

**Cultural Syncretism and the Discipline of Cultural Studies: Mizo Culture in Context**

**Lalhmingangi Pachuau**

Ph.D, Department of English Literature  
The English and Foreign Languages University  
Hyderabad 500007  
Telangana, India

**Abstract**

*The paper engages with idea of cultural syncretism taking the Mizo culture of North-East India into context. After the arrival of the British in Mizoram and their subsequent interaction with the Mizo, the culture of the Mizo has undergone tremendous changes. The paper attempts to examine various questions such as: Has the encounter with the British produced a kind of cultural amnesia among the Mizo people? Is there any attempt to regain the past, if there is cultural amnesia? As the two traditions have met, is it a case of one tradition overwriting the other tradition? While attempting to respond to these questions, one is posited within the discipline of Cultural Studies and scrutinizes the relation of such an inquiry with the discipline itself. In other words, one is interested to examine how the discipline of Cultural Studies has oriented itself towards addressing the questions of syncretism. The paper, therefore, briefly traces the development of Cultural Studies, to reflect on the internal anarchy within the discourses on Cultural Studies, which demonstrates the difficulty of speaking on syncretism in a transparent manner despite continual attempts.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Syncretism, Post-colonial, North-East, Headhunting, Tlawmngaihna

This paper engages with the idea of cultural syncretism. Cultural syncretism as a mode of expressing the interaction of cultures has acquired tremendous circulation in the academia in recent times. The historical event of colonization by the European powers over Asia and Africa, and the repercussions of this event on the colonized cultures have accentuated the necessity to understand syncretism in its various dimensions.

In the study of syncretism as a cultural experience, the paper focuses on the Mizo experience of the coming of the British in Mizoram. The interaction with the British has brought a sea-change in the culture of the Mizos. It can be seen that it has a modernizing effect on Mizo culture especially if we consider modernization as an alignment towards Western culture. The paper attempts to examine various questions such as: Has the encounter produced some kind of cultural amnesia among the Mizo people? Is there any attempt to regain the past, if there is

cultural amnesia? As the two traditions have met, is it a case of one tradition overwriting the other tradition?

While attempting to respond to these questions, one is posited within the discipline of Cultural Studies and scrutinizes the relation of such an inquiry with the discipline itself. In other words, one is interested to examine how the discipline of Cultural Studies has oriented itself towards addressing the questions of syncretism. The paper, therefore, briefly traces the development of Cultural Studies, to reflect on the internal anarchy within the discourses on Cultural Studies, which demonstrates the difficulty of speaking on syncretism in a transparent manner despite continual attempts.

Significant changes have happened in the field of Cultural Studies in the last fifty years as the attention shifted from global to local. The advent of post-structuralism and post-colonialism marks a categorical move towards small narratives as against the universalizing tendencies of the meta-narratives. It points out the necessity of local knowledge in the study of a culture rather than employing a universalized perspective. This is all the more significant when we take into account that most of the theories that we employ at present in academia to study culture – whether located in the West or located in the East – have been originated within the European intellectual tradition, and the theories have been disseminated across cultures through the violent acts of colonization. This conflict of local and global becomes all the more apparent in the present context of Cultural Studies. In other words, it has become a fundamental issue for any student of Cultural Studies to wrestle with the local-global scenario and the rise of syncretism.

Cultural Studies was developed in Britain during the 1950s with a particular focus on the working class. The problems of the working class were marked out due to the rising socio-economic changes in the then England. The text, *Uses of Literacy* by Richard Hoggart spoke about these changes and their repercussions on working class members. This text, *Uses of Literacy*, therefore heralded an innovative way of looking at the individuals through larger socio-economic structures. This kind of reading life-practices forms the ground for the early cultural studies. Simon During has this to observe for the early Cultural Studies:

“Early cultural studies did not flinch from the fact that societies are structured unequally, that individuals are not all born with the same access to education, money, health care etc.,...it differed not only from the (apparently) objective social sciences but from the older forms of cultural criticism, especially literary criticism, which considered political questions as being of peripheral relevance to the appreciation of the culture.” (During Introduction 2)

It is clear from his statement about the early Cultural Studies that it is politically motivated; in other words, it is guided by the understanding of the role of power, dominance and hegemony in the society and social structures.

