

Expounding Enshroud Eco elements in oral traditions of Mizo Folklore,"Mauruangi".

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A finesse of semi literature circle, oral traditions are framed and chanted orally, which made up the earliest of all poetry and still breathing in many parts of the world. It carries the perpetual ethos of blood and sap, a mingling of body with soil. Folk tales are stories including myth and legends that are passed down through generations mainly by verbal method. Oral traditions bring out the customs, beliefs and traditions of humanity belonging to a particular circle. Mizo tales and their folklore are exalted for its brutality, a motif grasped effortlessly, but through keen observation one could acknowledge the blending of human elements with nature, the rebirth of existence as belongings of ecosystem.

In this paper ,I would like to exhibit the masked interweaving of mortals with ecosystem by drawing reflections from the Mizo folklore "Mauruangi,an Ideal Mizo Women" a tale retold by Malsawmi Jacob.The plot depicts natural rural life and qualities of mankind entangled with nature. The uncomplicated plot illustrates a child's love, affection and longing for its mother, and the reincarnations of its mother to nurture the deserted central figure in various appearances of nature identified in both land and water. Unaware about the powers of mighty nature, people keep on torturing , plundering and killing green creations which will ultimately leadto the end of all mankind.

KEY WORDS:Oral traditions, Mizo tales and folklore,"Mauruangi",environment, Malsawmi Jacob.

Date of Submission: 12-05-2020
05-2020

Date of Acceptance: 24-05-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Mizoram, one of the Fabled Seven Sisters of the north east, is the land of hills, rivers and lakes. Divided into eight districts, Mizo people had a wide tradition of singing and chanting traditional songs and poems, collectively called folktales. Unfortunately modern society seems to be discarding their old customs and ways of life supporting the sailed Revolutionary ideas of the West. A Research on Mizo folktales helps to seek insight to the nature tangled culture the Mizo people followed, just like any other, during olden times. Folklore exists as a form of cultural expression, expressing the ethos of natives. Passed on orally in a very traditional form showcases human qualities such as diligence, perseverance, patience, courage, humility, hospital and so on that underlines the basic principles of social life. And this highlights the importance of folktales, its retelling and research.

Mizo folktales are large in number because of multitudinous tribes and their varieties on occupation and land inhibited. These tribes sustained their lives with the blessings and support they received from nature. The people maintained an inevitable bonding with trees, flowers, animals, rivers and hills and they incorporated these elements of nature in their folktales, traditional dances, paintings and festival celebrations. The main occupation, like any other tribe was agriculture, rearing domestic animals and fishing. Mizo oral tradition developed in the year 1350 AED when they inherited areas around the river. Since there were no written documents or methods to preserve the supporting ancestral stories many failed to stand the test of time. Details presently available with us a stories in detail by classifying them upon the names of rivers mountains environment and style and the mode of telling stories there are other classification for better understanding of Mizo tales for example a set of tales which originated when people leave beyond the Chua rivers and the group of stories when people cross Betwa river the horror stories is said to have originated in early stages and continue to develop in the laterstages.

Mizo ancestors chanted tales to teach about the moral laws, civic sense, evils of War, sacrifice for the cause of others, importance and greatness of love and many other social and moral values and ethics. B.Lalthangliana in his book Culture and Folklore of Mizoram points five striking prominent features present in the Mizo folk tales. Wars between good and evil, rebirth of man as animals, birds, stars and so on. Supernatural elements including 'Vai' ,non Mizos as physically powerful and a lot about the boundless nature lied as a

common principle one could trace in the detail evaluation of Mizo tales. Certain spotted folktales or stories carries the myth and legend of Northeast Culture.

Mauruangi a folklore heroin epidermis human virtues and qualities .The tale was recreated in English by Malsawmi Jacob in English in a blog. "Mauruangi, a legendary heroine, is perhaps the epitome of ideal womanhood. In spite of all imaginable suffering under a callous father and true-to-tradition wicked step mother, she grows up into a lovely woman. She possesses all the virtues, triumphs over all odds and has a happy ending". Mizo sings the casual violence people committed in the daily life without any fear for the slightest matter. I do not like to Pen about such blood thirsting brutalities present in folktales rather I would like to trace the lively mingling of nature with people and their life. Mauruangi, a young girl loses her mother when her father purposefully pushed her mother into the river. The father than remarry a woman from the neighbourhood who is a widow with one daughter Bin Tai same age as Mauruangi The little girl began to lead a satisfied life with her step mother in the beginning but things gradually changed when she started comparing and saving her daughter with Mauruangi, making Bingtaii a spoilt child.

