

Glimpses into Pre-Christian Mizo Pasts as seen through Folktales

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Abstract

Mizoram has come a long way; from a society that, in the 19th century, was by and large illiterate, and often portrayed as "head-hunters", it today ranks as the second state in India in terms of literacy. Until the arrival of Christianity, whose missionaries first Romanized the Mizo language, knowledge and wisdom were preserved and communicated through oral traditions. Since, for most of Mizo history, oral tradition was indispensable to Mizo society, it is imperative to return to these oral traditions to understand both the past and the present, and the changes that occurred in between. In this paper, two Mizo folktales have been translated from Mizo to English in order to offer insights into religious practices, the status of women, and societal values that prevailed preceding the arrival of Christianity to Mizoram.

Introduction: The Mizo Tribe

The Mizo tribe is the main tribe that resides in the state of Mizoram. Mizoram is located in the north-eastern part of India, bordering Myanmar to the east and Bangladesh to the south. The term Mizo translates as "highlander", as Mizos are known to have always settled in the mountains. There are many sub-tribes within what is the Mizo fold today. Although most of the tribes reside in Mizoram, there are also Mizos living across North-East Indian states and in Myanmar. The language that is widely accepted as the Mizo language is the *Duhlian* (sub-tribe) language, although there are several other dialects within the Mizo tribe.¹ It is hard to trace the origin of the Mizos, but there are many theories and fascinating oral tales about Mizo origins. Of all these legends and origin myths, the most widely-told is the legend of *Chhinlung*. It goes as follows:

According to the popular legend, the Mizos claimed that their forefathers came out of the earth through a big hole on the side of the mountain in the east at a place called Chhinlung, the big stone shutter. However the exact location of this big stone called Chhinlung was never known right from the days of our forefathers.

¹ One of the Mizo clans, whose dialect is today used by most Mizos.

Most probably, it lies in central China from where the Mizos migrated to the south until they reached the present Myanmar (Burma) and finally went towards the west through the Chin Hills and halted at the present state of Mizoram (Khangte, 2006, p.119).

The Mizo society was always a close-knit society under the leadership of tribal chiefs. Since there were frequent battles between different tribes, bravery in a man was important and revered. Every village had a hall called *Zawlbuk*, a place where all the bachelors of the village came together at night, ready to protect their village against possible intrusions.² This is the place where young Mizo men were trained by the elders to serve society.

The arrival of the Christian Missionaries in the late 19th century brought about tremendous changes within the Mizo community. The first missionary to visit and survey Mizoram in 1891 was a Welsh missionary, then stationed in the Khasi hills named William Williams. He did not stay in Mizoram for long, but soon two missionaries arrived in Mizoram to spread Christianity. Pachuau & Van Schendel (2015, p. 92) write:

The first settled missionaries were J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge who were sent to Mizoram by Robert Arthington, a missionary philanthropist in Britain and the founder of the “Aborigines Mission”. Lorrain and Savidge put up a church right away.

Lorrain and Savidge arrived in Mizoram in 1894 and developed the Mizo alphabet. Thus the Mizos saw the beginning of their journey into literacy. Today the literacy rate of Mizoram is 91.33% according to the Mizoram population Census data 2011. The conversion of Mizos into Christianity did not happen overnight. It was a slow process met with hostility in the beginning, but the missionaries became more successful when they introduced education and health facilities. ‘By the 1940s, resistance against Christianity had been overcome and most Mizos thought of themselves as Christians’ (Pachuau & Van Schendel, 2015, p. 103). The conversion of Mizos into Christianity and their introduction to education have caused some changes in the status of women and led to the disappearance of traditional religious practices. There are certain societal values and practices such as *tlawmngaihna* (selflessness) and the sense of communal solidarity that are still preserved and practiced by the Mizos. Under British India, the present state of Mizoram was known as the Lushai Hill District within Assam. In 1954 it became the Mizo Hills District and later in 1972 it became a Union territory under the name Mizoram and achieved statehood in 1987.

² A village hall, where all the young men of the village comes to sleep when they reached a certain age.

Mizo Folktales and Religion

Folktales are an important aspect of any culture that has rich oral traditions. Folktales are not merely stories passed down from generation to generation to teach moral lessons, as it is commonly perceived, but they also provide excellent reflections on the tradition and culture of a society. Folktales cannot be dismissed as stories just for children or entertainment. They are an essential tool for helping us appraise the ways of our ancestors: their code of conducts, etiquettes, rituals, religious beliefs, and moral values. They are an indispensable medium for learning and preserving a past that is now fast disappearing. Mizos have a rich oral tradition with a host of folktales, songs, legends and myths. These tales and songs were their medium of communication, their custodian of culture and tradition and, in a word, their teachers. As Kiangte (2006, p. 121) writes: 'The folktales of the Mizos were as old as the history of the people itself.'

