Chapter -VI

Comparison of Thadou concept of God with that of Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people

Thadous are closely related ethnically to the other people of Chin Kuki group. They are believed to have a common ancestor. This led William Shaw to have remarked that, “The Koms, Aimols, Khotlangs, Thadous, Lushais, Pois, Suktes, Paites, Gangte etc, are undoubtedly all connected. Their languages have similarities, and the syntax is not dissimilar. Again there are their customs which have a common principle running through them all.” Shaw rightly mentioned the relationship of all the tribes who can be grouped as Chin-Kuki group of people. They also share the same religious beliefs though there are differences in its application. We can point out the similarities and dissimilarities as follows:

1. Belief in God

All tribals belonging to Chin Kuki groups of people believe in the existence of a high God, whom they called Pathen, Pathian, Pasian etc. He is believed to be the creator of the universe. All these tribes do not subscribe to the theory of evolution. Shakespear said about this group of people: “Practically, all divisions of Lushai-Kuki family believed in a spirit called Pathian, who is supposed to be the creator of everything and

167 Shaw opcit p. 16.
is a beneficient being but has however little concern with man.” The Chins also believe in a high God called Pasian. It is said that the Chin people from time immemorial had the idea of God. For Thadous, this high God is called Chung Pathen. He is taken to be a male God, and Nungjai is said to be a female god. Some writers go to the extend of saying that Chung Pathen and Nungjai share the same power. For Chin people, their God, Pasian is so good that he does not require his worshippers to sacrifice anything to please him. Khup Za Go, one of the leading church leaders of Manipur, who is a member of the Chin community, writes:

Chins have the idea of Supreme Being or a creator God. They called him Pasian, all goodness, law and power. As they believe hi is good and mercifful they never give him anything or any offering of sacrifices to him.

It is peculiar to the Thadous that Nungjai is called God’s wife. It is clear that this kind of idea about God having a wife is absent in the religious thinking of the other Chin Kuki group of people. The Vaipheis also believe in Nungjai as one of the gods, but not as the wife of Pathian. Lamboi Vaiphei says, “Most of the tribes recognized Nungjai as one of the gods but not as the wife of Pathian.” All tribes belonging to the said group of people held that Nungjai and Chung Pathen are two different

168 Shaespear opcit p. 61.
169 Renthy Keitzer, Goodnews, For NE India (Guwahati: CLC, 1995), p.177.
people. Here Prim Vaiphei gives a very clear distinction of the two gods as:

The Vaipheis like other Kuki Chin tribes recognized one all-powerful God whom they called Pathian. This *Pathian* is always associated with *Nungjai*. It is usual to speak of *Pathian* and *Nungjai* together. No one can say whether *Nungjai* is *Pathian*'s wife or an equally powerful being sharing power with *Pathian*. Generally, Nungjai is regarded as the god of this world and *Pathian* as the god of above.172

Many of the tribes who belong to Chin-Kuki-group of people held that Nungjai is inferior to Chung Pathen. That may be the reason why Thadous called Nungjai as the wife of God.

Like the concept of God advanced in deism, most of the tribes believe that God is good and loving, but he keeps himself aloof from the daily affairs of mankind. They do not worship the lesser gods or spirits, though they dreaded the anger of those spirits. In order to appease the anger of the spirits, the sacrifice their dogs, pigs, mithuns and fowls. It is wrong to equate this appeasing of the spirits to the act of worshiping spirits. Appeasing ones anger and worshiping one as God, are never the same. In fact, they worshipped the God whom they called him Pathen once a year and ascribed all divine honour due to his name. But many times, they seek the will and guidance of God through the priests and other things related to their religion. The high God is said to be loving and caring. It is believed that he is concerned about the hardships and

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172 Prim Vaiphei opcit p. 23.
sufferings of his creation: mankind, rich and poor. In this regard of God's concern and care for his creation, Mangkhosat Kipgen says:

This concept of remoteness was not absolute, however because, there was also Pathen who sees troubles from above and I willing and able to uphold justice. It was therefore, to him that people turn when in trouble.\(^{173}\)

This ideas of God's concern for his creation is expressed by others too. Lamboi Vaiphei says, "A person in distress will normally address both Pathian and Nungjai for help but will use the word 'Chung' for Pathien as Nungjai. Pathian is therefore, addressed as Chung Pathian which is unique in position." \(^{174}\) All tribals who belong to Chin-Kuki-group of people voiced their grievances to Chung Pathen, without fear and shame. In looking at what they said about God, it is clear that the God whom they believe is not far from them.

