

# **A Case Study of Chapchar Kut Festival for Tourism Development in Mizoram**

**Dr. Lukram. Ibempishak Devi**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, D M College of Arts, Dhanamanjuri University, Manipur  
Email: [lukramibempishak03@gmail.com](mailto:lukramibempishak03@gmail.com)

## **Abstract**

Mizoram is one of the seven states of North-Eastern India situated in the extreme corner of India.. The Mizo tribes are formed out of the same tradition over two centuries.. Primarily, before the colonization of the British rule every village was under the authority of the Chieftain. The Chief was the only highest authority of the village. The Mizo had come into contact with the British when the British expanded their territory in the Chittagong Hill Tract. The culture of the Chieftain gradually abolished by themselves after the advised of the British and the modification their culture. Still now they keep their traditional culture in high regard. The Mizo civilization occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the year 1864 when the English missionaries occupy in the heart of the Mizos , since then the Mizo culture had been almost changed .The main occupation of Mizoram is agriculture .They have three main festivals namely; Chapchar Kut , Mim Kut and Pawl Kut . All of these festivals are closely related to jhum-cultivation . And among festivals Chapchar Kut is the most popular and biggest festival in Mizoram.Though jhum–cultivation is prohibited all over the world , there are some suggestions and remedies for improving jhum-cultivation particularly in this state. The culture of Mizoram is based on agriculture and jhum – cultivation is the origin of Chapchar Kut, It is the right time to promote Chapchar Kut as eco- tourism festival of Mizoram . Because the most important point for the development of this state is the development of eco-tourism, as it has the availability of unexploited natural resources which is perfectly blended with rich tribal traditional and cultural heritage. Thus, tourism and industry has to be given the first priority which can be definitely provide sustainable economic development for the region.

**Keywords:** Jhum-Cultivation , Eco-Tourism , Festival , Chapchar Kut , and Culture.

## **1. Introduction:**

Mizoram is situated in the extreme corner of India. The geographical area of this State is 21,081 sq.km. Its dimension north to south is 285 km and east to west is 115 km. This state is surrounded by Assam and Manipur on the north, Burma in the east and south, Bangladesh and Tripura in the west. Mizoram is almost height areas and the ranges have an average height is 900 metres and run into North-south direction. The rivers flow from high hills in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. According to 2011 census, the population of Mizoram is 10,91,014. Many thinkers have given different opinions about the origin or migration of the peoples of Mizoram, but still now the debate is unending about their

origin. Almost writers stated the Mizo tribes belong to the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid group comprise of many tribes people having the same tradition. The Mizo people entered from China to Burma towards the west of the Chindwin River in the early 800- 850 A.D. of the Christian era. They moved from the Chindwin river valley, towards to Kabaw valley which is called by the Mizos Kawphai. During those days the Mizos settled side by side with the Burmese. The evidences about their close relation with the Burmese can be known from their similarities viz, musical instrument, dresses and customs. The Mizo tribes are Lushai, Ralte, Hmar, Paite, Kuki etc. In the early period before the colonization of British the people of Mizoram were under the authority of the Chiefs (Lal). Each village was independent and the Chief was the only high honourable person and everybody was dependent on him, but after the British rule there is some modification in their culture. Even though still they keep their traditional culture in high regard. There are three major festivals in Mizoram such as, Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Pawl Kut. Out of these Chapchar Kut is the biggest festival. This festival is mainly based on Jhum cultivation. The festival is celebrated by the local people in the month of spring season of March. So, Chapchar Kut means Spring Festival in Mizo language.

As Chapchar Kut is the biggest festival of this state it is possible to promote as an Eco-Tourism so as to improve the economic condition in Mizoram. Moreover, according to 2025 census, the literacy rate of Mizoram is 99% which is the highest literacy rate in India. Hence, it will be possible and acceptable to promote it as Eco-Tourism festival. This festival is closely related with Jhum cultivation. Though shifting cultivation is prohibited in all over the world Chapchar Kut is recommended by the State government of Mizoram as a state festival. Besides, the culture of Mizoram is based on agriculture it will be possible to promote it as an Eco-Tourism. The main origin of Chapchar Kut is Jhum cultivation.

### **Literature Review:**

B.B Kumar's (2007) book entitled 'Problems of Ethnicity in the North-Eastern India' mainly discusses the ethnicity of the North-Eastern region. In this book it deals about the insurgency problem, became a union Territory in 1972 and became independent state in 1987.

Nursadh Ali's (2007) book entitled 'National Resource Management and Sustainable Development in North-Eastern India' explains the economic problems and bio-diversity of the tribal communities of North-Eastern India.

Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii's (2013) book entitled 'Mizo Narratives account from Mizoram expresses about the geographical structure origin and socio-cultural aspects of Mizoram.

J.V. Hluna's (2013) book entitled 'History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-Eastern India' discusses Chapchar Kut, Impact of Christianity, pre-colonial and colonial period.