Another founding text, apart from *Uses of Literacy*, is Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*. This text also came around the same decade in the 1950s. The argument developed in *Culture and Society* is that culture should be studied in a wider canvas by blurring the categories of high culture and low culture. The tendency to see high culture as the "actual" representative of a society is a misinformed one according to Raymond Williams. The low culture within which a larger section of individuals belong has a role to play in the discourses of Cultural Studies. The high culture, in terms of population, is a small section of society but with tremendous influence over the rest. This influence is ideologically motivated and early Cultural Studies, especially in the writings of Raymond Williams, attempts to dispel this influence by high culture by refusing to allocate a high and more prominent status to it.

Both Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams had grown on the ideas of F. R. Leavis and his "Great Tradition" The Great Tradition emphasizes on the formation of moral sense among the people and preferred a few chosen texts over experimental writers such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. F. R. Leavis had argued in his text to rework the literary canon to that effect. Expectedly, he found himself resisting the mass culture. Nonetheless, the post-war Britain with Marxist leaning had followed F. R. Leavis' dictum for moral upliftment as the primary task for literary texts. Hoggart and Williams had complex relation to the ideas of Leavis. They found his "Great Tradition" wanting in terms of popular culture despite its acceptance in the post-war Britain. In short, the nature of Culture Studies in its early phase had two strong aspects: it was colored by Marxist philosophy and guided by the structural reading of cultural practices. Structuralism, which was developed by Ferdinand Saussure, functions on the relation of signifier and signified within the sign system. Culture is examined as a cluster of systems. Around 1960s, the influence of Structuralism was highly evident, and Cultural Studies (which came in 1950s) too had taken the benefit of it. Louis Althusser played a vital role in bridging Marxism and Structuralism, and thus making the former, a scientific one. Consequently, more than Saussure's theory of sign, it was Althusserian notions on cultural analysis such as *ideology* and *problematic* that had been appropriated by Cultural Studies scholars. Ideology is the conceptual framework within which we interpret the experiences. It then generates the sense of the culture and the consciousness of our identity. Althusser speaks about the main ideological apparatuses of the society such as religion, family, law etc. which, according to him, are as important as the economic condition emphasized by Marx.

The early Cultural Studies had shown interest in class consciousness but unlike Marxism, it refused to relegate the significance of individual agency for structural/discursive factors. Marxism gave all importance to economic structure and nullified the agency of an individual. Scholars such as Hoggart found this aspect questionable. Consequently, the scholars of Cultural Studies went ahead to display the capability of individuals to stand against any dominant discursive structure. The break from traditional Marxism was accountable for the

rise of New Left. The Cultural Studies in Britain was largely modeled on New Left which was more democratic in appeal and broader in concern. Althusser too was one scholar who had emphasized the role of discursive structures which he calls “apparatus”. New Left Cultural Studies scholars diverted their attention from Althusser and paid more attention to another scholar, Antonio Gramsci and his idea of “hegemony”.

Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is revolutionary in the sense that it explains in a convincing manner as to why the oppressed people contribute to their own oppression by helping the oppressor. Hegemony is the control of people without using any direct force. It functions effectively by working on the psychology of the oppressed – the force of self-interest. The oppressed is made to understand tactically the importance of oppression for the oppressed. In other words, the oppressed is convinced of the necessity of the oppression through some external rationalization. Subsequently, the oppressed themselves help the oppressor to continue the oppression. Later, this notion of hegemony is thoroughly explored by Edward Said in his work.

