number of Mizo folktales in Mizo language and published his book **Mizo Thawnthu** (means Mizo folktales in 1962). In recent years even some other writer also collected Mizo folktales in Mizo language.

Mizo folktales had been translated into English by some writers, which they have included in a chapter of their book. Among them **The Lushei-Kuki Clan** by Lt.Col. J. Shakespear, **Lushai Chrysalis** (1949) by A.G. McCall, **Tribal Folktale of Assam** (1970) collected by S.M. Barkataky, **The Mizos** (1978) by Mr. L.B.Thanga may be mentioned. The collector or writer of these books made commendable job in recording some of the Mizo folktales.

Knowing the importance of having a separate volume of Mizo folk tales in book form, I started translating Mizo folktales since 1991. I must not forget to record my heart felt gratitude to those writers and their valuable books. To be precise, I've got wise ideas and information from their works. However, those writers have left out a good number of tales which I have translated in my own way.

In fact, all these translations were carried out according to the information I have received from my grandfather. I was very fortunate that during my childhood days my grand-father Rev. Liangkhaia (who was a Writer, Historian, Poet, Theologian, Astronomer, Preacher and Story teller) told me a lot of tales and real life stories.

Besides him, my grand-mother and other grand old men and grand old women always told me those interesting episodes and stories of long ago, including those of creation and heavenly tales. So, in my translation I followed the story outlines as told by my grand-father and mother.

It is interesting to know that the world of Mizo folk tale is full of interesting accounts of men's folk and women's folk. I have divided different themes to different section.

In the first section, I have dealt with Chhurbura, who was considered to be the real hero of Mizo folktales. I consider him to be the most interesting character in the world of Mizo folklore. Chhura's humor is inexhaustible and it is interesting for everybody. He may be considered as the most memorable hero in the world of simpletons.

In the second section, I have arranged interesting events in the lives of men folk. There are strong men, famous for their bravery, popularly lazy, extremely handsome, magnificently fast, and various other interesting qualities were found in the characters. The section three is devoted for pathetic accounts of women's folk.

The section four is a special category in which different kinds of stories are put together. In this section animals also can speak and behave like man. May be there was a time when man and animal had common language and communicate one another as we do among human beings.

I must say that the folktales I had collected are very popular among the Mizos even today. Though it is a literal translation I hope that this will be an eye-opener for those people who would like to do further study in Mizo folktales and try to study Mizo folk literature. As stated earlier the second and third volume of **Mizo Folklore** will be published as soon as possible and I wish every reader to enjoy these tales in the highest degree.

Fakrûn, (Laltluangliana Khiangte)

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Illustrations are given in random.



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