### **Objectives of the present paper:**

1. To discuss the socio-cultural aspects of Mizoram
2. To discuss the importance of Jhum-cultivation for promoting Chapcha
3. r Kut festival as Eco-Tourism.
4. To discuss the ways and means for promoting Chapchar Kut Festival as Eco-Tourism.

**Methodology of the present work:**

In this present paper, I used both primary and secondary sources. In primary sources, I visited Saipui village and attended the Chapchar Kut Festival. I also took interview from many intellectual and anecdote persons; they narrated to me the origin of this festival and gave me many good ideas and suggestions to promote this festival as Eco-Tourism festival. In secondary sources, I also collected related materials from books, journals and websites etc.

**Hypothesis:**

If the state Government and the Tourism Department of Mizoram involving some interested organisations and NGOs make a plan to promote Chapchar Kut festival with a great sustainable effort to develop in the National or International Eco-tourism, this state may be developed like that of the other advanced states of India. There is a necessity of sustainable effort of development from both the sides of this state and the inhabitant local people.

**Results And Discussion:****Socio-Cultural Aspects of Early and Present Mizoram and origin of Chapchar Kut:**

Like that of other tribal communities Mizoram has its own culture. After colonisation of British rule it was influenced by western culture but still they keep their traditional culture with high regard. Mizoram became an independent state on 20-02-1987. In the earlier, it was known as Lushai Hill. In Mizo society both men and women have their limit responsibilities. Both of them performed their duties separately without disturbing each other. The Mizo society is a patriarchal society where both male dominance prevalent. The Mizo Chieftain originated and developed on its own without the influence from outside.

The inhabitant people of this region celebrating Chapchar Kut festival in the month of spring season, of March throughout the State. It was started around 1450 to 1600 A.D. since time immemorial. There is a story of performing Chapchar kut festival in Mizoram. It is said that once upon a time the feminine of the villagers used to go to the forest to cut the trees and bamboos dry and burn it for the next cultivation, when the village chief went for hunting in the forest he could not find any animal for hunting as the forest were already cleared and burn. As a result of this the chief returned to his home without catching anything. At the time being the wife of the chief heard that her husband arriving to home without any food. Before arriving of her husband she arranged a big feast with her neighbouring for the chief. They celebrated a big festival with dance and music in front of the chief's house. This kind of celebration is known as "Chapchar Kut". Hence, all the tribes and sub-tribes of Mizoram are celebrating this festival as a religious ceremony throughout Mizoram. It is celebrated before showing the grains in the field after cleared and burn the spot. Nowadays, it is undertaken after celebrating the festival.

Before fixing the day for the festival the villagers used to go for hunting in the jungle and catching fish in the river to collect sufficient food for the feast. Every arrangement was done in the chief's house. Each household brought rice-beer so that every participant could drink and pour into a big earthen-pot so as to share the same. After the feast is over they started singing and dancing by the

villagers. The day of the festival depend upon the supply of the rice-beer. Nowadays, there were some modifications in the festival.

### **The Impact of Jhum cultivation of Mizoram:**

Shifting cultivation is a local name for slash and burn forest for agriculture before showing the grains in the spot and for the next cultivation the farmers will shift the spot and will select another land for cultivation . It is widely spread all over the world. It is also practice in the north-eastern regions of India. Shifting cultivation is known as ‘Jhum’ and the farmers are known as ‘Jhummys’. Jhum cultivation is generally performed in the hill areas by the tribal communities as an integral traditional culture. It is believed that Jhum-cultivation is originated during the time of Neolithic period since time immemorial and from that time it has been continuing as a system of traditional culture by the high land people .The shifting cultivations considered that jhumming is their way of life and all other activities are supposed to revolve around it . Hence, they give more importance to this trade than others because these people believed that it will bring better social and economic security in their life . The people of the hilly people of Mizoram also practicing such kind of cultivation as their livelihood.

Because of badness of communication and lack of implementation by the government, the people who are under Jhum-cultivation have low enrolment and wastage in education. That is why they cannot improve their standard of living in high level. Since independence the Government of India in one way or other has been trying for the development of the North-Eastern region but the implementation is very low .Because of these reasons, the people who are under shifting cultivation become backward throughout the year. Therefore, it is the right time to discuss the issues related to economic development. The need of the hour is to come out with a constructive sustainable effort with the involvement of Government , local inhabitants , interested persons of eco-tourism promoters, communities , self-help groups ,organizations and NGOs. Fortunately the Prime Minister of India is going to take up some policies and programmes for the North-Eastern states. In place of the earlier concept of Look East Policy he changed into look –East Act Policy . In addition to this, the North-East Development Summit including the four Chief Ministers of Assam , Nagaland , Arunachal Pradesh , and Manipur held a meeting at Imphal in Manipur on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 2017. It was inaugurated by Ram Nath Kovind, the President of India. It is an example of taking initiative of some steps forward for the development of North- East region .Hence, there is a golden chance to recommend it as an eco-tourism festival in the National or International level . Because Chapchar kut is the only biggest festival which is closely related to their traditional culture .