An important aspect of New Left Cultural Studies in Britain was the involvement of intellectuals from the Third World countries. The relation of Britain with the Third World is an outcome of centuries of colonization and imperialism. The unilateral flow of people from the West to the East in the (pre-)colonial period is marked by a stark change in the post-colonial period with people migrating from East to the West. That the Cultural Studies in Britain in 1980s should be heralded by the Third World intellectuals is therefore no surprise. The involvement of the colonial intellectuals (coming from the Third World countries) had shaped the Cultural Studies in a particular fashion. The work of Stuart Hall, who was a colonial intellectual, introduced the concerns of the Cultural Studies– racism, identity, ethnicity and diaspora etc.

In the later decades, the internationalization of Cultural Studies was reflected not only by the presence of colonial thinkers but also by its sprouting in other locations such as the United States, France, and India. Outside Europe and the US, South Asia became an important location for Culture Studies and in South Asia- India became a significant one with many well recognized intellectuals working on Cultural Studies. The names of scholars like Ashis Nandy, Rajni Kothari, D. L. Sheth of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Ranajit Guha, Gyanendra Pandey and Gayatri Spivak of Subaltern Studies have enriched the field of Cultural Studies. The CSDS members have raised questions related to the transformation of pre-modern cultures to modern cultures; interaction of cultures, and the recovery of marginal culture from state hegemony and cultural imperialism in the context of Indian societies. These issues (raised by CSDS) are strongly linked to the conditions of intellectual colonization that India has suffered for centuries in the hands of the European power, and India’s attempt to recover its traditions from a Euro-centric perspective.

South Asian Nations have undergone similar fate of colonization and cultural amnesia and therefore, the concerns of CSDS reflect a much larger framework. Cultural amnesia can be understood in terms of change in value assessment. Edward Said's *Orientalism* introduces the establishment and implications of value re-structuring in cultural context. Orientalism is the way in which the West has stereotyped the East into an inferior Other as feminine, weak and irrational. In his introduction, Said remarks:

The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (2)

Edward Said has emphasized on academic institutions and those who work in them. Both these two have served to promote Orientalism in the post-colonial scenario. The modern institutions have become a surrogate force for Euro-centric epistemological dispersal. In the wake of this dispersal, the native cultures and traditions are re-evaluated as lower in the hierarchy of progress and civilization. Europe is produced as the benchmark of civilization which other cultures have to aspire for and work towards it. It is the white man's burden, so to say, to educate the non-Europe since Europe, the elder brother happens to be ahead in the race of civilization. When the European anthropologists came to Asia to "learn" about the other cultures, their writings spoke more about them rather than the cultures they were looking at. In other words, they were seen working with pre-given frames and ideologies. These ideologies were, quite predictably, Eurocentric in nature. The blindness of insight to the fact that cultures are different and different cultures behave differently has effected cultural amnesia among the non-European societies as they begin to model their experience and expression on the line of European scheme.

It becomes an unavoidable exercise to posit a question: how do we speak of our tradition, which is non-European, while locating ourselves within the paradigm offered by the West. This critical situation has led many important thinkers such as Ngugi-wa Thiong'o to call for different model and different parameter for the study of cultures of non-Europe. He points out the differences in the cultures – historically and intellectually which affirms his opinion that African culture should take a different route while assessing its culture. The parameters offered by Europe are non-congruent for the non-European cultures like Africa. Still, the history of Africa is intertwined with the history of Europe and therefore, it becomes imperative that the discussion on Africa carries the traces of Europe. Not only Africa but many other countries of Asia have suffered the same destiny of inescapable history of syncretism.

Syncretism can take place in two modes – one through force and another through assimilation. It is largely through the exercise of force, authority and powers that the

syncretism of Asia and Africa with Europe has happened. In other words, many cultures in Asia and Africa have undergone drastic changes owing to the encounter with the West. The non-recognition of the Other is writ large in the colonial expansion of the West. In the context of cultural syncretism, what is the experience of Mizo culture when it interacted with the Europeans in the nineteenth century?

