

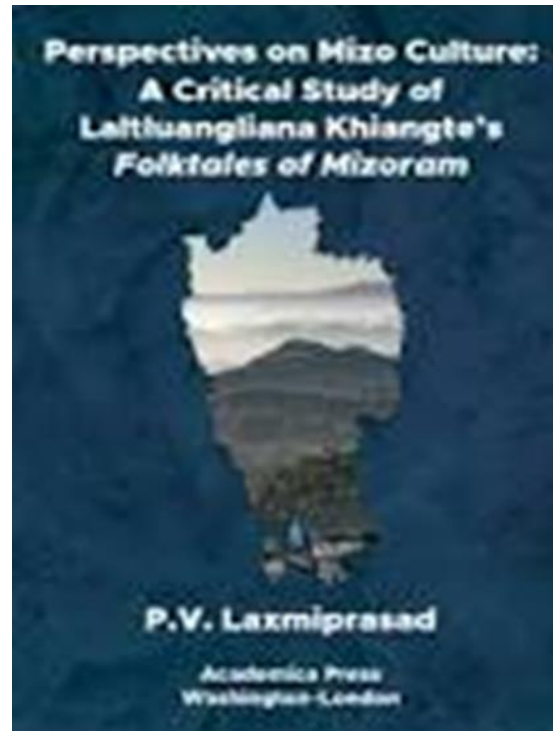
Perspectives on Mizo Culture: A Critical Study of Laltluangliana Khiangte's Folktales of Mizoram by P. V. Laxmiprasad, ISBN: 97801680534405 Academica Press, Washington-London, 2022.

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Dr..P. V. Laxmiprasad is an eminent academician, an erudite scholar, a literary critic, and a senior editor. He has so far published 42 books in English literature. The Perspectives on Mizo Culture: A Critical Study of Laltluangliana Khiangte's Folktales of Mizoram was published by Academica Press Washington, London in 2022.

Folktales of Mizoram are a translated collection of sixty-six short stories from northeast India taken up for a critical evaluation. The stories depict a typical Mizo culture in spirit and practice. This study focuses on the transformation of oral literature into written narratives. Folk practices, folk medicine, folk narratives, traditional songs, and received wisdom dominate these stories. A more insightful approach into folk narratives and songs emphasizes the world of new hermeneutics. The land, the culture, the language, the traditions have been remarkably explored through an elegant reading and evaluation of this collection. Antiquity speaks through the folk tales. The spirit of folktales becomes one of unique exploration of hermeneutics in the end.

The critic has segregated the contents into five parts, Mizoram, Folk Tales, About the Author, Critical Evaluation of Folk Tales of Mizoram and Conclusion. Though the book concerns about the critical evaluation of folk tales, the critic has taken efforts to give a concise description of Mizoram in the first section entitled "Mizoram". The critic has elucidated the reasons for being called by the name Mizoram. Throughout the first chapter dance forms, art and culture, customs and tradition and festivals, religion of the people of Mizoram are delineated, so that the readers



are acquainted with the state and have a clear-cut idea while reading the critical evaluation of folk tales.

In the second part “Folk Tales,” the critic has given importance to Folk Tales to get a clear idea of the folk tales that are dealt in the fourth section. Folk tales are stories passed on from one generation to other through word of mouth. As the critic states Folk Tales are enduring and appealing furthermore it is also a cultural study of the land. They are figurative in nature. The folktales of Mizoram are important in the lives of the ethnic groups in Mizoram. The most common and important factor in folk tales is that there are flat characters and young protagonist. Folk Tales are part Myth, part fable, and part fairy tales. These folk tales create a sense of unity in a cultural group. The critic has mentioned different types of folk tales 1) Animal Tales 2) Tales of Magic 3) Religious tales 4) Realistic Tales 5) Romantic Tales 6) Tales of Stupid Ogre. He also expresses that Folk is used in terms like folk music, folk dance and folk tale. These tales are dynamic as they are modified to suit to the modern world.

The third part is the shortest section which is a short bio note on the writer Laltluangliana Khiangte who is a well-known playwright – dramatist, poet, scholar-critic, essayist, biographer and folklorist from the state of Mizoram. The critic highlights that for his immense contribution to Miizo language and literature the writer has received Padma Shree in Literature.