Before the introduction of Christianity, the Mizos believed in a god called *Pathian* and other spirits, both good and bad, that were believed to reside in the natural world.³ *Pathian* was considered to be an all-knowing and loving god. The Mizos did very little to worship *Pathian* because he was deemed to be a loving god who needed no constant pleasing. Instead, they spent their time and money on offering animal sacrifices to evil spirits that they called *Huai*, because these evil spirits were believed to bring calamities. The Mizos lived in constant fear of these evil spirits and did everything to appease them: 'The Mizos believed in the existence of various demons which caused illness and other bodily sufferings to man. When they fell ill they called the *Puithiam* (priest) who prescribed necessary sacrifice to be offered demons for recovery' (Lalzama, 2017, p. 29). The Mizos also believed in life after death and a world beyond this world. Lawmsanga (2010, p. 37) writes thus: 'The early Mizo society believed in the existence of two different abodes for the dead people. One was called "mitthi khua" (village of the dead) and the other place was called "pialral" (paradise).' These places are supposed to be beyond the Rih Lake in Myanmar, which is situated just a few kilometres away from the present-day Mizoram border. It is said that: 'On the outskirts of the Mitthi khua there was a man called Pu Pawla who had a big pellet bow with which he shot the spirits of the dead coming to the "mitthi khua" the abode of the dead' (Lalzama, 2017, p. 32). It was believed that a spirit that gets shot cannot enter *pialral*, the ultimate paradise where there is no suffering or work. However, brave warriors who killed certain wild animals, rich men who gave *thangchhuah*, or men who slept with three or

³ A word used to describe God even today.

more virgins would never be shot by Pu Pawla.⁴ Further, it was believed that spirits who cannot cross the 'pial' river and enter pialral would need to go to *mitthi khua* where they would have to continue to work and live like when they were in the world. (Shakespeare, 1912).

In what follows I will present and discuss two folktales and use these to reflect on various aspects of Mizo society before the advent of Christianity. I start with the story of Ngaitei, who is an orphan girl.

Folktale 1: Ngaitei, an orphan girl

Once upon a time there lived a young orphan girl named Ngaitei. She lived with her grandmother in a small village. She and her grandmother would often go to their *jhum* fields to harvest yams and other vegetables.⁵ At the bottom of their farm there was a river. Her father had drowned in this river and it was believed that her father's spirit still lived in the river.

One day Ngaitei and her grandmother went to their farm to dig out some yams and as they were working, Ngaitei felt very thirsty. Her grandmother went down to the river to fetch some water for her. After a while, she felt thirsty again and asked her grandmother for some more water. "I am too tired to go down again. Why don't you go down to the river and get some water? But when you reach the river, do not say *ekhai*," said her grandmother.⁶ Ngaitei went down to the river and when she reached it, she saw that the river was dark and deep and she said *ekhai*, forgetting her grandmother's warning. As soon as she said *ekhai* she fell into the water. When Ngaitei did not return, her grandmother got worried and thought that she must have drowned. So she decided to go and look for her. On her way, she met a pair of deer and she asked them if they had seen Ngaitei. They replied saying, "Yes, we saw her go on the other side of river Tuipui and Tiau." Her grandmother realized that Ngaitei must have been taken by her father's spirit. As she continued to walk, she met a pair of partridges and asked them again if they had seen Ngaitei. They also gave her the same reply. When she reached the river, she saw Ngaitei in the river. "Ngaitei, I am going to jump into the water," she called out and jumped into the river. Ngaitei was overjoyed to see her grandmother. Her grandmother asked, "Where is your father's spirit?" "He has gone to work in the form of a snake and will come back soon," she replied.

In the evening her father's spirit came home in the form of a snake, but after a while he turned into a human. The grandmother said, "I am going to take Ngaitei back." Ngaitei's father

⁴ A ceremonial feast to attain higher social status in the society.

⁵ Process of clearing land and burning them for cultivation practiced in Mizoram. Also known as slash and burn.

⁶ An exclamation to express amazement.

missed his daughter and wanted her to stay with him but said, “You can take her back now, but she must come back to me again.” Ngaitei and her grandmother went back home happily. Ngaitei was very happy with her grandmother and did not want to go back to her father.

