

PROJECT REPORT ON CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF MIZORAM

INTRODUCTION :

Mizoram is an adorning state glamoured with scenic spots and vibrant cultural entity. Based mainly on the tribal communities inhabiting this alluring state, referred to as the Mizos, the cultural boundary of Mizoram is reflective in its own way. Known as the land of diverse tribes and races of people living together, the different tribes and communities here have unique features of their own. Mizoram's culture is also reflective of the traditional heritage of the inhabitants. The residents of this peace paying land are very proud of their cultural legacy and go beyond lengths to preserve it inspite of many foreign intrusions. Being the songbird of the northeast, Mizoram perches on the hills, displaying its storehouse of endless natural beauty.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF MIZORAM

Mizoram is rich in Intangible form of Cultural Traditions. There are certain numbers of Activities and/or Ideas in Festivals, Dances, Performing Arts, Oral Traditions, Social Practices. The Project works covered a study of these traditions by undertaking research-based field works and collecting informations from reliable sources. Reports worked out from those finding may be discussed as follows -

1. FESTIVALS :

The Mizo population consists of several ethnic groups. The diversity of these ethnic groups reflect the historical immigration patterns. The majority of the Mizos are Christians. There are four major kinds of tribes in Mizoram, which are the Chakma Tribes, Pawi tribes, Ralte tribes and the Kuki tribes. The tribes of Mizoram are populous, literate, gorgeous, and wish to live free. They reflect a friendly and a happy go lucky personality. The state which is equipped with a plethora of beautiful sites also has many festivals to celebrate. The festivals exhibit the vast cultural diversity of the state. The festival season is the season of harvest. The festivals are celebrated with great vigour and enthusiasm. Festivals thus play a major role in shaping the brotherhood bonds of the tribes, also helping them to perform their old traditions and rituals while renewing some old bonds and ties. Each tribe has its own festival and rituals.

Mim Kut

Mim Kut is one of the most important festivals of Mizoram, it is celebrated in the months of August and September. This colourful, bright fiesta includes dancing and singing and continues for four to five days. This involves paying patronage and tribute to their dead ancestors by practising already set customs which have been practised for centuries.

These include offering bread, maize, vegetables and other items. The festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm as it is believed that the dead ancestors visit the houses of their children and special offerings are made for them.

Chapchar Kut

Chapchar Kut is considered as the oldest festival of Mizoram, during this festival, farmers cut bamboo forests to make places for seasonal farming. They wait for the bamboo heaps to get dry and then burn them. Portraying the liveliness of the culture, people dress up wearing traditional clothes and hats made from parrot's feathers and beads. They do not wear shoes, and a traditional bamboo dance is performed where the women dance gracefully while the men sit on the ground and beat each other with bamboo sticks while singing the traditional songs. Chapchar Kut is celebrated in all the villages of the state and is also the most important cultural tradition followed.

Pawl Kut

Pawl Kut is celebrated in December and is also considered as the Thanksgiving festival. Meat and eggs are a customary part of the feast of the festival. Rice beer is primarily consumed during this festival with lots of gaiety and fun.

Thalfavang Kut

Celebrated and solemnised in the months of November, this fiesta is also concerning harvest. It marks the onset of harvest. The local people dance and sing and wear unique attire. Many cultural events like games are also a part of this festival. Tribes and communities gather around and pitch in their collections in the form of feasts and happily spend their time.

None of these Festivals are celebrated nowadays except 'Chapchar Kut'.

2. DANCES/PERFORMING ARTS :

The state of natural splendor also has one of the most captivating dance forms. The residents of Mizoram love to indulge in dances, making their lives as cheerful and vibrant as possible. The diverse Mizoram dance forms are delightful and interesting reflecting the jubilant spirit of the Mizos. Most of these dances are performed during the festivals and are group dances. Following are Dances of Mizo -

Cheraw

Cheraw is also referred to as the Bamboo Dance. It is believed that the dance form existed in the 1st century AD. Traditional Mizo costumes are worn by the girls making them look graceful. The main instruments are gongs and drums.

Khuallam

Khuallam is the dance of the Guests. Guests are invited from the other villages. Gongs known as Darbu remain the most relevant instruments of the dance. Traditional hand woven Mizo cloth is wrapped around the shoulder.

Chailam

Chailam is performed during the Chapchar Kut festival. This is performed by men and women standing in a circle, where men hold the shoulder of the women while the women hold the waist of the men. The musicians are placed in the middle of the circles; they play the drums and the Mithun's horn.

Sarlamkai

Sarlamkai is performed as a part of celebration after winning a war. Men and women stand in their places while the hero dances holding his shield and his sword, swinging it to the tune of gong beats.

