

# DEVELOPMENT OF MIZO POETRY

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## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

'Mizoram' means the land of the Mizos: "Mizo" denotes the people while "Ram" the land or country. It was formerly known as Lushai Hills.<sup>1</sup> It is located with 20.20' and 24.27' North of Latitude and 92.20' and 93.29' degree East of Longitude, having 630 miles international boundary with Burma on the east and Bangladesh on the west. And its bounded by Manipur and Assam (Cachar district) on the north, and Tripura on the north-west. It has an area of 21,087 square kilometres.

Mizoram is hilly and rugged. The hill ranges are stretching from the North to the South with narrow and deep gorges. The average height of the hills is 900 to 1000 metres. Naturally the Hills in the eastern part are higher than the hills in the western part of the state.<sup>2</sup> Many rivers are found in the narrow valleys at the foot of the ranges flowing along the directions of the hill ranges.

1. By an Act of the Parliament the name "Lushai Hills" was changed the "Mizo District" in September 1954. And with the implementation of the North Eastern Re-Organisation Act (1971), Mizo District got the status of Union Territory on 21st January, 1972, and was rechristened "Mizoram".
2. Geological Survey of India, Know your District "Mizoram" Shillong, 1976.

Having source in the high hills, thousands of streams and small rivers flow with strong current to join the bigger rivers.

The climate in Mizoram is moderate. The atmosphere in the low valley is a bit sultry, but it is fairly cool in the higher ranges. The people live on the hill-top where the climate is pleasant throughout the year. The average temperature recorded in Mizoram is 11°C to 21°C in winter and 20°C to 29°C in summer. Like in other country, Mizoram also have the four seasons, and each season brings new thought to the poets. Favang, the autumn is the most pleasant season. In this season when rain is over, the sky is wonderfully blue and it inspires many Mizo poets to compose songs. Thlasik (winter) often stirs Mizo poets. The winter mists called Tiauchhum smother the river valleys, giving enchanting view of wide stretches resembling a vast lake. Lloyd, a christian missionary, describes his impression on the winter season in Mizoram as follows: "It is a rare pleasure to look down from the mountain tops especially on a winter morning when the sun is bright and the white mist swirls about like driven snow in the valleys".<sup>3</sup>

3. J.M. Lloyd, On Every High Hills, p.9.

Exaggerating the beauty of the country a British military officer, Lt. Woodthrope, who took part in the Lushai Expedition of 1889 said,

When the mist did not trouble us in early morning the scenery was magnificent. On both sides the mist lay in the valleys like a sea of softest wool, stretching far away for miles, marking out each spur and ravine on the mountain side like little islands, while currents of air below dashed the mist against the steep, outrunning spurs, like mimic breakers against some bold headlands. The hills extended far away to the west, rising range, purple and blue, till the sun appearing above the bluff mass of the Surklang, lighted up the mountain sides with most brilliant tints of orange and green and changed the cold blue of the cloudy sea beneath, into all the varied and delicate tints of mother of pearls, while over all hung the canopy of clear lilac and gold of the morning sky. Such a scene requires a much more eloquent pen than mine to do justice to it, or even to convey any idea of its exceeding beauty.<sup>4</sup>

The charming and dreamy haze enshrouding the mountain tops in the spring thus often arouse the poets' imagination.

Mizoram is covered by thick forests of trees and bamboos. Different kinds of tropical and sub-tropical trees and plants are found in Mizoram. It looks green in all the seasons. Though the panorama of Mizoram is evergreen, trees which let the leaves fall during autumn and winter seasons are also found in some places. The altitude variation seems to be responsible for the differences. In the easter portion

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4. Woodthrope, The Lushai Expedition 1873:313 f.

of the state, open grasses covered slopes are found, with groves of Oak and pine interspersed with rhododendron.<sup>5</sup>

Orchids of almost all kinds could be seen in the branches of the trees which are thickly undergrowth by thorns and canes.<sup>6</sup> Wenger also described Mizoram as a "Botanists' Paradise".<sup>7</sup> These natural beauty and endless variety of landscapes entwined different themes of Mizo poetry.

The life of the Mizos is inter-mingled with the life of animals and birds in the olden days. Legends and poems indicate their close relationship with animals. Even in this late twentieth century, a large species of wild animals, birds, serpents and insects still survive in the state. Large animals found in Mizoram are elephants, bison, tigers, bears, sambar and hog deers. Different types of monkey and reptiles families are also found. Of game birds, there are pheasants, wood and green pigeons, and jungle fowls in abundance. Three distinct species of hornbills are to be met, as also a variety of singing birds and birds of beautiful plumage.

5. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.VI, New Delhi-5, 1975, p.17.

6. A.G. Mc.Call, The Lushai Chrysalis, London, 1949, p.30.

7. Quoted by DIPR & T, Mizoram.

Kites, larks crows, bhimraj, parrot, bulbul, nightjar, snipe are also found in abundance.<sup>8</sup> Vankhama, one of the most famous poet of the Mizos describes Mizoram as Rimawi Ram (the land of Sweet Sound). It runs as follows :

Our pleasant highland clad with green forests,  
 Where crystal clear dew gathers and flows;  
 Seet song birds and cicades units  
 And sing all day long their glad tribute,  
 Old leaves fall to nourish young shoots in spring  
 Dreamy haze spreads awakening old memories,  
 Every bough breaks forth with blossoms  
 And resounds with songs of winged songsters.  
 ( Translated by Sangliana )

## 2

In the absence of any written records, it is extremely difficult to locate the original home of the Mizos. The Mizos believe themselves to have originated from a big cave called Chhinlung. Supporting this view, one of their oldest songs said,

Ka siengna Sinlung ram bhmingthang,  
 Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai,  
 Chawngzil ang kokir thei changsien,

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8. Capt. W.F. Badgley - "Report of the Hill Tipperah, North Chittagong and the Lushai Hills", Topographical Survey Party for the field season of 1872-73 No.199 Dated Shillong, the 17th May, 1873.