Since Ngaitei did not return, her father’s spirit decided to flood the village where Ngaitei and her grandmother lived. This was his way of demanding the return of his daughter. The water began to flow into the village and the flowing water appeared to say, *Ngai, Ngai, Ngai*.⁷ The water was about to submerge the village and since the villagers knew why this was happening, they talked amongst themselves: “Because of Ngaitei our village is going to be submerged, what are we going to do?” Some suggested: “Throw a piece of cloth that belongs to Ngaitei into the river.” When they did that, the flood subsided for a while. But soon the water started rising again. Someone said: “Throw her comb into the river,” and they did that, and again, for a while, the water subsided. The villagers continued to throw each and every possession of Ngaitei into the water to appease her father’s spirit. Each time, the water would momentarily subside, but soon Ngaitei ran out of belongings. The river started swelling and the people of the village realized that if they do not throw Ngaitei into the water their village will be completely destroyed. The spirit of Ngaitei’s father would not rest until his daughter was returned to him. So, the distressed villagers had to make a decision and it was decided that they will have to sacrifice Ngaitei for the larger benefit of the village though she was loved by everyone.

As soon as the water swallowed Ngaitei the flood water subsided and it never came back. The people of the village were very sad and kept crying for Ngaitei. They grieved for her in mournful songs, even long after the day of the flood.

Folktale 1: Ngaitei

Ngaitei is a popular Mizo folktale about a young orphan girl who had to sacrifice her life to save her village. The story of *Ngaitei* depicts the pre-Christian Mizo belief in the existence of demons in their surroundings that harm people and therefore need to be appeased. In this story, the spirit of *Ngaitei*’s father is believed to reside in the river and causes floods in the village in order to demand the return of *Ngaitei*, who continued to live with her grandmother despite her father’s request for her return. His spirit in the story can be considered an example of *Huai*, an evil spirit that is said to inhabit rivers, big trees, caves, big rocks, and precipice. These spirits cause illnesses and other harm and therefore sacrifices are made to them. *Ngaitei*’s father’s spirit

⁷ Part of *Ngaitei*’s name. It could also mean the feeling of longing or needing something.

causes floods and threatens to destroy the village. The people of the village try to appease him in the beginning by throwing in all the belongings of Ngaitei, but the flood would recede only for a while and eventually the villagers had to make the hard decision of sacrificing Ngaitei in order to save themselves. As soon as Ngaitei is thrown into the river, the water subsides and the village is saved. Ngaitei here is a symbol of the sacrifices that Mizos used to make to drive away evil spirits. Mizos did perform animal sacrifice but whether Mizos practised human sacrifice or not is debatable. While there are some who claim that Mizos could have practised human sacrifice, J. Shakespeare, the first Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District expressed his doubts about such practises and expressed how such stories could be just an invention. He claims that Mizos were merely raiders and not even headhunters and bringing home heads was just a result of raids they made for loot and slaves. However it cannot be denied that bringing home a human head from a war was considered an act of bravery among the Mizo tribes (Zou, 2005, p. 6-9). The belief that the spirit of the dead crosses some kind of water-body such as Tiau Lake to go to *mitthi khua* or *pial* river to go to *pialral* is seen in the story of Ngaitei when the grandmother is told by a deer that they saw Ngaitei with her father beyond the river *Tuipui* and *Tiau*.⁸

Although Mizos still hold on to many of the indigenous beliefs of their forefathers, they no longer have fear of demons or evil spirits in nature nor do they perform any kind of animal sacrifice.

Mizo Folktales and Women in Mizo Society

Mizo society is a patriarchal and patrilineal society and men are seen as dominant both at home and in the community. When a woman marries a man, she is expected to go to her husband's home and her children will take their father's name, even though the wife continues to keep her surname. The status of women in the pre-Christian Mizo society was far from ideal. When a girl got married a bride price was paid by the groom's family to the bride's family. In traditional Mizo society a man could easily divorce his wife, and in such an event the only thing the wife was permitted to take home were the things she brought from home on her wedding day (Lalhmingpuii & Namchoom, 2014, p. 33). Although the tradition of paying a bride price is still practiced in the Mizo society, this is not looked upon as bane to the society but rather as a way of maintaining traditional practice. Bride price today can also be considered as a way for a bride to seek help and protection from her relatives as the bride price which she gets from the

⁸ Names of rivers in Mizoram.

groom's family, in small amounts, is distributed to various relations who in turn give her gifts and blessings to take with her when she is married.