The function of culture is to protect the society as a whole and to work for its promotion. Because of insurgency problem in Mizoram Chapchar Kut festival could not held since (1962-1972). But, before its period it was celebrated throughout the state of Mizoram peacefully. After having a long gap the church leader permitted to celebrate it. Since then this festival has been performing without any gap in Aizwal city at the campus of Assam Rifle, Saipuii Village. Now this is a right time to promote Chapchar Kut festival as Eco-Tourism centre in this state .

One of the most important ideas to promote Chapchar Kut festival is to improve the agricultural products and establish industries so as to produce more production in the state itself. North Eastern region has been an agricultural land since time immemorial. Due to lack of forward and backward

linkages of agriculture to industry, the growth of per capita income remained almost in stagnant stage. In the process of sustainable growth and development industrialization is the means for the process of economic growth of a region. A region bestowed with enough natural resources remains underdeveloped mainly because of the lack of entrepreneurship. Therefore, to improve the economic status of this backward region, a major effort is necessary towards industrialization. In this regard Mali and Bandopadhyay maintain that “the economic backwardness of the North East might be attributed largely to inadequacy of the supply of entrepreneurship in this region. If this deficiency can be removed by developing entrepreneurship, the region will be able to complete with the rest of the country”<sup>1</sup>. The only rapid growth of this region is to link the natural resources in relation to agriculture with industries in form of natural resources based and agribusiness enterprises especially in the small scale industrial sector. The key factor of the north-eastern regions is to use the natural resources properly so as to become wealth in the process of economic development especially backward state like Mizoram .

So far promoting Chapchar Kut festival as an Eco-Tourism, the first priority should give to the Jhum-cultivators, because they are the most important persons who take the role in the agriculture, and also the origin of Chapchar Kut festival. Hence, without the development of agriculture and industries Chapchar Kut will not be able to promote as a tourism.

From the above given suggestions, it is true that to promote Chapchar Kut festival as an Eco-Tourism is closely related to the agricultural conditions of the state. The only rapid growth of this region is to link natural resources with agriculture based on small scale industries sector utilization as a major objective. In fact, North-East India is one of the industrially backward regions of the country .In these states industrial investment is the lowest in India .It is because of negligence and lacking initiative by the Government in these regions.

### **Promoting Chapchar Kut as an Eco-Tourism:**

The most important point for the development of this state is the development of Eco-Tourism, as it has the availability of unexpected natural resources having rich tribal traditional and cultural heritage. Thus, Tourism and industry have to be given the first priority, which can definitely provide sustainable economic development for the region. The potentiality of agriculture of this region is highly recommendable. “Eco-tourism is an approach that creates a variety of quality tourism products and services that are environmentally suitable ecologically sustainable economically viable socially and psychologically acceptable. Thus’ eco-tourism’ is the term generally used when describing any manner of recreational activities or vocational in natural setting and can enhance economic development of the region . In this regard eco-tourism is to be promoted with sustainable development without degradation and depletion of natural resources. Eco-tourism has the financial potential to provide a viable economic alternative to the exploitation of environment. In fact, it is potential strategy for reconciling bio-diversity conservation with local development in ecologically fragile areas. Thus, the only rapid growth of this region is to link the natural resources.

What is needed in a comprehensive tourism action and marketing in connection to agriculture which may make the destination with tightly knit cooperation not only in the North-Eastern Region but also all over India. In this way, the only means of socio-economic development of Mizoram is to be eco-tourism. If the state Tourism Department of Mizoram takes some initiative with sustainable effort



involving some eco-tourism promoters, local inhabitants, social organisers, and NGOs, then it may be put up in the higher National or International level . North-Eastern India is one of the industrially most backward regions of the country . Industrial investment in the region is one of the lowest in India .” This is mainly because of three reasons ; (1) the income level of the people is very low , (2) the region is able to attract very negligible investment from outside ,(3) the local entrepreneurship is conspicuous by its absence”<sup>2</sup>.

## Findings of this paper:

1. In Mizoram, there is still lack of a good transportation and communication system.
2. There is no development of establishing industries and factories in Mizoram.
3. Again, both the Centre and State governments do not fully utilise the available of natural resources of the State.
4. There is harmony of natural beauty with that of the inhabitant’s people in Mizoram.
5. The people of Mizoram have high spiritual unity and integrity.
6. Chapchar Kut festival is an integral part of the socio- cultural life of the all tribes of Mizoram.

## Conclusion:

Conclusively, when we observe that most of the Mizos are under cultivation. The state has plenty of natural resources but utilization is low. The people are industrious, spiritual, unity, high integrity and intelligent. Therefore, it will be possible to promote Chapchar Kut festival as Eco-Tourism in the National or International level. There is a necessity to make some policies and plans to promote as Tourism. Though Mizoram is the second highest literacy in India, the Jhum cultivators cannot improve their life because of negligence of implementation and lack of communication. If the government takes up some policies and programmes for the Jhum cultivators, then Mizoram will be one of the brilliant States of India. Because Chapchar Kut festival is mainly based on Jhum cultivation. When the Eco-tourism is recommended all the people including Jhum cultivators will be able to create new ideas of innovation and the economics problems also can be solved.

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