Mauruangi was given only rice husk to eat and she starved all day .The step mother's harshness grew no bounds. Mauruangi visited the river where her mother was drowned by her father.

Such sudden cruelties without any true intentions are dominant in Mizo tales. The little girl's request to get back her mother's love prompted the spirit to be formed into a giant catfish. The power to be reborn was bestowed upon females, most commonly because women were considered treasures of the society .Mizo people celebrates the birth of a girl as society moulds her to be an ideal daughter and wife .She is given the task of weaving and spinning apart from household chores. Mauruangi gets the warmth and motherly love from the catfish making her joyful inside out. Whenever she reached the bank of the river crying, it would feed her happily till she felt satisfied. The stepmother wondering about the good health of Mauruangi found out the catfish feeding her and keeping her safe from starving .She arranged the village folk to kill it. Mauruangi tried to protect her mother from attacks but failed and the villagers feasted on the fish meat. The little girl could not tolerate the cruelty and refused to eat the fish. She then collected the bones and buried it in the garden. A plant sprouted out of the bones and grew into a large tree and bloomed beautifully.Mauruangi happily stood under the tree and sang.

"Bend down oh my mother!
Mother PhunchawngDarnghiangi,
Bend down !oh my mother"

The braches bowed before her and she filled her empty stomach with the juicy nectar and her mother could feed her child just as how a mother sustain her infant with her milk. Bingtaii spied on Mauruangi and reported about the feeding tree to her mother. The step mother again persuaded her husband to cut down the tree and along with their neighbours they chopped down the tree. Mauruangi stood near and sang.

"Hold on, O, my mother,
Mother phunchawngDarnghiangi,
Hold on, O, my mother."

Hearing Mauruangi's song, the tree refused to fall. The cuts villagers made on it kept filling up and finally when Mauruangi was taken away, the tree fell. The tree could withstand the cuts only when she sang the song. Her sweet voice was enchanting her mother's spirit to withstand. This pictures the beautiful concept of man nature bond. In some of the stories we can see the impact of trees on people and the manner in which they incorporate worshipping of those trees in their life. They used to consider, in fact all tribal people around the world, trees and animals as an integral part of their own survival shell. A mutual support was quite essential to lead a substantial life in the worldly life.

Mizo tales often draws images of well-behaved and self-maintained women roles. Similar to our Hindu Mythology, before the arrival of the Hindu lawmaker Manu, provided equal chances and in fact a superior position for women, Mizo tales consider the tenderness of a female and mould characters and plots accordingly. There are few stories that bring out brutality in women but Mizo women are consider a "helping tender hand one family could have".Mizo people celebrate the birth of a girl child. Here too Mauruangi turns up to be an "ideal women", contrasting to her step sister. Young girls are taught to work in fields to cultivate essential crops and it was not assigned to men to toil in land. Women were given equal responsibility or even more at times. Mauruangi was given the worst worm eaten seeds by her step mother who gave her own daughter with the best healthy seeds. Bintaii used to be idle, always taking rest and lazed all day. She did not properly sow the seeds or ploughed the field. On the other hand Mauruangelaboured hard but still had to face scolding from her stepmother for being lazy and doing nothing. They did not had the eyes to see Mauruangi's effort. She kept quiet as she believed someday something good or miracle will happen to her life

Mauruangi's dream of owning a cultivated field became a reality with her constant hard work and determination, which is an essential quality of Women must possess according to Mizo tradition as it is she who has to show what will power is to her family. Mauruangi's field yielded crops whereas Bingtaii had weeds grown at its full potential. One day the servants of Vailalpa, a lord, was passing by and eyed upon the ripe cucumbers and maize in Mauruangi's field. The requested her to lend them some food so that they can satisfy their hunger. Without any second thoughts Mauruangi offered the best cucumbers and maize. The men were satisfied with her kindness and hospitality and soon recognised her ability to begin an independent family. None teaches life lessons like a woman and the same strength distinguishes her from her opposite sex. They asked her consent for marrying their lord finding her a perfect match for their lord. Mauruangi knew very well that approving the proposal was the best opportunity to escape all her sufferings and finally she said,

"My stepmother will not allow me, as she has her own daughter to marry off.
So the only way out is, come to our house and ask for Bingtaii's hand.
I will follow to see her off, and after passing the village you can leave her and take me along instead."