The Mizos are heterogeneous communities in North-East India, which include many sub-groups such as Lusei, Hmar, Kuki, Paite, Mara and Ralte among others. All these sub-groups have their distinctive identities which they preserve and bequeath to the next generation through the practice of various dances and songs. They did not possess a writing technology, a script, and therefore the cultural expressions were done through embodied practices. Only recently in March 1894, with the help of the Christian missionaries Rev. James Herbert and Rev. F.W. Savidge, the Mizos employed the Roman script to write their language. The term “Mizo” is an umbrella concept which is commonly understood as “people of hills”: ‘mi’ means people and ‘zo’ means hill. If one has to trace the history of Mizo through the oral narratives, it becomes clear that migration has been a strong factor in their cultural formations. In the past, some thousand years ago, they had travelled through the mountainous route of Khampat via Myanmar to reach the North-Eastern region of India. The place near Khampat is traditionally referred to as Sinlung or Chhinlung. The migration of these communities along with many other communities in North-East explains the cultural heterogeneity as well as their distinctiveness from mainland India. During the British Rule in India, the North-Eastern region remained a separate entity in itself. In other words, it was not a part of India. The expansion policy of the British made them to encroach into the communities of North-East. The British occupied Assam and then went ahead to occupy Nagaland, Mizoram and several other parts of North-East India. In Nagaland and Mizoram, the missionaries were rather active to spread the gospel of the Christ. Hinduism had already taken strong root in the plains; only the hills were untouched by the wave of Hinduism. The missionaries took the opportunity and made a massive conversion of people in the hills. Those people were largely Naga and Mizo.

The encounter of the Mizo with the British in North-East India in the nineteenth century has produced an account of the Europeans re-configuring the culture and tradition of the non-European society (Mizo) with the perception that its culture (European culture) is more civilized. The European force was more powerful and they had taken control over the chiefs in Mizoram (formerly Lushai Hills District, Assam) as they had controlled over the rulers in India. Once in control, they started making significant changes in the traditional practices. Two such practices are noteworthy: Headhunting and Zawlbuk. Both these practices were abolished by the British on account that they were “barbaric” practices.

Headhunting is a ritual and by ritual, it means, as Richard Schechner puts it, a socially codified performance which is efficacious. For the Mizos, headhunting is not done on any



day; rather an auspicious day is chosen when the cry of the bird minivet is heard. This bird is associated with the sign of success. After a successful headhunt, the warrior shouts the name of the deceased three times and sings the song again. This is done to enslave the deceased in the after-life and also to make him recognize the master's voice. Upon reaching home, the warriors are welcomed by young girls and appreciated for their courage, victory and for bringing the head. In the society of constant wars and enemies all around, the act of headhunting forms an important part of Mizo culture. In the symbolic world of traditional Mizo, headhunting provides rich meaning into their understanding of valor, enemy, and social status.

Headhunting is a cultural practice which despite the involvement of violence is not considered a wrong deed. Rather in Mizo culture, it is a mark of a warrior to hunt a head successfully. In the world of the Mizo, the importance of life is not restricted to man alone. Animals, trees and other beings share the same importance. The spirit is believed to be there in all of them. Before sacrificing an animal, a proper request is made to the animal and the relation of man-animal is invoked so that the animal is not violated when it is killed. In headhunting, the severed head is not violated in (socially given) ethical sense but the head is valued and kept as a source of power and strength. The meaning attached to the act of headhunting therefore varies from one culture to another. To the European, the act of beheading someone seems brutal and a violation. In Mizo culture, the beheading is not an end of the person's life. The head has the spirit of the person and therefore the head has the power and vitality of the person which the possessor of the head acquires subsequently. The British in their reading of Mizo head hunting practice had failed to take into account the overall meanings that were functioning for the Mizo, and therefore, they considered the practice as savage. The practice of headhunting is not confined to Mizo; it is there among Naga as well. Headhunting, therefore, seems to be a cultural practice among peoples of Tibeto-Burman race whose roots can be traced towards Khampat region. The abolition of headhunting is encouraged by the association of barbarism and also the threat that such a practice gives to the British. Contemporary researchers on Mizo culture are inclined to look at the action of the British as cultural imperialism and vigorously promote the revival of "the forgotten traditions" including headhunting which is theatrically staged by elders for the community.