The fourth Part “Critical Evaluation of Folk Tales of Mizoram” is a detailed analysis of the collection of folk tales. The critic has dealt with the stories precisely giving adequate information to the readers and representing the moral values that are imbedded in the folk tales. The readers get a clear-cut idea of the stories which is somewhat similar to the folk tales of other states as well. The critic has presented the fact that life is not the same for everyone. For some it is easy going for some hardships are on the way. Whatever happens in life people try to accept and live. The folk tales taken for the evaluation by the critic posits that the life of both humans and animals are juxtaposed, one cannot be totally removed from the other. The critic has analysed the stories in each section and the themes and motifs in each section varies.

The first section of the short story collection deals with the character ‘Chhurbura’, who is considered a real hero in Mizo folk tales. The critic has tried to accentuate the human vices and folly and virtues through these stories. The character Chhurbura in most of the stories is depicted as a person of stupidity. Simultaneously he is honest and loyal, he is prone to deceit and treachery, jealousy, trickery, cunningness of his brother too. The stories based on colour phobia and misunderstanding of the concept and doing stupid actions. The critic also focuses on the ignorance of the protagonist and insists that at times brothers are conspirators. The

protagonist Chhurbura is both wise and stupid; he shows his wisdom while escaping and stupidity at other times. The critic has not tried to evaluate the protagonist only on one term but he has provided a broad spectrum of the character.

The second section “Interesting Memoir of Males” deals only with male protagonists. While evaluating this section the critic has presented how in ancient times people were controlled by magic traps and evil spirits. In each of the stories the critic has scrutinized the comic effect or humour that is represented in the stories. Adventures are part of this section and while relating the animal character Prasad has stated “The animal characters are used to arouse some suspense and interest for the listeners. Oral traditions had tales like this to make it a thriller and reliever in the end” (19). This section has a variety of stories and in most cases the intelligence of the characters are represented. Most of the stories in this section are about the tribulations man face in life because of his laziness and unless he works for the better he cannot live a peaceful life.

The third section entitled “Memorable Portrayals of Female” is about abduction, sale of women in the ancient times, which was a social customs and women going to heavenly abode after praying to God. The critic also brings to limelight the close proximity of animals with human beings. Brothers going in search of sisters, separation and reunion of couples are focused in this section. The critic points out that “Even age-old practices are still in fashion among the tribes in some areas in India. Mizoram is one such state to contribute the folktales of magic, animal sacrifices, evil spirits, nymphs and unexpected turns and twists in the lives of characters. One essential feature of these tales is the transformation of human beings into animal forms” (26).

The fourth section “Traditional Mizo Love Stories” emphasis on the man-woman relationship. Tale of love, woe, reunion and remarriage if abandoned by husband, and true lovers facing death, strong faith and confidence in each other, sacrifice, compassion and sympathy and fascination for prophesy. In certain stories ghosts are one of the key factors. The writer portrays man’s selfishness rebuttal and rejection of his own people. Thus, the critic puts it thus, “Man’s greed for selfishness and aggrandizement dominate the tale that moves on and on for ages to come” (32).

The final section “Animal as Characters Besides Man” deals fully with the connection between man and animals. This section deals with the tale of man and animal in the form of love, marriage, separation and conjugal love, the love and friendship between animals. Like human folly and vices, animals are also known for their folly and for their intelligence, they too plot wicked devices. In certain cases “Animals are not gifted with the power of speech and rational

thinking. Their actions imply their language which is only understood but could not be responded” (35). As the critic states not only human beings “Animals too have rivalry in terms of wicked nature, revenge sort of activities, and fight for supremacy just as human beings do in the world. The race for superiority and domination is clearly visible through the tale”(35).step-mother stories like Cinderella and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs are also part of the Mizoram folk tales. This represents the human pathos and sympathy and the continuous pain of suffering triggered by stepmothers all over the world. These fables in the final section create curiosity and interest in the listeners.

The fifth part “Conclusion”gives a brief outline of the culture of Mizoram and the importance given to folk tales. The animal and human characters, the connection between the animal world and the human world all has given beauty to folk tales. Finally, the critic has pointed out that the “Diversity of the collection is wholly dominating” (39).

The critic in P.V.Laxmiprasad presents the age old tradition of folk tales in Mizoram; he has used language which is easily understandable by students as well as scholars. He brings out the themes and the moral values and the age-old beliefs represented by the writer in his works. He adds insights and expresses his opinion about the folk tales of Mizoram. This critical work will certainly help the readers to decide whether the collection of folk tales will be interesting to read. He has appreciated the Writer for re-presenting the folk tales to suit the modern world and which proves still interesting even after centuries have passed. This critical book is useful for research scholars.