In the past, a woman did not inherit anything from her father or her husband. She belonged to the men in her family from birth to death. A Mizo woman's position in the society in the past is reflected in some of the old Mizo sayings, such as "A woman's wit does not cross a village spring" and "A woman and an old fence can be easily replaced." However, it does not mean that women did not play an important role in traditional Mizo society. They were in many ways the backbone of their family and thus of society. Women did not only do all the household chores, but also toiled hard in the fields. They worked from dawn to dusk taking care of their family. They would get up early in the morning to fetch water, prepare meals for the family, and go to their *jhum* fields to work all day. Their work continued once they got back home: cleaning, cooking, weaving, and feeding children and domestic animals. Young unmarried women were also expected to entertain *inleng*, who may visit them every night.⁹ In the story of *Mauruangi*, *Mauruangi* and her step-sister *Bingtaii* are made to cultivate plots of land once they reached a certain age because a woman's responsibilities did not end within the four walls of her home. The story of *Ngaitei* depicts *Ngaitei* and her grandmother working in their *jhum* field. Mizo women were meant to be strong physically and emotionally. J. Shakespeare observes, 'The women are prolific, five to seven children being about the average, but mortality among the children is so great that few parents can boast of more than two or three grown up children' (Shakespeare, 1912, p.2). The following folktale, titled 'the story of *Mauruangi*', will be narrated in order to look at the status and standing of women in traditional Mizo society.

Folktale 2: The Story of *Mauruangi*

Once upon a time, in a faraway village in Mizoram, there lived a young girl. Her name was *Mauruangi*, and she lived with her mother and father.

One day her parents went to the forest to collect firewood and on their way, they had to cross a very old and weak bridge. The wife asked: "How can we cross this bridge on our way home when we are heavy with our load?" Her husband made a plan and told her: "Whoever is scared to cross the bridge on our way home should be pushed into the water," and the wife agreed. When they started collecting firewood, the husband made sure that his wife's load was heavier than his. On their way back to the village, when they reached the bridge the wife was

⁹ Male suitors.

afraid to cross it. Her husband reminded her of the agreement earlier and pushed her off the bridge.

At home, Mauruangi was eagerly waiting for her parents. When her father arrived home alone she asked: "Father, where is mother?" He replied: "She is washing my turban in the river." When her mother did not return that night, Mauruangi kept asking her father about the whereabouts of her mother. He kept giving excuses as to why her mother had not arrived home. At last, her father told her the truth and Mauruangi wept bitterly for her mother.

The next day when Mauruangi tried to light the fire, she could not, as the ambers had died in their hearth. Her father told her to go to their neighbour to ask for fire. Their neighbour was a widow who lived with her daughter, Bingtaii. When Mauruangi went to her neighbour's house to ask for fire, the widow said to her: "I will give you fire only if your father agrees to marry me." Mauruangi was surprised and told her father what the widow had said and her father told her to tell the widow: "Maybe someday I will marry her."

Very soon Mauruangi's father married the widow. In the beginning she was very good to Mauruangi, but soon she started mistreating her. The step-mother loved her own daughter and gave her all the good things, but she did not even give proper food to Mauruangi. Mauruangi was fed rice husk and made to do all kinds of work. She became very thin and weak. She missed her mother and would often cry.

One day Mauruangi went to the river feeling sad. Suddenly a big fish began talking to her: "I am your mother. Your father pushed me into the river and I have turned into a fish." Mauruangi was very delighted to meet her mother and she told her all about how her step-mother was mistreating her. Her mother gave her delicious food to eat and told her to come to the river every time she got hungry. So Mauruangi would go to the river to meet her mother every time she was hungry and started gaining her weight back.

When the step-mother noticed that Mauruangi was gaining weight and was looking healthy despite the food she offered her, she started suspecting her of stealing. So she told her daughter Bingtaii to watch the whereabouts of Mauruangi every day. Bingtaii secretly followed Mauruangi around and found out who had been feeding Mauruangi and reported this to her mother. The step-mother was very pleased with Bingtaii's discovery and soon made a plan to kill the fish. She told her husband that it was time for the whole village to go fishing in the river. When Mauruangi heard of the plan she was very sad and went to her mother and told her of the plan. She told her mother: "When I tell you, 'swim upstream', swim downstream and when I tell you, 'swim to the side', swim to the middle of the river."

