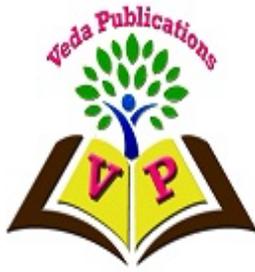




RESEARCH ARTICLE

**LOVE BEYOND BOUNDARIES: HUMAN, SPIRIT, AND ANIMAL RELATIONS IN MARA FOLK NARRATIVES**

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*(Research Scholar, Mizoram University, Tanhril, Mizoram, India.)**(Professor, Mizoram University.)*Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2025.12310>**ABSTRACT****Article history:**

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Love, in Mara folk narratives, is not confined to human romance but extends across the boundaries of spirit, animal, and human realms. This article explores the theme of love in Mara folklore, examining tales of human-spirit marriages, human-animal bonds, and familial devotion. It situates these stories within the Mara cultural background—a people once animistic, later Christianized, whose oral traditions preserved a worldview where spirits and animals were living participants in daily life. By retelling stories such as Vawri the Spirit Wife, Siarahmaino the spirit-medium, and tales of metamorphosis, the article highlights how the Mara imagined love as a force that bridged natural and supernatural worlds, binding humans to landscape, kinship, and cosmic order.

Keywords : *Chief Disciple, Pride Of Place, Impactful Speeches, Social Upliftment.*



INTRODUCTION

The Mara, numbering about fifty thousand today, live in the southernmost part of Mizoram and adjoining regions of Myanmar's Chin Hills. Once known as "Lakher" or "Shendu," they trace their migration from the Chin Hills around the seventeenth century (Parry 12; Ray 53). Traditionally, the Mara lived in village-based societies practicing shifting cultivation, and were renowned for their courage in warfare and headhunting practices, which carried both social and spiritual significance (Hlychho 10). Their cosmology was deeply animistic: every hill, river, or forest was believed to be inhabited by spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. Christianity, introduced by R. A. Lorrain in 1907, reshaped religious practices, but the old narratives remained alive in oral tradition. Against this backdrop of a spirit-filled world, stories of love between humans, spirits, and even animals take on cultural significance, revealing how the Mara imagined relationships beyond human society. This article explores the theme of love in Mara folk narratives, focusing on human-spirit bonds, human-animal relations, and the moral and cultural meanings these stories carry.

HUMAN-SPIRIT LOVE

Stories of love between humans and spirits are common in Mara folklore. A central tale is that of Vawri, the Spirit Wife, who married a mortal man. Her presence brought prosperity and happiness, but when her supernatural identity was revealed, she vanished, leaving her husband and children behind. This narrative highlights both the attraction and danger of unions across realms. For the Mara,

spirits (lyurahripa and khasôh) were not distant beings but constant presences in daily life. Marriages between humans and spirits in folklore reflect a blurred boundary between the natural and supernatural, echoing the Mara belief that spiritual beings could influence fertility, prosperity, and even desire (Parry 355). These stories also serve as cautionary tales, reminding listeners that intimacy with the spirit world carried both blessings and risks.

HUMAN-ANIMAL LOVE

Another theme is love between humans and animals, often involving metamorphosis. In some stories, a python, tiger, or bird takes human form and marries a mortal. These tales emphasize both wonder and moral lessons—love is possible across forms, but betrayal or disrespect leads to tragedy. Such stories reflect animist thinking, where animals were regarded as kin or alter-beings. The ability of animals to transform, speak, or marry humans echoes the Mara understanding that the natural world was alive with consciousness. These tales, while fantastical, are also moral, reminding audiences of the respect owed to the environment on which Mara society depended.

FAMILIAL LOVE

Love in Mara folklore is not limited to romance. Many stories highlight deep bonds between siblings or between parents and children. Sacrifice, loyalty, and grief are recurring motifs. In some tales, a sister gives her life to save her brother; in others, parents sacrifice to ensure their children's survival. Such narratives reflect the communal and kinship-based structure of Mara society, where the family was the



core of survival and identity. These familial love stories also served as moral instruction, teaching younger generations about the duties of care, loyalty, and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

These love narratives reveal that for the Mara, relationships extended beyond human society into a cosmos filled with spirits and animals. Even after the spread of Christianity, such stories continued to be retold, embodying memory and cultural identity. They are not only tales of romance but also cultural reflections of kinship, moral codes, and the animist roots of Mara society. In narrating human-spirit and human-animal love, the Mara affirmed their belief in a world where boundaries were permeable, and love itself was a force bridging human and nonhuman realms. Through these narratives, love emerges as a binding force between people, spirits, animals, and the land itself, sustaining cultural identity across generations.

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