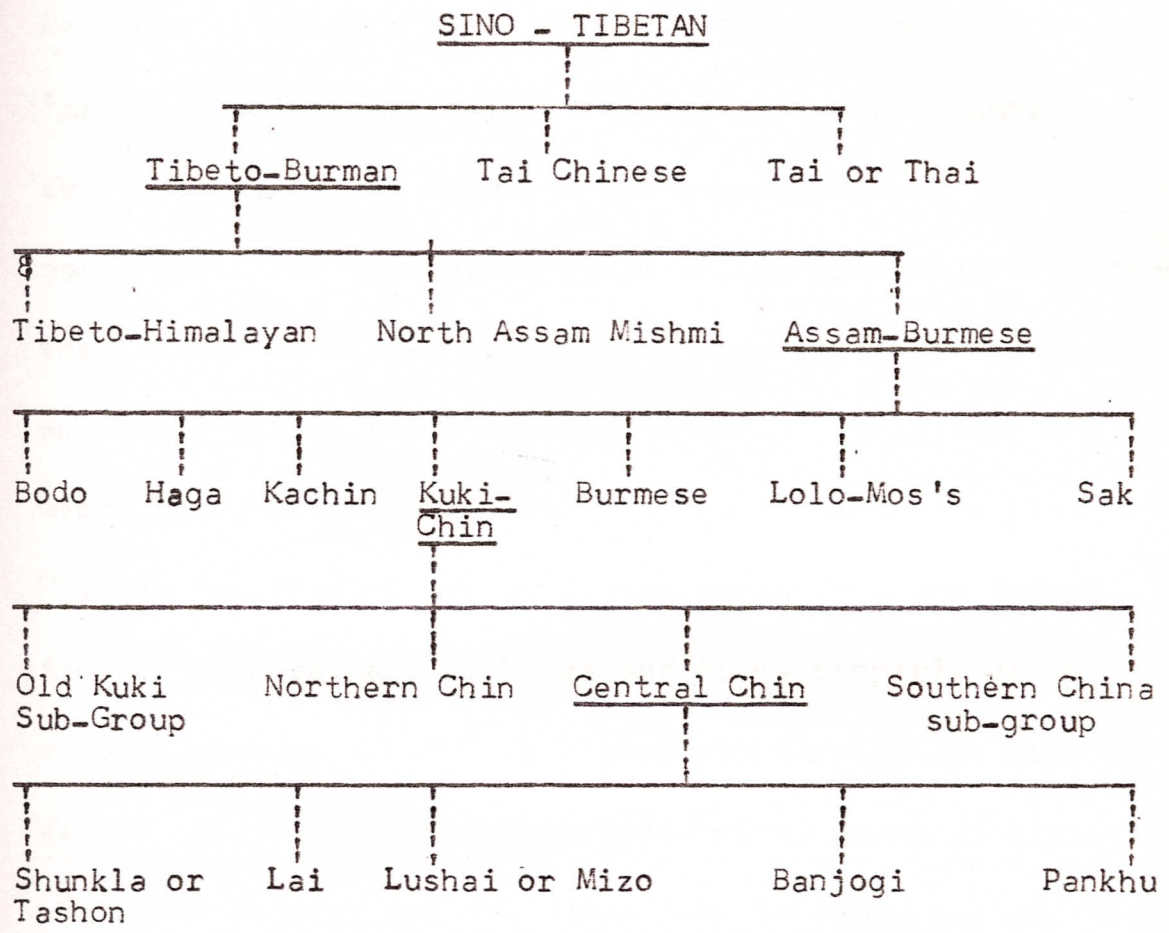
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.

(My homeland, famous Chhinlung,  
Could it be called back like Chawngzil,  
Homeland of my own ancestors).<sup>9</sup>

Even though there are many songs and legends which support Chhinlung to be the original home of the Mizos, none of them mentioned its location. It, therefore, remains a mystery to the researchers. There are many possible theories suggesting the location of Chhinlung or the original home of the Mizos, but the common conclusion is that the Mizos had once settled in Central Asia. From the physical traits also it seems that the Mizos come from the Mongoloid stock. The Burma Census Report of 1891 which is regarded as the most reliable source, says that the Kukis of Manipur and the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins originally lived in Tibet and are of the same racial stock.<sup>10</sup> And from the linguistic point of view Mizo language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan family. The following table illustrates the points -

9. Rochunga Pudaitis, The Education of the Hmar People, 1963, p.21.

10. Betram S. Carey and H.N. Tuck, Chind Hills, Vol.I(1932) Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprint, 1976, p.1.



It is difficult to ascertain the date the Mizos left Central Asia and the reason why they embraced the nomadic way of life. Some historians suggested that the trouble started when the Chins came to power in the beginning of 200 B.C. According to Freds Greene, the Chin dynasty "violated all the rules of courteous warfare, triumph and took over the territory and symbols of the rule of the Chou dynasty, absorbed many of the tribes that were in the land".<sup>11</sup>

11. F. Greene, The Far East, p.85.

Many who refused to be absorbed were pushed out and the "pressure which forced these tribes to the South-western coast and drove the Mizos to the mountains came from the north west. The successive waves of Chinese immigrants drove the earlier consists, such as the Shans, pushed the Mizos and other tribes still further south".<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the Mizos might have left Central Asian homeland due to the waves of Chinese immigration and political pressures, and "moved towards the boarders of Tibet and Burma properly around seventh century A.D."<sup>13</sup> Then probably through the Hukong Valley they came to the Chin belt. After years of migration, the Mizos settled for the first time in Kabaw valley, the present Shan state in Burma.

While living in Kabaw valley, the Mizos built the first and oldest town of their own at Khampat. It seems that here they enjoyed freedom and a sense of security for hundreds of years. However, a legend suggested that separatism began among themselves when the chief of the town  
 12. E.T. William, China: Yesterday and Today, pp.51-2.  
 13. P.K.B. Padhyay, Leadership among the Mizos, p.32.

enjoying overlordship started exerting pressure on the people. But K. Zawla believes that a terrible famine called thingpui tam might have compelled them to leave this town in order to find a better place to live in.<sup>14</sup> One of their poets also retold the natural calamity they had faced in the following verse:

Shan khuoah lenpur a tla,  
Mi raza tlan thiera e.

(A severe famine visited Shan  
That made people run).

It is said that the Mizos planted a banyan tree to express their love and loyalty to the town after generations before they left Khampat. One poet expressed the general feeling thus:

Our planted banyan tree has the power to predict,  
No harm caused by either men or animals;  
Grew luxuriantly under the protection of Supreme  
Being  
When your spreading branches touched earth,  
Would Mizo come back and restore the town.<sup>15</sup>

(Ka phun Bungpui dawi ai ka sanna,  
Mi khawih loh, sa khawih loh tein,  
Thangin lian la, khuanu leng hualin,  
I tang zar piallei a zam tikah,  
Seifaten vangkhua an rawn din leh nang e).

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14. K. Zawla, Pipute leh An Thlahte shanchin, p.10.

15. Lalrimawia, Pre-Historic and Historic Migration of the Mizos, Proceedings of the Session of the History Association, Second Session, Dibrugarh, 1981.