When the village men started casting their nets Mauruangi shouted: "Mother, swim up," and when the men went upstream Mauruangi's mother would go downstream. When she shouted: "Mother go to the side," her mother swam to the middle so the men could not catch the fish. When they realized that it was because of Mauruangi, someone shouted: "Gag that girl

and take her away.” So Mauruangi was gagged and taken away and they were able to catch the fish.

The whole village gathered and had a feast but Mauruangi was heartbroken and refused to eat the fish. She collected the bones of the fish and buried it in their garden. A *Phunchawg* plant sprouted out of the bones and grew into a big tree which blossomed beautifully.¹⁰ Every time Mauruangi got hungry she would stand beneath the tree and sing:

‘O bend down Mother
Mother Phungchawg *Darhniangi*
Bend down, O Mother’¹¹

The branches of the Punchawng tree would bend and Mauruangi would pluck the flowers and drink the nectar from the flowers. This way, Mauruangi was getting healthy again and it was soon noticed by her step-mother. So, she again persuaded her husband to get the villagers and cut down the tree. So the men of the village came to cut down the tree. As they began cutting down the tree Mauruangi kept singing:

‘Hold on, my Mother
Mother Phunchawng *Darhniangi*
Hold on, O my Mother.’

As she sang, the tree held on and resisted being cut, so Mauruangi was gagged and taken away again. Finally the tree was cut down and Mauruangi no longer had her mother to take care of her.

Once again Mauruangi was starved and mistreated, but she grew up to be a hardworking woman. Her step-mother decided that it was time for her and Bingtaii to work in the farm. The step-mother gave Mauruangi bad seeds to sow while giving the best seeds to Bingtaii. Bingtaii was very idle and slept all day in her farm whereas Mauruangi worked all day and her crops thrived.

One day when Mauruangi was tending her crops some men passed by her field and asked: “Can you give us some of your cucumber and corn? We are really hungry.” Mauruangi replied: “You may eat as much as you want.” These men were the servants of a foreign king and were looking for a wife for their king. The king’s servants were very pleased with Mauruangi’s nature

¹⁰ A tree, whose scientific name is *bombax ceiba*.

¹¹ Name of Mauruangi’s mother. It is also a nick-name for a phunchawng tree.

and beauty so they asked her: “Will you be our king’s wife?” Mauruangi told them: “My step mother will not allow me to wed as she has her own daughter to marry off. The only way I can marry your king is if you come to my house and ask for my step-sister’s hand. My step-mother will be delighted and she will ask me to see my sister off at the outskirts of the village. When we reach the outskirts, you can drop her and take me instead.”

The men agreed to the plan and went to Mauruangi’s step-mother and asked for Bingtaii’s hand. She was delighted and soon prepared for Bingtaii’s departure. She told Mauruangi: “Your sister is going to marry a king and look at you; you will never find a husband. Get ready to drop her until the outskirts of the village.” So the men carried Bingtaii and Mauruangi went along. When they reached the village outskirts, they dropped Bingtaii and took Mauruangi instead. Bingtaii ran home crying and told everything to her mother who was furious.

The king was very happy to see Mauruangi who was beautiful and skilled in so many things, especially weaving. They got married and lived happily. Meanwhile, Mauruangi’s step mother was plotting revenge. She sent a message inviting Mauruangi to come home, saying: “Let Mauruangi come home so we can give a feast in her honour.”

Mauruangi went home and one day when her step-mother was looking for lice, she pretended to drop her comb under the house and asked Mauruangi: “Can you please go and fetch my comb?” When Mauruangi went under the house looking for the comb, her step-mother poured hot water on her. She was presumed to be dead and thrown into the woods.

Meanwhile the king was starting to miss his wife, so he sent a message telling them to send his wife back. Mauruangi’s step-mother took this chance to send Bingtaii to the king but the King was quite sure that she was not his wife. He tested Bingtaii by asking her to weave, but she could not.

One day while the king’s men were traveling through the forest they heard a woman singing and when they approached her they realized that she was their king’s wife. Mauruangi told them everything, including how she was recused and healed by *Sazaltepa* who made her take care of his baby.¹² When they asked her to go home with them she said: “I cannot go without the permission of my master who saved me.” So they waited for *Sazaltepa* to come home and when he did, they gave him a bunch of bananas in exchange for Mauruangi.

The king was very happy to have his real wife back. He made a plan to get rid of Bingtaii. He decided that Bingtaii and Mauruangi should fight a duel and that whoever survives will be his wife. The king secretly gave Mauruangi a sharp sword and a thick blanket to cover herself

¹² A Serow. By saying *Sazaltepa* and not *Sazaltep* the Serow is personified. All Mizo male names end with an ‘a’ and female names end with an ‘i’.

while he gave Bingtai a blunt sword and a thin blanket to cover herself. Mauruangi was able to defeat and kill Bingtai.