They all held that when God is angry he withholds rain to come in its season. His anger is with human beings, which is to love each other and to enjoy all his other creation. When there is drought in the land, they will say that something is wrong with human beings. God is said to be displeased with bloodshed and killings. Elder Luaizakham writes that Nungjai is inferior in rank to God, the maker of the universe.\(^{175}\) Mizos believed that God once revealed himself to human beings.

\(^{174}\) Lamboi Vaiphei opcit p.177.
Mangkhosat Kipgen writes, "One day it was said, Pathen came down from heaven to a mixed village. It was a custom to welcome all guests and so approached a man of Hnamte clan. That man had just performed one type of sacrifice that prohibited entertainment of guest. The Pathian had to approach the Lushai clan who welcomed him and entertained him happily. The family was somewhat puzzled at the behavior of the guest but did all to make him feel at home. Next morning the man went out with their guests for a send off. Pathian disclosed his identity instructed him to sacrifice a piglet promising him perpetual blessing to the family."\(^{176}\) Many believed that Mizos or Lushais become popular and prominent than the other tribes of the Chin Kuki Mizo group of people because of God's special blessings. Since then Mizos offered a piglet as an act of worship before castration.\(^{177}\) Thadous never mentioned about God's revelation in human form called incarnation or \textit{avatara}. They simply held to their religious fact that God is loving and hates no one in particular. He never kills anyone, but malevolent spirits are responsible for the death of man. In this regard, Lhajong (akind of spirit) is blamed in particular as the spirit of death. A priest confirmed this idea of Lhajong as the killer of human beings. According to the priest, it is illogical for a good and loving God to kill his creation- the human beings. So, a malevolent spirit called \textit{Lhajong} is responsible for all deaths.

\(^{176}\) Mangkhosat \textit{opcit} p. 117.

\(^{177}\) \textit{Ibid} p. 117.
2. **Belief in spirits**

Thadous along with Chin Kuki Mizo group of people believed in the existence of spirits good and evil. These spirits are also known as lesser gods. Thadous share the same belief with other tribes regarding the spirits. There are priests in every village who performs rites and ritual by chanting and sacrifice for the appeasement of the spirits.

Mizos also believe in the existence of the spirits. In this connection, Zairema writes:

They believed that the world was peopled by spirits some benevolent and some malignant to man. The evil spirits inhabited trees, streams, springs, mountains or any other objects curiously shaped or deformed. They will not attack man unless provoked. When unwary, men encroach upon their habitation, thereby making the spirits angry and cause all kinds of illness and misfortune. To recover from the illness these spirits have to be placated by sacrifices of appropriate animals.\(^{178}\)

Like Thadous, Mizos too held that spirits live in hills, mountains and in water. The name given to the spirits may not be the same, but the activities of the spirit known to them are more or less the same. Chins also believe in the existence of spirits called 'Dawis (huais in Mizo, thilhas in Thadou). G.K. Nang writes that the Chins believe that the spirits have a chief or king of their own, called *Dawimangpa*, which is king or Lord of the spirits.\(^{179}\) Thadous, though have not mentioned directly about the king of the spirits or thilha lengpa, it can be gleaned from stories often told to

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\(^{178}\) Renthy Keitzer opcit p. 70.

\(^{179}\) Keitzer opcit p. 88.
young people at bed time. It is said that the king of spirits has an eye in his forehead. For Chins, Lungjai is the god of atmosphere, but not the wife of Pasian or Toupa. They further said that the name Lungjai signifies darkness.

Thadous held that God created spirits and man. They lived in the same place. But they could not live as God intended them to. Men were about to kill all spirits. A pregnant spirit escaped and went to God and complained that man was about to finish him off the spirits. The spirit was told to mix a kind of tumeric in the place where man draw water. Since then man lost the ability to see spirits. Thadous, Mizos, Gangtes, Paites, Zous and Hmars never know the exact number of spirits. But G.K. Nang Chin Church leader said that Chin people could identify 68 spirits. Chin people always try not to hurt the spirit by what they do and say fearing the consequences. But it will be very difficult to escape from the dreaded spirits since they live in water, forests, hills, and cliffs and in many places. All tribes belonging to Kuki-Chin Mizo groups of people believe that they provoke the spirit to anger by their carelessness in speech or in intruding into their habitation.