Chheih Lam

To perform Chheihlam people sit on their heels on the floor in a circle while a dancer stands in the middle. He recites a song with various limb and body movements. He exhibits various jerking movements of legs and gentle movements of hands and body. Though, this dance is physically tiring but it relieves one from mental stress. It is generally performed in the evenings when the day's work is done. However, it can also be performed on any occasion. The main aim of the dance is to unite everyone and spread happiness.

3. SOCIAL PRACTICES :

Food Habit

The Mizoram cuisine is reflective of a rich cuisine and focuses mainly on non-vegetarian dishes. Their food is less spicy as compared to other regions. Rice remains a staple of their diet, with several vegetarian and non-vegetarian curries. Some of the traditional Mizo cuisines include Bai, Vawksa Rep, and Arsa Buhchiar.

Mizos are working in the field/jhum from their home every day. As such they are required to take their Breakfast heavy with Rice and Sabjis to sustain energy to work with full force and take the lunch with light food. The dinners are heavy as breakfast. This is the unique traditional food habits of the Mizos.

Marriage Culture

Mizoram, the land of blue mountains, has a pretty popular wedding trend. It has the most number of inter caste marriage. The Mizo tribes follow

the tradition of bride pricing, a custom where payment is made by the groom's side to the bride's kin. The boy and the girl are given an extended courtship period, and then the engagement follows. The boy's family approach the girl's family to settle the wedding as well as the price. Most of the Mizos accept Rs 420 as the price of the groom from which Rs 20 will be given back to the boy's family. From the price of the groom so received, every close relatives are given as 'mantang' who in turn donate whatever they think appropriate materials they have. Long ago weddings take place without any oath taking but nowadays taking place in the church and makes Mizo wedding entirely different and unique. One of the interesting traditions followed in a Mizo wedding is that a bride gives a Puandum to the groom which is a traditional rug. This rug is wrapped around him at the time of burial. The bride and the bride groom are not jeweled. Simple and elegant perfectly describe the tone of the Mizo wedding.

Religious Culture

The Mizo religion just like other religions of tribal ethnic groups appears to have ceremonies and sacrifices. It is also seen that they believe in retribution in one form or another after the enemies were killed. The primeval Mizo religion was perhaps 300 years old and had Gods and spirits.

The most important God of ethnic tribe was the 'Pathian'. He was worshipped with reverence and sacrifices were offered. Pathian which means 'highest God' is believed that He dwells in heaven. 'Pathian' was more or less an onlooker from heaven. The 'Pathian' was prayed to when at times people faced difficulties as he is always looking down to the people and knows who is doing what or at least he is good and in difficulties would always help them.

The study thus reveals that the Mizos' primeval religion was full of gods and spirits. These spirits are divided into two, good spirit and bad spirit. Good spirit are the one who do good to human or at least did not harm them, on the other hand the bad spirits are harmful and even fatal at times. They always haunt for human and animals. The Mizos had a great fear for the evil spirits and offered sacrifices to escape from their evil eye. However, they had a systematic presentation of everything that happen in the society. Every sphere of their life is connected connection to spirits, either good or bad.

4. ORAL TRADITION

Folktales -

The folktale comprises a large body of this oral tradition. A problem arises in defining folktales because there is a continuing debate about the relationship between various forms of traditional literature, identified as folktales, myths, legends and fables. While some scholars accept the different forms as types of the folktale, some others regard the forms as distinct but overlapping.

In the Mizo language, 'thawnthu' is the term given to all forms of

traditional narrative making the distinction even more complicated. However, in this study, I have only included traditional narratives that feature elements common to folktales although some may verge on the legendary or mythical.

IDIOMS AND PHRASES –

Mizos have rich and interesting Idioms. There are so many Idioms and Phrases all of which cannot be taken here. Let us take some of them –

1. Ui puar koh ang (Like calling of a Fed-Dog) –

A dog will respond you before you give food. But after feeding, it will give no heed to your call. It is used when a person is giving no response to someone who needs him.

2. Ui leh kel thlun pawlh ang (Tying a Dog and a Goat with one rope) –

Dogs and Goats are supposed to hate each other. It is used when persons don't live together peacefully and instead quarrel each other.

3. Van laia tla ang (Falling from the Middle of Heaven –

A person with no relatives. No dad/mom, no sons/daughters etc..

4. Zawhte no nei ang (Like Cats giving birth) – A cat giving birth to kitten was assumed to have shifted frequently to another place. A person

5. Arpui mit men (Hen sleep) – Person with half-opened eye. If a person who pretends as if sleeping but could see everything secretly.

There are so many other Idioms and Phrases all of which cannot be reflected here.

Thank You

The End