When they left Shan in search of food, the Mizos formed themselves into various groups. From Shan, they went up the Chin Hill in the late 14th Century A.D., where we find the first clan-wise settlement. Lushai (Lusei) settled at Seipui and Khawkhawk; Ralte at Suaipui and Saihmun; Chawngthu at Sanzawl and Bochung; Khiangte at Pelpawl, Belmual and Lungchuan; Hauhna, Chuaungo and Chuauhang at Chawnghawih and Siallam; Pautu at Pautu Hills and Khawlhiring at Khawlhiring hills.<sup>16</sup> Their settlements at Thantlang (Than range) and Lentlang (Len range) were landmarks in the history of Mizo oral literature to which I shall return later in Chapter III. From here, they were said to have entered the present Mizoram in five successive batches. According to Soppit, the first batch of the Mizo clan after crossing river Tiau settled in the present Mizoram sometime in the middle of the 16th Century A.D.<sup>17</sup> However, not all the Mizo clans entered the present Mizoram; many of them were left in the Chin Hills, some of them moved towards the south while some others towards the north. It seems that after Khampat, different clans developed different dialects, different styles of living and

16. Rev. Liangkhaia, Mizo Chanchin, p.21.  
 17. Soppit, C.A., A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes, p.7.

so on. In course of time, the present Mizo language, which has common elements of the dialects of all the Mizo clans, evolved.

There is a great controversy among the scholars in regard to the meaning of the word "Mizo". Some are of the opinion that the word 'Mizo' is composed of two words 'Mi' (Person) and 'Zo' (Hill), which means highlanders. Supporting this theory, Gaugin writes, "the real meaning of Zomi (or Mizo) is one who dwells on the hillside having the same bearing in manner and custom etc. for ages together".<sup>18</sup>

Another explanation says that the people living on the hills could be named "Zomi" or "Mizo" or "people of the cold region" by the brethren of the hot valley.<sup>19</sup> Lalthangliana believes that they are called after the town Zopui, which was built at about 1765 A.D.<sup>20</sup> Here Zopui means a big town of Zo. One of the poets of that time also mentioned this town as follows:

Zokhaw val hnam chem kan chawi,  
Mangngul ar ang kan thahna,  
Run kuamah aw e.

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18. T. Gaugin, The Discovery of Zoland, p.12.

19. B. Lalthangliana, History of Mizo in Burma, p.71.

20. Ibid., p.71.

(We, men of Zopui, bear the swords,  
For we killed Mangnguls as chickens,  
By the bank of river Run).

If we take this interpretation, the word "Mizo" would have come only after the second half of the eighteenth century when Zopui was built. Vumson, on the other hand, mentioned the possibility of Mizo clans to be descendants of the great 'Zo' dynasty who ruled over northern Burma in 11th or 12th Century A.D.<sup>21</sup> From these interpretations, it seems that Mizo have no collective name before the occupation of the Chin Hills. Vanlawma believes that even if the word 'Mizo' or 'Zomi' or 'Zo' might have been well-known to them earlier, the Sailo Chiefs, after having subjugated many other Mizo clans, made the use of collective name 'Mizo' amongst their subjects possible.<sup>22</sup>

The Mizo tribe is made up of different clans and sub-clans. The Military Report of 1930 recorded fifteen sub-tribes such as - Lushai, Khawlhing, Khianqte, Roite, Darlong, Punte, Renthlei, Chawngthu, Ralte, Noente, Poi, Lakher,

21. Vumson, as quoted by Vanlawma, Who and What are the Mizos, Mizoram News Magazine, Winter Issue, 1985, p.20.

22. R. Vanlawma, op.cit., p.20.

Paihte, Hmar and Thado.<sup>23</sup> In this list, Zatlunga added four more sub-tribes viz. Pautu, Tlau, Zawngte and Vangchhia.<sup>24</sup> Other historians like Liangkhaia,<sup>25</sup> V.L. Siama,<sup>26</sup> and K. Zawla<sup>27</sup> added some more sub-tribes such as Mirawng, Bawng, Biate, Hrangkhawl, Dawn, Tlanqlau and Mualthuam. The differences in dialects between these clans are very little, and they can understand each other. The dialectical diversity gradually disappear among the residents of the present Mizoram, embracing Lusei dialects as a 'lingua franca' of all the Mizo clans and sub-clans. However, the difficulty is that many of the Mizo clans have been scattered to the different places before they have collective name 'Mizo'. They have been scattered in the hills of the present Mizoram, Manipur, North Cachar, Tripura and nearly half of the population are in Burma and Bangladesh. As they are divided by the wall of international and state boundaries for more than a century, the cultures and traditions, mode of living and behaviours and even dialects gradually differ from

23. Military Report on Presidency and Assam District, Vol. III, Simla, Govt. of India Press, 1930, p.201.

24. Zatlunga, Mizo Chanchin, pp.3-8.

25. Liangkhaia, Mizo Chanchin, Aizawl, 1947.

26. V.L. Siama, Mizo History, Aizawl, 1975.

27. K. Zawla, Mizo Piute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, 1964.

place to place. This has, however, been a common phenomenon in all major societies.

As a result, some narrow viewers include only those who resided in the present Mizoram, or those who can use the written 'Mizo language' fluently to be qualified for calling themselves "Mizos". But this definition is not acceptable to the majority of the people. Therefore, in a wider sense, 'Mizo' includes all the clans who have been bound together by the bond of common traditions, customs, history and cultural heritage having linguistic affinity.

## 3

Prior to the advent of the Christian Missionaries Mizo religion was animistic in nature. The Mizos did not worship the Sun or the Moon, but they believed in the powers of evil spirits who lived in the hills, big trees, streams and caves. Those evil spirits are known as Ramhuai, and those residing in water were called Tuihuai. All the troubles and ills of life were attributed to the evil spirits. They also believed the existence of good spirits like Lasi, Khuavang, and family of gods. They offered less sacrifices to the good spirits as they never caused illness to men. Like most tribals

they were much afraid of the evil spirits that they often offered sacrifices to them. Therefore, some historians remarked that the Mizos worshipped Huai. Challiana also declared "warship of Ramhuai" to be the Mizo religion.<sup>28</sup>

However, some historians like Liangkhaia repudiated the theory of worship of Ramhuai. According to him, the Mizos offered sacrifices to Ramhuai only to appease them, but they did not worship them as gods or goddesses. He said, the word Sakhua (religion) was a compound of two words "Sa" and "Khua". Sa was believed to be origin of men or creator of human beings, and khua, nature.<sup>29</sup>

The Mizos believed in the existence of a family of gods, but they also believed in a Supreme God known as Pathian. C.V.L. Auva also defines Mizo religion as a kind of Polytheism with a tendency towards monotheism.<sup>30</sup> The God-family headed by Puvana as a father of the family of gods inhabited Heaven. Khuanu was referred to as the mother of

28. Challiana, Pipu Nun, p.28.

29. Liangkhaia, Mizo mi leh Thil Hmingthangte leh Mizo Sakhua, p.60.

30. C.V.L.Auva, Religious Beliefs and Customs among the Mizos before the Advent of Christianity, 1981, unpublished Thesis, Gauhati University, p.352.



the family; and Vanchungnula as the daughter of the family of gods. Usually, Khuanu was regarded as the God of love and blessing. A happy married couple are called Khuanu tuah or Khuanu samsuih which means God's predestinated partners in wedlock. Khuanu, as a God of love and blessings is more comprehensive than the Roman Cupid or the Greek Eros as it is a god, not only of erotic love but also of other loves. It concerns with an overall view of love. From their invocations it appears that apart from these, the Mizos believed in the existence of other gods such as Chung (god of light and rain), Vansen (creator of clouds), Hnuaite or Kawm (gods of land), Hnuaibui (god of different layers of the earth), Khuavang (guardian of man), Lasi (goddess of animals) and Vanhrika (god of science and learning); this god functioned like Saraswati of the Hindus. Khuavang was sometimes addressed as Pathian or Khuanu. The Lasis were believed to be fairy, generally considered as beautiful girls, and they used to fall in love with handsome hunters. A Lasi revealed herself in the form of human being and asked a hunter to marry her on condition that if the hunter agreed, she would give him any wild animals he desired to kill. Those who fell in love with the Lasis were called Lasizawl.