The abolition of Zawlbuk is an interesting case, especially in Mizoram. Zawlbuk is a construction in an open space built near the Mizo chief's house. It is meant for bachelors and generally, the place is used for entertainment and for imparting socio-cultural knowledge among the young men. Such a site for bachelors is found in other cultures of North-East India as well like the Naga. Unlike other parts of the North-East, the initial perception of the Zawlbuk by the British was not negative. In fact, the missionaries found Zawlbuk convenient for their evangelist works. They found Mizo Zawlbuk free from the unwanted elements such as sex and drinking of *zu*, the local rice beer. The abolition happened much later when the

very nature of Zawlbuk began to go against the prescribed social code of conduct laid down by Christianity. The tribal ways of life were found incongruent to the code of conduct expressed in the Holy text. Religions in all the societies have been repressive towards man's actions. In other words, religion has proved itself to be a policing agent in man's affair. This nature of religion cannot be out rightly denounced as wrong for in a context, the restrictions are meant for the betterment of man. Religion can become outmoded, that is another issue altogether. The coming of Christianity in Mizoram has brought a modification in the conduct of Tlawmngaihna. The value of human life is considered higher in the chain of being in Christian tradition. This reflects the human-centric world view in which man is the centre of the universe, and all the things in the world are evaluated in relation to him. In such a scheme, taking of lives especially of woman and children during head hunting is considered immoral and wrong without reservation.

The early missionaries were hesitant to intervene with the existing cultural practices. They were mild in handling the issue of Zawlbuk. The later Mizo leaders gathered courage and abolished the practice of Zawlbuk especially in the wake of its becoming a site of gossipmongers and love affairs. It might perhaps be incorrect to claim that Zawlbuk became such an unwanted site all of a sudden. The unwanted elements and practices might have been there all the time but they were ignored and overlooked. The coming of new codes of conduct gave an opportunity to question the unwanted practices in Zawlbuk and subsequently, they were abolished.

Zawlbuk is associated with a traditional "concept" referred to as Tlawmngaihna and the primary objection to the abolition of the Zawlbuk was that it was the site for disseminating Tlawmngaihna. It was assumed that the abolition of Zawlbuk was the abolition of Tlawmngaihna. Certainly, this was not the case. The afterlife of Tlawmngaihna was seen in the Biblical code of conduct. The synthesis of Christianity with the traditional ways of Mizo had expanded the experiences of Mizo people making them acquire the Saidian's contrapuntal vision. The complexity of the experience is well understood as Mizo endeavors to carry the two traditions within themselves. Even at present, the Mizo people speak of Tlawmngaihna, and encourage one another to follow it.

In this interaction between the Mizos and the British, Christianity also finds itself changed due to Mizo traditional practices and values. In other words, Christianity in Mizoram is indigenized, and therefore it is not the same Christianity of Europe or elsewhere. In Mizoram, one can observe the use of traditional music during the Church services. The musical instrument used is called *Khuang* which is drum-like and is beaten with one stick. The cultural affiliation of Mizo people to dance and music is undeniable and it comes out clearly as in when one studies the rich performative traditions of Mizo. In view of this attachment, it is not surprising that the modification on Christianity should come through a supplement of indigenous music.



The inclusion of songs sung in a gathering (*Zaikhawm*) after the end of the formal religious services on different occasions is also promoted by the traditional practice. Some new songs derived from folk songs have also entered the Christian theological practices in Mizoram. According to one observation:

Today the Lushai Church is producing quite a new type of hymns, which is even more popular and powerful than those spoken of above (translated hymns and locally composed songs sung to western tunes). They are the outpouring of Lushai hearts inspired by the Holy Spirit. In construction they conformed largely to the Old Lushai songs, but the tunes, although Lushai through and through, are yet quite different from those used in the old heathen days. The Christians love these new hymns and sing them with ecstatic fervor. (Kipgen *Christianity* 278)

The effective reuse of traditional material to suit the contemporary need as in case of Christian prayer and church service is one way of familiarizing the foreign practice. The outcome of such intermingling of traditions is the birth of a new tradition wholly particular to the culture concerned.

