

RESEARCH ARTICLE



A STUDY OF THE TRADITIONAL COURTSHIP SYSTEM IN MIZO SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT



The paper describes the Mizo traditional system of courtship, focusing on how it was practiced in the early period. The Mizos are one of the tribes living in Northeast India; they have a rich cultural tradition and distinctive social practices, customs, and way of life, some of which are crucial to understanding the concept of courtship. The social lives and practices of young men and women have been studied and are the central focus of this paper.

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Every nation has its own customs and traditions. There are many different ways of doing things when it comes to marriage. There are many different courtship systems among the North Eastern tribes of India. The Mizo people were a free society in the past. They are a society that lives together and does things together. Their society was so free that young men and women are involved in social activities. Rev. Liangkhaia said that, "...all the young men and women of the village collect firewood and cut down trees, mostly green trees... This sathingzar is a pleasant time for young men and women." This statement portrays the lifestyle of males and females of the era.

They are a society that practices the courtship system as a means of marriage. There were some forms of courtship in which, usually in the evening, young men gathered to court the girl in her house. Dr. N. Chatterji mentioned that "It was during such evening pursuits that the Mizo boys and girls would try to size up each other to examine whether they could, in the long run, develop such intimacy into a matrimonial relationship." (The Earlier Mizo Society, 3) James Dokhuma wrote that, "They are a society where young men go to the houses of the girls to court them... the young men go out to the houses of their lovers to court them together... When entering the girls' house, the young women quickly welcome them and give them a seat quickly." (Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung, 171) C. Laitanga also mentioned that, "After dinner, young men gather together first to Zawlbuk and discuss with their friends whether they are playing or going out... They do not go to the girl's house alone; they go to the girl's house with their friends." (Mizo Khua, 66)

They are thus a society that practices courting girls at their homes at night. Girls were polite in manner and never talked negatively to anyone. For young

women, having several visitors in one night was considered a kind of reward from generation to generation and an honor for every young girl; it showed that they were highly valued females. For this reason, girls would try to make it seem as though they were falling in love with every young man who was courting them. Therefore, they happily talked about various things and laughed together until the rooster crowed, which served as a timekeeper for every villager.

The young men's position was very good towards the girls. If the girls spoke badly to them or did not please them, the angry young men of the village would fight the girls or punish them. C. Lalbiaknema mentioned that, "...the young men who see bad behaviour towards the girls, the proud girls... who displeasing in the sight of the young men in this way are punished by the young men, they made her ashamed... they visited and exchange group by group whole night," (Zawlbuk Titi, 21, 22). Fearing this, the young maidens would make it a point to be hospitable at all times during the hour of courtship. On the other hand, their situation was very difficult. When they faced punishment, even their parents and brothers did not dare to respond, and the chief and the elders did not interfere with the young men's actions. They discussed it in the Zawlbuk, and if they thought it was right, they punished the girl. This is why young girls are hospitable to young men at all times.

In the evening as well as in the daytime, they have a chance to visit the girl's house. In the olden days of the Mizos, when the women were in the house, they did not stay alone; they collected firewood or did weaving. Traditionally, young men who were unemployed would visit the homes of young women, where they could interact and spend time with them. In former times, Mizos worked hard in the fields, and



this kind of daytime courtship usually occurred after they finished their work.

Collecting firewood was also a form of courtship among young men and women during the daytime. This type of courtship also mainly occurred when they finished and had nothing to do in the field. Some did it publicly with their friends, and some did it secretly.

Shifting cultivation was their main occupation, so young men and women worked in the fields every day. Therefore, young men and women who are in love are invited to work together. They work together in this way, so they can get to know each other's characteristics, their strengths and weaknesses, their diligence and lack of diligence. In the olden days of the Mizos, young men and women did not show their love as openly as they do today. Openly dating is considered a shameful thing, and it is one of the reasons why girls cannot find visitors among the young men of the village. So they mainly keep their love life a secret for as long as they can. It was mandatory for every girl in the past.

At night, when the girls met the boys at their house, they still did household work, like preparing food for their livestock and working on their weaving. Young men also helped the women as much as they could. During this time, they expressed their love in secret, using work in a way the recipient could understand, which could lead to a later marriage. The ancient Mizos were very strict about marriage. They even secretly investigated their potential partner's bad characteristics. For these reasons, they mainly hide their bad character during their courting period. It seems that courtship practices can lead to sound decision-making when selecting a partner. However, divorce was also common among the Mizos in the olden times. So, it shows that they hide their bad attitudes and traits during courtship, and that this

cannot prevent poor decision-making when choosing a partner.

They are a free society where young men and women are free to court, but they are very secretive about their love affairs. Their parents are the main decision-makers regarding their marriage. Many young men and women secretly fall in love, but sometimes their parents force them to marry someone they do not love; parents sometimes arrange their marriages as well. Therefore, in many ways, many young women married with tears due to their parents' decisions. So sometimes courtship did not affect their marriage as often as it seemed to.

In the olden times, Mizos were a society of young men and women who lived together freely and in harmony. They lived together in a realistically grounded way. Women's status was low in many ways, but their words and songs had meaning. Many famous Mizos express their anger and love through songs, and many also express their shortcomings and injustices through songs. Some women dare to cross the wide gap between social classes, including daughters of chieftains who crossed social barriers by loving a commoner. From these facts alone, such freedom of communication in the community likely has many meanings.

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