The Mizos believed in life after death. Like Heaven and Hell in the Christian doctrine, the Mizos, also believed in the existence of two spiritual worlds, Mitthi Khua and Pialral. Mitthi khua was believed to be much inferior to the life on earth that the life in Mitthi khua was miserable and horrible. Pialral, on the other hand was believed to be an abode of bliss which is similar to the Balpakram of the Garos, where food and drink were to be obtained without any work. A man was entitled to go to the great title called Thangchhuah. There are two classes of Thangchhuah, one was known as Inlama Thangchhuah which was believed to be attainable only by the richmen who could perform a very long process of sacrifices to gods or goddesses. To complete the necessary sacrificial ceremonies for this great title, one has to entertain the whole villagers in more than ten grand feasts. There was also a chance for commoners to obtain the great title by killing Sahrang, the term for large animals such as Elephant, Sambhar-deer, Barking-deer, Wild Board, Wild-Mithun and Bear.

The spirit of a dead was supposed to come out of his head and remained around the village for about three months. During this period, the bereaved family entreated the departed

soul to stay with them, that they had to provide an empty seat for the soul at mealtime, and had to offer some small portions of meat and food at every meal. In case of the death of her husband, if a married woman misbehaves with other man during this period she would be treated as adulteress.<sup>31</sup>

After this period was over, the bereaved family would send away the soul to the spiritual world by performing ceremony called Inthen. The departed soul was supposed to go straight to the Rih Lake, which is situated in Burma on the border of Mizoram. They believed that all the souls would have to go through the Rih Lake. After crossing Rih Lake, the soul was supposed to climb up a hill known as Hrinolangtlang, a spiritual hill from where the living world could be seen. From this hill, the spirit would cast a last lingering glance at the living world, and the soul was believed to weep bitterly longing to go back to this world. The soul then half-heartedly proceeds through a stream known as Lunglohtui (forgetfulness) which is like the Lethe of the Greeks. On the bank of Lunglohtui, there was a very beautiful flower called

31. Zairema, The Mizos and their Religion, Mizoram News Magazine, Winter Issue No.2.

Hawilopar which means 'no looking back flower'. The soul was supposed to pick the flowers and place it on its hair and ears, and also to drink the water. It then immediately lost all its consciousness and feelings that it had no more desire to go back to the land of the living world.

Proceeding the journey, the soul would reach a junction called Zingvawnzawl or Pawla kawt. The road branches from this junction into two; one leading to Mitthi khua and the other to Pialral.<sup>32</sup> A legendary man called Pawla and his wife Sanui were said to have their house at this point. No one could escape Zingvawnzawl without his notice. He had a big pillet bow with which he shoots at all the passerbyes. However, he would not shoot at those people who performed Thangchhuah in their life time and their families. Hlamzuih (children below six months), adult female virgins, and youngmen who enjoyed three virgin girls also escaped his shooting.

Therefore, the belief in life after death, particularly the abode of the dead as two categories, clearly

32. J.M. Lloyd, On Every High Hill, p.21.

shows that they had a firm belief on one Supreme Being who rules over them, which belief, in fact, controlled them in life and there-after.

## 4.

From time immemorial, the Mizos have been using different musical instruments. Even though we can not date the origin, the "Mizos of Kabaw Valley during late 10 to 13 century A.D. had developed their music as nearly as they have done today".<sup>33</sup> The traditional Mizo musical instruments are very simple and they can broadly be divided into three: string-instruments, wind-instruments, and beating or striking-instruments.

The Mizos have only three kinds of stringed instruments such as Tingtang, Lemlawi and Tuiumdar. Mizo tingtang is a kind of fiddle or violin having only one string. A piece of bamboo is fitted in the gourd to carry the string made of thangtung, the fibre of the Malay Sago palm. Lemlawi is the family of Jew's harp but the shape and size are different. It is made of small piece of bamboo. From the piece of bamboo, the Mizo craftsmen took out small portion, with knife, for

33. B. Lalthangliana, op.cit., p.9.

its string. The sound it produces is controlled by the mouth. Tuiumdar is also made of bamboo having three strings producing three different notes.

The Mizos have six varieties of wind-instruments like Rawchhem, Phenlawng, Tumphit, Buhchangkuang, Hnahtum and Mautawtawrawt. Rawchhem is a kind of Scottish "Bagpipe" or Chinese "Snag". Nine small bamboo pipes or hollow reeds, having different sizes and lengths are inserted to the dried gourd. One of the pipes serves as a mouthpiece. A small portion of the pipes are struck out so that it can produce sound when the instrument is blown. The musician blows into the mouthpiece, and by controlling the holes with his fingers, he can produce various musical notes. The music is sometimes dull and monotonous. Phenlawng is the Mizo flute made of bamboo. Originally, Phenlawng had only three holes producing three different sounds. Tumphit, the 'pandean pipe' is another Mizo wind instrument which occupies a very important place in Rallulam, a colourful celebration and rite performed in honour of a human head taken in a raid. It is made of three small bamboos having different sizes, and can produce normally three musical notes. Buhchangkuang is another small flute made

of reed or a paddy stalk. It was usually played by girls. The Mizo boys can skillfully turn leaves of many trees into simple but ingenious musical instruments. They can produce interesting sound by blowing deftly folded leaves. This type of instrument that is known as Hnahtum. Mautawtawrawt is a trumpet made of bamboos played by men in the jungle.

Most of the Mizo musical instruments used at the time of festivals and dances are striking instruments such as- different types of Khuang and Dar, Bengbung, Seki, Talhkhung and others commonly called Chhepchher. Khuang (Drum) is Mizo indigenous instrument which occupies a very significant place in Mizo social life. Khuang is a must on all occasions. It is made of hollow tree, wrapped on two sides with animal skin. The Mizos give different names to this according to its size and length. The big sized one is called Khuangpui (big drum), and the small sized, Khuangte (little drum). If it is longish, they call it Kawlkhung. Many Mizo families have their own family Khuang. Khuang is the only Mizo traditional musical instrument that is popularly used in the 20th century. Other popular musical instruments are various sizes of brass-gongs. Darkhung the big brass gong is very costly and it is one of their most

valuable possessions. In the olden times, it was sometimes used as a means of exchange, and sometimes the parent of a bride demanded Darkhuang for the price of their daughter. In one of the oldest folksongs we have the following lines:

Chawngvungi man tam e,  
 Thi ka pek a duh lo va,  
 Dar ka pek a duh lo va,  
 Kan dar huai kher in ngen le,  
 Chawngvung man tam sumhluani.