As per Mauruangi's plan, the men came and asked for stepsister to be their master's wife. Her step mother was very happy and send her off with them the next day. She then asked Mauruangi to accompany her sister so that she can see the life of a happily married girl because according to a step mother Mauruangi would not get a chance to lead such a life. Parental love is always divine but by suppressing another child and supporting one's own will prove disastrous in future. Mauruangi obeyed her step mother to follow Bingtaii and when they passes the village, they dropped Bingtaii and carried Mauruangi. A women can dream of nothing better if she is not married off to a comforting hands.

Vailalpa and Mauruangi got married and soon started their life together with much expectations and colourful dream. She found happiness in her life unaware about her step mother who was buried in deep thoughts to destroy her life. She plotted the best evil plans against the girl and invited her home. Mauruangi unable to smell the trap in it, left to her birthplace. The stepmother poured boiling water on Mauruangi and she died on the spot. Her body was thrown out to the bushes but was brought back to life by a serow as his babysitter.

One of her toe which was left in the bushes turned into a little bird.

Vailalpa missed his beloved wife and asked his servant to get her back as soon as possible. They went to her old home and enquired about her to the stepmother. The stepmother very cleverly presented her own daughter as their Master's wife even when they constantly refused about it. Finally they had no option other than to carry Bingtaii to their master. The toe turned little bird and as the servants carried Bingtaii, the little bird flew behind them and sang:

"Don't carry her, don't carry her,
She's Bingtaii, not Mauruangi,
Bump her bottom, bump!"

The men then bumped her on the ground. Bingtaii scolded and cursed the little bird.

As the servants took her to their master and he was surprised to see his supposed wife, he made up a plan to bring out the truth. See you very well that his wife could weave in the best way and he asked Bingtaii to do the same. She did not know to weave and failed in the test. She was thrown out of the house and warned to get away with her mother's evil plots. Bingtaii shamelessly stayed on without concerning about the lord's warning.

Fortunately the men found out Mauruangi rocking the serow's baby to sleep. Surprised and happy the men demanded to know what actually happened to her and she narrated the entire story. When the serow came back, the men handed it a bunch of bananas and asked Mauruangi in return. When they got back to the master's house, he was very happy to see Mauruangi. He wanted to get rid of the impostor, and decided to let the two women fight a duel. He covered Mauruangi with a thick new blanket and gave her a sharp sword. But he wrapped Bingtaii in thin clothes and gave her a blunt sword. Just like how the step mother used to treat her. When they were ready, Mauruangi said to her step sister, "Cut me first." Bingtaii hit her with the sword but could not hurt her at all. Then Mauruangi attacked and killed her with the sharp sword. Later Mauruangi and vailalpa lived together again. As every happy ending tales, the tale of this ideal woman also ended the same way. The couple lived happily forever.

The story of Mauruangi is similar to the fairy tales of the Western world like Cinderella and Snowwhite, which highlights 'fascinating fairy', but the only difference that differentiates the two tales are the revenge and violence in the plots in an extreme high level. Mizo tales can be differentiated in a wide concept with other Tales of India. For example the stories of Himalayas hold on more importance to the origin of mountain and

landscape of the region. Tales of Andhra Pradesh describe the life of common people in their traditional lifestyle.

The essence of nature tangled story telling abruptly ended with the widespread of Christianity. The acceptance of folktales faced modern questions and tales of rebirth and supernatural elements could not withstand its strength. The advent of Christianity in Mizoram affected not only the people's perception of the world, but also brought drastic changes in the line of oral culture they maintained. Even in the bloody violent plot, a keen attention can be drawn towards the lessons man learn from his fellow mates. He was taught what to do and what not to do, what to obey and what not to obey. When a new religion sprouted in the minds of Mizo people, they began to set aside their traditional faith and religious practices that had vivid reflections of the tales they passed on.

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