One major contribution of the British in its encounter with Mizo is the Roman script. Roman script became the medium for writing the language of the Mizos. The shift from orality to literacy was marked by an appropriation of Roman script by the Mizos. Subsequently, the people in large number received education through institutions established by the Christian missionaries. The route to modernization took ground with Mizo becoming scribal and literate. The circulation of the Bible among the Mizo due to the presence of a script also contributed in the spread of Christianity.

The expanse of Christianity among the Mizo seems to get into conflict with the traditional religion which is marked by propitiation of various spirits. These spirits are either good ones or bad ones. The highest and most powerful of all these spirits is called *Pathian*. He is the creator of the universe and all the entities in it. He is close to human and in folklores he can be seen as interacting with man. One such tale goes this way:

One day, it was said, Pathian came down from heaven to a mixed village. It was a custom to welcome all guests and so He approached a man of Hnamte clan. That man had just performed one type of sacrifice that prohibited entertainment of guests. The Pathian had to approach a man of Lusei clan who welcomed Him and entertained Him happily. The Family was somewhat puzzled at the behavior of their guest but did all to make Him feel at home. Next morning, the man went out with their guest for a send-off. Pathian then disclosed His identity, instructed him to sacrifice a piglet promising perpetual blessing to the family. He then disappeared. (Kipgen *Christianity* 117)

The centrality of Pathian in the lifeworld of the Mizo is replaced by the dominance of Christ as the savior, in the colonial period and the post-colonial period. The advent of Christianity also brought about a change in the celebrations of the Mizo traditional festivals. The major festivals of the Mizos were *Chapchar Kut*, *Pawl Kut*, and *Mim Kut* which were celebrated every year with community singing, dancing, drinking, and feasting. These community practices such as drinking and dancing during the celebration of the Mizo festivals were viewed as anti-Christian by the missionaries. Gradually, most of these Mizo festivals began to lose their significance and came to be substituted by Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Christianity in Mizo culture is so pre-eminent that any aspect of cultural syncretism is often ignored and the narrative of cultural violence is spelt out.

Another cultural disjunction that scholars frequently discuss in the encounter of the British and the North-East is the divorce of human from the ecological system. In the traditional model, man exists as one of the elements in the larger ecological system where he is interdependent to the other entities. There are oral narratives in Mizo culture of tiger-man. The animal and the human come together. There are stories of human-being turning into a river and other animals. The closeness of human existence with his surrounding is the hallmark of traditional life of the Mizo (this is also true for the Naga). It seems that there is no hierarchy of higher and lower being as it is there in the Chain of Being professed by Christianity. The shift to Christianity resulted in the shift in perspective: Man became the centre of existence and the highest creation by the Almighty. His relation with his surrounding therefore suffered a setback as other entities became inferior in status. The idea of man changing into animal or river is not promoted.

The synthesis of cultures as in the case of Mizo has often been read as an act of one culture wiping out the other culture. The rise of literacy in the case of the Mizo is seen as the death of oral world. In that sense, the notion of synthesis is not even purchased wholly. Following this paradigm, the academia and the research scholars speak of recovering the past. The question that one faces in this context are significant ones: can one really recover the past and more importantly, can one access the past in a transparent manner? The transparency of the access to the meaning posited by the past does not seem to exist in the contemporary situation of the post-colonial condition. Whether this transparency was there in the first place is also something that can be further examined. The nostalgia of the past and the emphasis on something like “pure past” or “origin” is a creation of false nativism. Culture in its fundamental sense is always motivated towards dilution. The impetus of revivalism has produced a sense of hatred against other cultures. In the case of the Mizos, the animosity and blame is towards the British and the legacy of Christianity.

The post-colonial situation has produced varied problems for cultural analysis in Asia and other parts where colonial powers had exerted their influence. The CSDS group mentioned earlier and especially Ashis Nandy, through his work, has spoken about it. He finds European

structure working on the way Indians have looked at their cultures. During the time when the European scholars were keen on reproducing an image of India and Indians as childlike, inferior, less developed and dependent, people like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Rammohan Roy and others chose to rattle this image by claiming that manliness was also in the blood of India. They became the spokesperson of manliness and renounced all forms of femininity. This step, according to Ashis Nandy, has only accentuated the claim of the British regarding the Indians.