(Chawngvungi, her price so high,  
 I gave necklace but they refused,  
 I gave a gong and they refused,  
 They demanded our sacred gong,  
 Chawngvungi, her price unsurpassed).

(Translated by Lalruanga).

Darkhuang is played on all occasions. One of the most popular musical instruments used either for religious practices or for social gatherings is Darbu, a set of three different sizes of brass-gongs. A Darbu player, positioning one gong between his thighs and two other gongs on his sides or hung one gong by his left hand, produces three distinct, rhythmic notes by simultaneous beating. Darbu is meaningfully used on certain occasions like Khuallam and other traditional group dances. Darmang is another small brass-gong. It is of no effect without other gongs or instruments but it is used in all the traditional dances to keep timing. All these gongs, as mentioned above appear to be Burmese in origin and, therefore, it is tempting to conclude that Mizos got them

from the Burmese while they were living in the Kabaw Valley during the mid-ninth century to the late 13th century A.D.<sup>34</sup>

Bengbung is another Mizo indigeneous instrument which has some similarity with xylophone. It is a musical instrument consisting of a graduate series of flat wooden bars, producing three musical notes. Bengbung was usually played by girls at their leisure. The process of making Talhkhuang is almost the same with bengbung, but Talhkhuang is much bigger than Bengbung. It is also made of hollowed-out pieces of reed, played by string with a wooden hammer. The Mizos would never take Talhkhuang to their houses or anywhere else except to Lungdawn, the memorial platform. It was only played when a Chief or greatman of the village erected memorial stones. Seki, the domesticated gayal's horn is also used to keep timing for the whole band. Even if they have not all the musical instruments mentioned above, the Mizos can enthusiastically sing throughout the whole night by clapping hands or any materials which can produce complimentary sound. All these informal instruments are called Chhepchher.

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34. Ibid., p.10.

The six-stringed guitar was introduced to the Mizos during the Second World War. It has now become part and parcel of the Mizo society. Almost all the Mizo boys and girls know how to play guitar and it is seen everywhere. The guitar alone has replaced all the traditional musical instruments.

There is one popular Mizo saying, "Khuang lova chai ang" which means 'festival without drum or music', and this saying shows that without music the life of the Mizos is incomplete. B.Thanmawia also says, "Music to the Mizos, is as indispensable as air is to man and beasts".<sup>35</sup> They sing on all happy and despairing occasions. When condoling bereaved families, they sing the songs of condolence; when attending marriage party they sing songs of joy; they even sing or hum tunes while they are working or walking on the roads. Kathryn Mc Kenzie remarks, "The sound of their harmonious singing and the haunting rhythm of their tribal songs can often be heard".<sup>36</sup> A survey of Mizo names indicates that a great many of names are derivatives of traditional musical instruments

35. B.Thanmawia, Mizos and Music, Mizoram News Magazine, Autumn Issue 1985, p.12.

36. Kathryn Mc Kenzie, Chhinlung Magazine, Vol.II, 1986, p.19.

like Dar (gong), Khuang (drum), Rem (accompanying music), Ri (musical sound) and Zai (singing). Some of the popular names are as follows:

Dar = Darkunga or i,\* Darhlira, Darlawma,  
Darhmingthanga, Darhnuni etc.,

Zai = Zaihmingthanga, Zaithanmawii, Zairemthanga,  
Zaithanpuui, Zaikunga, Zaihnuni, etc.

Khuang= Khuangliana, Khuangchhungi, Khuanglawma,  
Khuanghnuni, Khuangtuahtangi, etc.

A legend says that the Kawilam clan celebrated Chapchar Kut with full of merriment that people tend to forget their day-to-day business for about nine months. It is further said that a parrot dropped a piece of rice-straw among them. They suddenly came to realise that their granaries were already exhausted. They soon migrated to villages. It is also said that the Chawngtui villagers observed Chapchar Kut performing Chai continuously for several months. Like Kawilam clans, they fled to other villages after the stocks had gone. From these two legends one might easily conjecture that the Mizos in the early period were very close to nature and that music was the tune of their life.

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\* The last letter of Mizo names 'a' indicates the name of man, and 'i' woman. 'i' and 'a' are the gender indicator.

The Mizos believed in the force of poetry and music. It is said that the leaves of a tree called Sunhlu started falling into the ground if and when Buizova, the best known singer of the past, sang his sweet songs. It is also said that oldmen and women could forget their ages on hearing his voice. Zirsangzela, a young poet of Mizoram, rightly says in his 1980's poetry that there is no one except his guitar which can convey his sentiment and relieve him from his burden'.

Suihlung len hril pui tur leh,  
 Zaitin vawr pui turin,  
 Ninglo ten i awm fo thin,  
 Ka perhkhuang zai tin thiam'.

(You are always a friend  
 Who weeps gently when I'm cryin'  
 For want of friends in loneliness,  
 Oh, thou my sweet guitar).

- translated by C. Lalramzauva.

The love for music resulted in the love of poetry also. Even in the early period, poets were esteemed by the people. It is said that one day, a cicade sings beautifully at Lungdawh, the gate-way of the village while the villagers were about to jhum. On hearing the sweet song of cicade, no one could go on, and all the villagers gathered waiting for

Saikuti, the born-poet of the village. When Saikuti arrived, they immediately requested her to compose a song on this cicade. She then spontaneously recited the following verses-

Lengzawng ram tuan suihlung mu ang her tir che,  
Chawmkhuang beng lo siahthinga zairembhhung in ni e.

(Oh, though Cicade of the wood,  
They sweet singing of no rhythms  
Enchanted people from their works).

On hearing this verse, all the villagers went back and sing together the whole day in celebration to the new song of Saikuti. The Mizos used to celebrate a new song or songs. This kind of appreciation greatly inspired the Mizo poets. As such bulk of Mizo literatures are contributed by the poets, and it is a common conclusion among the scholars in Mizoram that poetry is the most developed of the branches of Mizo literature.

##### 5.

We have seen in the previous section that Mizo poetry, folksongs in particular, had been a reflection of their music. The Mizos are fortunate enough in having a traditional way of classification of their folksongs, and accordingly the Mizo folksongs may be classified as follows: Songs bearing names of individuals, Songs named after traditional musical instruments, songs named after modulation of the voice, cradle

songs, invocations and incantations. A study of their folksongs on the basis of the indigeneous system of classification shows that the Mizos are having about hundred different types of songs.<sup>37</sup> In this section, I propose to have a brief survey of some of the popular Mizo folksongs examining the various implication on love and nature, patriotism and suffering.