Foreigners, especially, missionaries, have recognized this fact. A.E. Garso once write to his friend in America telling him that there were five spirits behind his chair watching him writing the letter. All tribes belonging to Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups of people believe in good and evil

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180 Shaw opcit p. 201.
181 Keitzer opcit p. 88.
spirits. They also held that these spirits could be appeased by offering sacrifices. Though they spent a lot to appease the malevolent spirits, there are some who prefer to honour to benevolent spirits such as Maltong or pheisam, a one-legged spirit just to get his material blessings.

It is said that Pheisam has the power to control over animals. So, hunters as a rule avoid whistling in time of hunting in the jungle less pheisam would hide the beasts. This Maltong or pheisam of the Thadous and Vaipheis may correspond to the Lassi of Mizo concept or spirit. Mizos believe in lassi to be the owner and keeper of animals. Though J.H. Lorraine describes lassi as the creator of animals, many writers cannot subscribe to this view. Lushais or Mizos believe in offering a sacrifice to lassi a fowl or a small pig and another sakhal, they will be lucky. A man who is always successful in hunting is called lasizawl or friend of lassi. Thadous also believe that a successful hunter has something, which an ordinary hunter does not possess. Some of them have a stone, usually black in colour. The stone is kept under guard inside a small casket. It is said that this stone can help the owner to know when he will have a good game.

As already mentioned, the Chins believed in the existence of many spirits. In this regard Khup Za Go says, “Their belief in many deities such as Pusa, Gampi, Kongpi, Khiangsum, Phaikam, Khiangkhouh etc.” On the other hand, Mizos have a peculiar concept of spirits in what is known
as guardian angel, who is called *khualtu or khaltu*. It is believed that *khualtu* was intimately connected with the life and welfare of individuals. A person’s *khualtu* or khaltu is said to belong to the opposite sex. It is held that benevolent spirits are lesser than that of malevolent spirits. Innumerable stories have been told about man’s encounter with spirits. These encounters are said to have their impacts on the religious worldview of Thadous. Thadous also believe that a sick person’s soul is left by his or her soul somewhere, without the owner being conscious of it. Zairema says,

> *Thla* may detach itself from the owner who may or may not be conscious of this. A sick person may dream in his delirium that he is still in the place where he had been before he got sick. The thla fails to return with him and must be called home. Two or more persons are sent to the spot to bring the *thla* or spirit home. They should not talk or laugh on the way back home... the thla of the babies continues to cling to the father who must not do any work involving binding for fear of hurting the new thla of the baby.\(^\text{186}\)

This *thla* is the spirit or soul of a human being. The idea of searching the detached soul or spirit which detached itself from its owner is there in Thadous religion. It is called *lhakou* or *nungpui*, which simply means calling back or leading back the spirit.

They used to go out to the jungle or to the field to seek the soul of the sick person. When they came across a spider, they would as a rule put it inside a small bag or pipes made with bamboo and then bring it home thinking that they have found what they wanted to find. As to the idea of

\(^{185}\) Keitzer opcit p. 73.  
\(^{186}\) Keitzer opcit p. 73.
spirits, Luaizakham writing on the Paites said that they believe in a man having more than one soul. A soul lives with the person and the rest of his soul roam here and there. When the soul who does not reside in the body of the person is caught unaware, the body of the person suffered. A story is told about a Thadou man clearing the jungle for jhuming while they lived in Nanglembung, in Burma (present day Myanmar). As he was working, he heard a sound as if somebody wanted to say something to him. The sound was nearer and nearer to his hearing. Then it spoke and said, “I left our two children uncared for at home. Go home immediately and take care of the children. I left two eggs for our children for them to eat. It is at Jalchung. After this, the man ran home and found that his wife was dead. His two children sat beside their mother and were crying. Thadous in those days held that a soul that leaves its body passes through Nganglembung. That is why Nanglembung is also called Thijonbung.” So, Thaous and other tribes firmly believed that the soul is separated from the body at death. This separation of the soul from the body resulted in the death of a person. Almost all religions of the world subscribe to this view of the soul being separated from the body at death.