The opposition to the Western modernity and the dismissal of the use of Western framework in the analysis of Indian cultures in the writings of Ashis Nandy is symptomatic of the efforts made by many post-colonial thinkers in India and other places such as Africa. In Africa, Ngugi has spoken extensively about how the West has corroded the African oral practices by emphasizing on the writing technology. The oral performances and traditions are represented as inferior, uncivilized and backward. In the educational institute (Althusser's ideological apparatus) where Ngugi is teaching, he finds that the oral literature of his culture has no place and the curriculum does not have any place for it. Ngugi then advocates the employment and inclusion of *orature* in *Globalectics*.

In Nandy and Ngugi's discourses on how to speak about one's tradition, it is visible that they are constructing a binary opposition of the East and the West. The act of reclaiming the past is executed through a harsh criticism of the West. This seems problematic especially when we try to understand the role of the colonized in the advances of the colonizers. For instance, in Mizoram, the Christian missionaries were not strongly opposed by some section of the natives. Rather, the natives found the teaching of the Christ relevant and beneficiary. The same is true for India as well. Many rulers took the British as their political allies. Rather than being displeased by the presence they actually sought the British intervention. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, therefore, does not fit without problem in the Indian context. The interaction need not be delimiting or negative. It can be positive as a culture expands itself in response to the other culture. One argument that is offered mostly by post-colonial writers is that the interaction is negative because it is an act of cultural violence – there is no recognition of the Other. The Other is invisible or distorted. This is an undeniable aspect of colonization. In the aftermath of colonialism, the prolonged cry of servitude is merely an exhibition of weakness and the necessity for a cosmopolitan outlook is around.

The binary with a division between cultures, the opposition of the East and the West, does not seem to reflect the ground reality where cultures are continually coming together and synthesizing. At one level, the Cultural Studies is populated with Eurocentric discourses and at another level it is opposed by non-European discourses. The West attempts to universalize the discourses while the East attempts to localize them. The overall situation is an internal anarchy within the paradigms of discourses on Cultural Studies. The Western discourses on culture do not seem to suit well the experiences of the East and resultantly, non-European

people are keen on developing a non-European framework for cultural examination. Till the Euro-centric approach towards Cultural Studies is maintained, universalized and standardized, the conflict and anarchy within the discipline will not cease.

To conclude, there are no satisfactory responses to complex situations germinated by the interactions of cultures which are ideologically dissimilar. It will be wrong to read the cultural interactions between the Mizo and the British as a narrative of cultural colonization alone. The situation is rather complex with both the cultures getting affected and re-oriented. The Christianity of Europe in its re-planting in Mizoram has found itself acquiring another shape totally unknown and unprecedented due to Mizo influence. On the other hand, the traditional practices and beliefs of Mizo have undergone drastic modification leading to the westernization and modernization of the culture. The paper has attempted to show this complex situation of syncretism in the analysis of Mizo culture in post-colonial situation. The discipline of Cultural Studies, within which this enquiry is made, is also critically examined in the paper to argue that the internal anarchy within Cultural Studies in the present time is anticipated with the emancipation of small narratives which were once subdued within meta-narrative, and with the hyper interaction of cultures in the globalized world. From the 1950s to the present, Cultural Studies has been seen as interrupting the assumed hierarchy in socio-cultural discourses. Marxism and structuralism in the early phase while post-structuralism in the later phase have played a crucial role in the pursuit of Cultural Studies.

### **Works Cited:**

- During, Simon, ed. *The Culture Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-class Life, with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1957. Print.
- Kipgen, Mangkhosat. *Christianity and Mizo Culture*. Assam: The Mizo Theological Conference, Mizoram, 1996. Print.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983. Print.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. Print.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient*. UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978. Print.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge, 1988. Print.
- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958. Print.