Love is the principal theme of the Mizo folksongs. Poetry had been serving as the common medium of expression of love among the Mizos. The Mizo love songs in the primitive period reflected their natural closeness to the objects of nature. In Nilen zai the poet conceived the Dove as a living person,

Ka vau a huivate, i hram lai bang teh la,  
Kei pawh thadang ngain,  
Ka tah lai ni tam e.

(Dove of the forest near my jhum,  
Cease crying please,  
I too spend many a day crying for my love).

They often used birds as their love-messengers. In Ramthar zai, we have seen like this -

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37. Lalruanga, A Study on Mizo Folk literature, Unpublished Thesis, Gauhati University, 1985.

Hasn't my tender message reached you,  
 Hasn't my messenger, the eagle told you  
 That I love and miss you, my darling ?

-Translated by Lalruanga.

Saikuti, one of the most famous poetesses of the 19th century also contributed a great number of songs on the theme of love. In one of her love songs, Saikuti said that her love for her sweetheart was above her filial love. Mizo young lover also expresses his deep feeling of love in the following verses -

Ka lungdi nuam che maw,  
 Thangvan ah kai ila,  
 Siarah to ila, khua zain sel rawh se.

|| (How I wish, my sweet heart  
 That we both be stars in the sky,  
 And let people say what they will).

Laltheri's songs brought a great change in the domestic and social status of the Mizo women. She was the daughter of Lalsavunga, one of the most powerful chiefs of the Sailo clan. After the death of her father, she lived with one of her brothers, Vanhnuailiana who inherited the chieftainship. After sometimes, Laltheri fell in love with hnamchawm (commoner) named Chalthanga. Her brother killed Chalthanga immediately after he came to know about their love affairs. Since then, Laltheri took off her necklaces, garments and clothes, and wept bitterly. When her mother asked her to

put on her clothes, she replied by the following verses -

Nemte puan chu ka chawi lovang ka nu,  
Ka di Thangdanga zalna mah chhimhlei tual daiah.

(Mother ! I will not put on my clothes,  
While my Beloved lies cold in the grave).

She even did not want to take food and said,

Chhunrawl lovin ka fam lovang, ka nu,  
Suihlunglengin Sailo ngurpui fam lo awl na e.

(It shall not be for want of food I die,  
To pine and die it's as easy for noble Sailo).

The whole content of the song reflects her love for Chalthanga and her condemnation for the cruel deed more than her grief at the great loss. On hearing the songs of his sister protesting his cruel judgement against Chalthanga, the Chief really regretted that he granted more freedom and better status to the girls of his village. The poets and poetesses revealed the sensuous feeling in love, and they projected light upon social and domestic relations and values through their love-songs.

Till late nineteenth century, the Mizos adopted the semi-nomadic way of life. They had no permanent settlement. After they stayed about ten years at a particular place, they had to migrate somewhere else in search of fertile land for

their jhum cultivation. May be due to this instability in their settlement and their mind, the Mizo had not taken patriotism as a theme in their early songs.

As mentioned in the previous section, some of their folksongs were named after villages such as - Darlung zai (songs of Darlung village), Noente zai (songs of Ngente village), Zialung zai (songs of Zialung village), Zopui zai (songs of Zopui village), and Tlangkhaw zai (songs of Tlangkhua). These songs were patriotic in nature. One of the Noente zai said like this -

Kan Ngente khua, khaw nuam kha,  
Thla ka fam hma'n ka nghilh rua love.

(Our Ngente village, delightful village,  
I will never forget until I die).

A poet from Darlung village also exaggerated the greatness of his village as follows:

Mi kai ve u, Darlung kan awm khua,  
Laldang run in lai a zam ruai e,  
Laldang runin lai a zam ruai e,  
Nitin tiandar a ri chier nghian e.

(Come and live in our Darlung village,  
The Chief's house lies sprawling in the centre,  
The Chief's house lies sprawling in the middle,  
The sound of a gong reverberates ever and anon.

- Translated by Lalruanga.

From this song we can see that Chiefs were the main figures of the villages. Peace and prosperity of the people, the greatness and attractiveness of the village depended on the personality of the chief.

Saikuti, composed several songs encouraging the youngmen to be the great warriors, and stimulating them to glorify their village, Thingsai, so that other villagers might not dare to raid it. She also used to praise the warriors for the achievement they had made against their enemies.

Bawmzo thlunglu tui ang kan lak ni chuan,  
Kan thanin Saikhaw tlang a nghawr dim e.

(The day we brought home heads from Bawmzo,  
Saikhua resounded with chants of victory.)

- Translated by Rualzakhumi.

Hunting was the most favourite game among the Mizos. The society honoured pasaltha, the successful hunters. When a boy was born they blessed him to be the pasaltha. They had plenty of Hlado, a chant raised by the successful hunter, and salulam zai, songs usually sang on the celebration of the animals killed by the hunters. In this section, I will deal with only Hlado.

Chhawlthing e, thliak na ngai e,  
 Mangnghin e, thanhawl ka vak liau e;  
 Chhawlhnawm e, rak tho ulaw,  
 Valan Nghovari zalna e.

(Being a brave hunter, I go out to hunt. Removed the leaves which cover the wild bear chased by me).

Hlado also revealed their emulations. Pasaltha or the successful hunters were held in high esteem. Therefore, every youngman tried to be a successful hunter. A young hunter proudly chanted the following lines -

Chunnu'n e, a tir che maw,  
 Uai hnianga ram va tuan chu e;  
 Kei chu e, chengrang te nen,  
 Tlangah e, thliten ka her ngai e.

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

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

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

(On the day, the richman performs a grand feast,  
The village resounds with joy and laughter,  
But we the poor, achieve fame  
When the hills echo chants of our hunted victory).

- Translated by Rualzakhumi.

The Mizos believed that no one can kill wild animals without the permission of the Lasis, the guardians of animals. However, as Lasis were the good creators, they always gave their animals to the hunters instead of grudging to part with the animals. But all the same, they were believed to cry for the loss or death of the animals. One Hlado said like this:

Val rual e, kan kalah khan,  
Zingah khuanu a tap ai law.

(On the day, a hunter hunted animals,  
The creator cried in the morning).

As discussed in the previous section, the Mizos believed that a man would go to the Pialral only after achieving Thangchhuah during his life time. The manner in which the Thangchhuah-pa (a man of Thangchhuah) approached to the Pialral was retold in their Hlado as under -

Sai lian e, nang hmasa aw,  
Kawla fungtial a zuitu e;  
A sa e, hrangkim thiau e,  
Vawmphuai e, hnutiang ka dal tir e.