Maurungii and the king lived happily ever after.

Folktale 2: Mauruangi

Mauruangi is a story of a girl who, despite being mistreated by her step-mother, is virtuous, hardworking and generous and is therefore ultimately rewarded with a king as her husband. All the women character in the story of *Mauruangi* are either weak or evil. Mauruangi is an epitome of an ideal Mizo woman, who is beautiful, virtuous, subservient, hardworking and skilled. It is easy to point out that like all women in a strong patriarchal society, she is voiceless and is eventually rescued by a man. Mauruangi cannot speak or save herself from the clutches of her wicked step-mother. When she tried to speak and save herself and her mother, she was gagged and silenced by the society. The callous murder of her mother by her father also shows the place of women in the society. The step-mother who was a widow before marrying Mauruangi's father is depicted as a desperate woman trying to woo Mauruangi's father into marriage. Perhaps this is because of the way widows were treated and perceived in the Mizo society before Christianity. Widows were looked down by people. Even their children were often mistreated by others only because they were *hmeithai fa*, children of a widow. But, it is important to note that widows were allowed to remarry if they wished to, even in the past, although they were expected to remain in their in-law's house for three months after the demise of the husband. In traditional Mizo society, women had very little say in who they married. If a man was interested in them, or if their parents wanted them to marry a certain man, they had to agree. The joy in Bingtai's mother when the king's servants offered to take her daughter as their king's wife shows how important it was for girls to find a good husband. 'The girl's greatest attributes were physical beauty, skill in the spinning wheels and looms and the ability to exert hard labour in agricultural work' (Lalhmingspuii & Namchoom, 2014, p. 33). Therefore, in the story, Mauruangi who has all these qualities is the one who finds a good husband. The story ends with a duel between Mauruangi and Bingtai, which is a sad depiction of women fighting for a man in patriarchal society and it eventually leads to the death of one of them.

The status of women in the Mizo society changed for the better with the advent of Christianity and education. Education came hand in hand with Christianity in Mizoram and exposed the discrimination and exploitation faced by women. Though women are still marginalized, their place in the society has improved significantly. Girls are nowadays given equal opportunity to education, thus enabling them to be independent and self-reliant. The formation in 1974 of Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl, an organization that aims to protect women and children has brought about tremendous improvement in the status of women. This

organization works tirelessly for the empowerment of women in the Mizo society by trying to bring changes in traditional customary laws, which provide very little or no rights to women. Though the status of women in Mizo society has improved, their presence and influence in politics, economy, religion and government administration often remains very insignificant and they are still considered inferior in the society that continues to be dominated by men (Lalhmingpuii & Namchoom, 2014).

Mizo Folktales and Societal Values

Mizo folktales are a mirror to societal values that are deeply imbedded in the Mizo society. Mizo society is a close-knit society, a society that celebrates, mourns and works together. The most treasured value in the Mizo society is the value of *tlawmngaihna*, which can be roughly translated as a selfless act, or the willingness to help others. The value of *tlawmngaihna* compels Mizos to always come together in times of need. In the story of *Ngaitai* the village community came together when the river flooded their village and collectively tried to solve the issue. They deliberated and discussed the problem and came up with a solution, even though the solution may not have been what they had desired.

The story of *Mauruangi* showed how the people of the village came together to catch the fish on the behest of Mauruangi's father, who was persuaded by his wife. The villagers also rendered their help when the step-mother decided that the *Phunchawng* tree that was providing food to Mauruangi should be cut down. Even today Mizos as a community will come together in times of sorrow and happiness. Organisations such as Young Mizo Association can be referred to as custodians of these values as they are ever present when someone in the community is in need. The proverb, *sem sem dam dam, ei bil thi thi*, which means, 'those who share will live and those who eat alone will die', is the guiding philosophy of the Mizo community. In the past rich families would give feast to the whole village community and even share their valuables with the public (Khiangte, 2001, p. 12).

Conclusion

Mizo society witnessed tremendous changes and development within a very short span of time. Christianity and education has ushered in tremendous transformations in all walks of life. While these changes may be seen as signs of progress, it has also distanced us from our history and our roots. A society can thrive and continue to live on if we are respectful of our past and our roots. Therefore, preserving these folktales, song, myths and legends are of paramount importance as it is through them that we can see glimpses of our past.

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