Here the Thangchhuah-pa arranged all the animals he had killed

for the great title, placing the big elephant to the front, wild-gayal and other animal would follow, placing Bear to be the hindermost. He would enter Pialral with all these large animals.

One of the forces which did most to shape Mizo life for nearly three centuries was the frequent wars with the neighbouring tribes or the wars among themselves. As such, the Mizos have several war-chants and songs on the triumph over their enemies. If the Mizo pasaltha (chivalrous) killed his enemy, he had to trample the dead body under his foot, declaring his own name, chanted Bawhhla (war-chant). After doing this, the soul of the enemy would not frighten him, and even when he would die, the soul of the enemy would escort his soul to the Pialral.<sup>38</sup> The killer used to bring the head of the enemy to the village, and hold a group dance in celebration of the head taken in the raid, which was called Ralluham. Bawhhla or war-chant mainly expressed their superiority over their enemies.

The Mizo folksongs were characterised by pessimism,

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38. K. Zawla, Mizo Pipute leh An Thlahte Chanchin, p.82.

and they are very rich on the theme of lamentation and mourning. The Mizos believed in the life after death but as discussed in the previous section, they also believed in the suffering at Mithhi Khua (city of the dead). This belief might have caused the Mizo poets to be touched deeply by death. When her beloved son died, Darpawngi burst out with the following verses:

Awmlai lengin tlangtin dung rawn zui,  
Vanduai runah ser ang cham na e;  
Ka tuai chawn ban a kai e.

(Visiting every village on her way,  
Awmlai\* has stayed in our luckless home,  
He has snatched away my beloved son).

\*Awmlai = personification of death.

Here the poetess personified death as a cruel and powerful ruler whose demand is a must for his people.

Their songs of mourning and lamentations exhibits their theory of life after death, the Mizo custom of burial, The dirge of Saikuti manifested the distinctive thoughts of the Mizos about death.

Ral a lian e, tlangah dan rel ila,  
Awmlai hawktui ang a lian e, ka dang zo love.  
Chhingkhual angin zing zin theih chang se la,  
Hmuh ka nuam e, thlafam buantual ropui an relna.

(We established our stronghold against enemies, but nothing stands in the way of a death when it comes like a flood. Were it be possible like a pilgrim to visit the city of death, I would like to see the ground where judgement is carried out).

Besides the thêmes we have briefly discussed, reference may also be made on popular ballads, nursery rhymes, invocations and incantations. The Mizo folksongs and their old beliefs had a great impact on the Mizo secular poetry as well as on the Christian hymns. The early Christian hymns were translated from English, and there was no relationship with Mizo folksongs. However, those of Christian poetry composed by Mizo Christian poets have resemblances with the folksongs in the tune, the poetic diction, words, their representation of thought such as love, suffering, happiness, sorrow and others. They often presented Heaven as Pialral, river Jordan as Rih Lake. We have also seen metaphorical presentation of their old beliefs like Hawilobar, Dunqlohtui, and the instruments used for the sacrifices like Theirual, and their dress like Tanchhawn etc. Mizo folksongs therefore contributed to the development of secular and non-secular poetry.

## CONCLUSION

As the synopsis promised, the development and the major trend of Mizo poetry during the past 80 years have been discussed in the work. It is not only the study of the development in poetry but also the story of a civilization of the Mizos during the past eighty years.

The present study clearly illustrates that written Mizo poetry had undergone through an interesting process of change and development since its beginnings. The traditional songs had been replaced by Christian poetry. The greatest change and development occurred during the first three decades of the present century. There was a stern reaction from the people against christianity and the christian hymns. The traditional verse form was revived but it did not last long. The reason for this might have been the four great spiritual revivals which brought about the rapid growth of christianity. Some of the modern christian sects like Chana Pawl, Vanawia Pawl and Lalchhungkua tried to revive the traditional verse

form in their devotional songs, but it is like an old musical instrument that has no harmonious sound. It seems that due to the influence of western music, the soft and dull music of the traditional song has no power to vibrate the heart of modern youths.

However, the diction and traditional thought form still survive in the modern poetry. Hrawva might have been the first modern poet who employed the traditional thought form and diction in his poetic creation. The poets of the Patea Age vehemently used the traditional thought form in their presentation of life after death. And the later poets followed the tradition. The conventional epithets of the past are mainly employed in the elegies and dirges.

We may say that the entire stream of Mizo literature begins with the English literature. The ancient Mizo poetry had been prominently sung, but due to the absence of written documents it was not exposed as oriental literature. It was Roman alphabet which opened the window of their literary outlook. The western ideas and thought, in its early stage, penetrated to the Mizo mind through

christian literature. Since the first literary poetry belongs to christian writers, I have found that christian thought or the biblical passages and terms have influenced poets of the later age.

There had been a great influence in the art of expression of their feelings. Let us take an example of the belief in life after death. The Mizos regarded Mitthi khua much inferior to human life. Life after death is miserable to the common people. Death is often personified in their poems as a cruel ruler who forcibly takes their life. The spiritual world is now described as the land beyond the clouds; the land beyond the stars; the land beyond sorrow and tears; the land of lamb; Kingdom of God, street of precious stones; city of saints; New Eden and New Jerusalem.

Mizo poetry is intermixed with biblical symbols, metaphors and terms like the Lamb, the bride, bridegroom, the star, spring of life, tree of life, pillar of cloud, pillar of fire, son of light, Immanuel, Saviour, Cross, Hosana, Amen, Halleluijah, Eden and a lot of biblical names are found in Mizo poetry. Mizo poets also create

many new metaphors out of the biblical terms. I also found that most of the allusions made by the Mizo poets are biblical.

The influence of western literature on Mizo poetry is mainly on thought form. A few example may be taken. Mizoram is in the monsoon belt receiving adequate rainfall that makes the plants evergreen. There is no desert in and around the state. But I have found that the Mizo poets frequently employed the term 'desert'. Both Kamlala and Patea used this word as many as ten times; Saihnuna, five times. The Mizo poets generally used this term as metaphorical significance to human life.

Life as a journey is an important theme in every literature. Sea voyage often stirred the mind of the English poets, and is an important scenery in their poetic imagery. The Mizo poets seemed to have imitated this kind of expression of life from the christian hymns. Mizoram is hilly and land-locked. The nearest sea port is about three hundred miles from the border, and there is no big river for journey. In spite of this, the major

poets like Patea, Kamlala, C.Z. Huala and other poets occasionally mentioned sea or sea voyage. Let us take an example from the poem of Patea :

Ka vahvaihna luidung hi sei mah sela,  
 Hruaitu Hmar Arsi chu thlir zel ilak,  
 Lawngchawlina tlang thianghlim chu min thlen ngei ang a,  
 Tah chuan hmangaih lenrualte an kim tawh ang.

(Though I am lost in this great sea,  
 Let me look up at the guiding north star,  
 Surely 'twill land me to the harbour  
 Where all the dear ones will flock together).

Life is often compared with a stormy ocean. The great waves of ocean is also used to signify temptation; a vast ocean, to denote the greatness of love, and a harbour as heaven.

Pastoral landscape is sometimes reflected in western literature. However, sheep is not a typical domesticated animal to the Mizos that pastoralism has no place in their imagery. But the three educated poets such as Hrawva, Rev.Chhawna and Kamlala throw the light of this poetic imagery. All the three poets present heaven as the green pasture. An example may be taken from

Kamlala's Aw Hmanqaihna :

Ngaih zawng an kimna hmun hring leh

Beram No lenna hmun

(The green pasture where my loves and the Lamb  
abide peacefully).

The poetry of Patea Age is synthetical in nature. Both the traditionalism and western ideas can be seen in it. The translation of western hymns greatly influenced their poetic imagery and verse form. The traditional verse form like triplets and couplets are completely avoided. Meanwhile, their poetic diction and the tunes are traditional. As far as the form and metrical composition is concerned the christian poetry of different ages followed the same tradition, but the early christian poets and the contemporary poets employed direct expression while the poets of Patea Age vehemently used biblical symbols, metaphors and allusions. The centre of attraction in my field of study is the Golden Age poetry, that is the year between 1920 to 1950. The poetry of this age is marked by pre-occupation of the countrified or agrarian life. The poets drew their subjects from jhuming

hunting, fishing and trapping. This age is also marked by simplicity and directness of the manner of expression. The poets directly stated what they thought and felt.

After having a survey on the themes adopted by the Mizo poets, I came to learn that there are three major themes such as nature, love and suffering. Like the romantic poets of the west, the Mizo poets vigorously exhibited the beauties of external nature, the simple life of the peasants, and hill-dwellers. They reflected with love of the objects of nature such as stars, moon, sun, clouds, wind, rain, rivers, mountains, trees, flowers, birds and animals in their poems. Nature is generally treated as a friend, but to Romani, it seems to be a symbol of catastrophe. To Buta, the life of what the birds enjoy seems to be much superior to man's. K.C. Lalvunga also beseeches a bird to interchange each of their living standard and feeling so that he might be able to enjoy the beauty of autumnal season. Zirsangzela presents nature as an efficient judge in the treasury bench while Rokunga regarded nature as a teacher and exemplar.

Love and suffering entwined each other in their poetic creation. Both the religious and secular poets equally adopted these two themes. The early christian poetry, mostly translated from English, are songs of praise and prayer to God, while Patea Age poetry depicted the world as a temporary abode for man, and heaven as the permanent home. Therefore, hope is the important theme of this age. The contemporary christian poetry on the other hand mainly concerned with evangelism.

Patriotism is an important theme of the post independent poetry. Cessational elements also appear after the Mizo National Front (MNF) movement. Some important themes like wealth, war and power are found from the poetry of Rokunga and a few poems of other poets'.

I have found that five of the techniques employed by the poets in other cultures have been used by Mizo poets also. These are symbol, simile, metaphor, irony and allusion. In secular poetry, there is hardly a poem in which simile is not used. However, it is remarkable that similes are rarely used in

christian poetry while symbols and metaphorical words are mostly found in christian poetry, but very few in secular poetry. There may be some reasons for this. Firstly, the christian poets might prefer to use metaphors and symbols because simile is less attractive, and metaphorical presentation vividly introduced their imageries to the readers. Secondly, most of the similical languages are romantic in nature. Thirdly, there had been so many symbols and metaphors in the bible that appropriately be apply in their poetic creation. As such, symbols, metaphors and allusions are biblical in nature. I have found, too, that there is little or no private symbol in Mizo poetry. In so far as allusion is concerned, the poets seem to have used it consciously, but there are instances where these techniques appear, at least to me, to have been used unconsciously as part of the poetic art.

An examination of the evolution of poetic genres in Mizo poetry shows that the Mizo poets expressed their feelings, in the forms of lyrics, ode, ballad, elegy and satire, I have found that

bulk of the Mizo poets are lyrical in nature. An investigation also shows that the Mizo odes are very short in comparison with English odes'. In general, an address to the ~~obje~~ct is seen from the refrain or from the second stanza.

My survey reveals that the Mizos have so far fifteen literary ballads, seven of which are on the episodes of the famous legendary man called Chhura. So far as the metrical composition is concerned, the Mizo ballads have no uniformity'. The Mizo balladists do not follow the ballad stanza of the English poets.

It is interesting to note that most of the Mizo poets, whether religious or secular, composed at least a poem on lamentation. The difference between ancient and modern Mizo elegies is the consoling power of the modern ones.

My investigation reveals also the peculiarities of Mizo poetry'. Firstly, the absence of rhyme scheme. Most of the Mizo poetry are written in blank verse. The English rhyme scheme had been

adapted in the early translations and compositions. But the rhyme scheme might not be suitable to Mizo language that the later translators and composers never tried to rhyme their poems.

Self-importance and self-centredness is another distinctive feature of the Mizo poetry. A poem in which a poet does not talk about himself is very few. Lalzova, P.S. Chawngthu, Laltanpuia, Romani and many contemporary poets are somewhat egoistic.

Mizo poetry, love poem, in particular, is also marked by an excess adoration of the beauty of the fair sex. It seems that the poets regarded women as goddesses worth of adoration. The poets repeatedly praised her beauty and charms; they implored her love, her gracious eyes, smiles and warm reception; they begged for her forgiveness, her mercy, her affection and her tender-heart, Vankhama bowed before the queen of his heart, taking a vow as under :

For you dear, just for your I vow my heart,  
 For you dear, I swear to faithful be,  
 And should there'd be a day of sunshine  
 'Twill apt to be a rainy day  
 And if you'd cherish me with voice so tender,  
 I'll bear an earthly cares ebbs, and till then  
 I'll ever be true to you.

(Tr. by the poet).

As the poetry of other cultures, Mizo poetry too is an interpretation of life; the life of the authors or the Mizo people in general. Bulk of the Mizo poetry dealt with the life of the authors. The ancient songs are mainly an expression of personal feelings. The life and experiences of others are not in the picture. For example, Laltheri alone is pictured in Laltheri Zai; Awithangpa, in Awithangpa zai. As such, their poems are named after the composers. Interpretation of the author's own life is still cherished in modern poetry. Some of the modern poets interpret the life of the whole community. Rokunga might have been the champion in this respect.

The interpretation of life is also varied from poets to poets. Poets like Romani, are nostalgic about the past while

futuristic element can be seen from the poetry of Rokunga.

Kamlala was disgusted with the human life, whether past or present, and looked forward anxiously to the future.

Finally, I believe that the present work will be a positive contribution to the knowledge of Mizo poetry and the Mizo people; and will serve as a stimuli to many would be researchers in Mizo literature.

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