So, the tribes already mentioned have the belief in God as the high God, who is good and loving. They held that all good things come from him. But they have been troubled by innumerable spirits. They acknowledge God as their creator, sustainer and giver of all things. They could not enjoy his blessings, as they ought to because of the troubles

187 Luaizakham opcit p. 61.
188 Ngulseh Hangshing opcit p. 29.
caused by the malevolent spirits. That is why, instead of worshipping
God, as he really is, they spent a lot of their time and wealth in trying to
appease the anger of the spirits. What Lorraine said about the Lushais is
also true to the other tribes, especially of the Chin Kuki people in general,
and the Thadous in particular. He said, “In seeking to appease the evil
spirits, the Lushai had lost almost all knowledge of God”\textsuperscript{189} This is true
with Thadous and other also. God is good and loving, but they do not
worship him, as they ought to. Instead of worshipping their God, they
were busy in dealing with the spirits who caused all kinds of troubles in
their day to day life. Whether they like it or not, they spent their energy,
time and wealth to appease the angry spirits.

3. \textbf{The role of priests and sacrifices}

Thadous and other tribes share the same idea on the role of the
priest and various forms of sacrifices. The priest is called Thempi in
Thaou, Siampu in Chin, and Puithiam in Mizo. Khup Za Go says, “Every
Chin village has a priest who presides over various functions relating to
the spirit worshipping ceremonies and feasts. He is called Siampi in
Teddim. Sick persons generally consult him as to the spirits requires.
After feeling the pulse of the sick person the priest pronounces the name
of the animal to be killed to appease the spirits. Then the sacrifice is made
under the supervision of the priest.”\textsuperscript{190} Thadous practise the same
method. In Chin Kuki-Mizo worship and sacrifices, the priest plays a very

\textsuperscript{189} Keitzer opcit p. 84.
\textsuperscript{190} Khup Za Go opcit p. 10.
important role in making and instituting a house god or magic called *indoi*. Even in this *indoi* or house magic, the priest has to do the major works related to worship. The *thempu* after making the house magic or *indoi* invokes God's blessings on the *indoi* and for the family for whom the *indoi* is instituted. The invocation is for the householder to have many sons and daughters, riches, power and even long life here on earth. Thadou picked up this *indoi* magic while they sojourned in Burma or Myanmar, many years ago. *Kimchal*, who lost his daughter *Japhal*, was instructed to make this *indoi* in his dream. In those days, dream was one of the ways in which spirits communicated to man. While Thadous were living in Khovang in Teddim, Burma, *Kimchal* lost his daughter *Japhal*. She was believed to be taken away by the spirits living in *Molphei*. Her parents prayed day and night asking God to send their daughter home. As they kept on praying, one night, *Kimchal* had a dream. The spirit who appeared in his dream told him that he had taken *Japhal* away for his wife. He, instead of lamenting should climb up a *sething* (a kind of tree). In the morning, he looked and saw a *doibom* there. He took home and installed it as a housegod. As directed by the spirit in his dream, he became richer and more successful in whatever he did. Thus the whole Thadou community started to instiall *indoi* as house god. The idea of *indoi* being installed and worshipped as housegod is unfamiliar to the other tribes. Belief in household deities' *griha devata* is present among the people living in different parts of India. For Mizos *inthawina* means ceremonial cure. It was associated with the curing of or healing of a sick person. C.L. Hmings says, "The *puithiam* who officiated such sacrifices
could more properly be described as medicinemen rather than a priest or a
witchdoctor. They were certainly gifted psychologists or physiologists and
could tell fairly accurately the symptom of illness from the puse on which
skill their effectiveness depended.”

Different kinds of sicknesses were
cured by offering animals depending on the nature of the sickness. Paites
held that ancestor worship was the most prominent among their tribes. It
was the worship of the spirit of an old lady, who made Liandou and
Thanghou very rich, after which she disappeared again. They further held
that a spirit called Suahnu blocked the way to mikhua (mithi khuo in
Thadou) or the land of the dead people. Here suahnu is the same
person whom Thadous called Kulsamnu. Hmars also believed that all
souls of the dead person would go to mithikhuo or to abode of the dead
people. Some of them are believed to be unable to adapt themselves to the
said village of the dead. Hmars believe that constant propitiation is needed
upto one year. They also held that the spirit of the dead person lives in the
village upto seven days after death. The Hmars perform a rite called thitin
to send off the departed soul. Thus the spirit finally departs from the
soul. The idea of the spirits who are unable to adapt themselves to
mithikhuo is very unclear and unknown to Thadous. Thianse or the act of
giving food for the spirit of the dead person is there. But the idea of
sending off and bidding farewell to the departed soul is absent or rather
unkown to the Thadous in their concept of life after death. But they put
aside some food for the deceased. Zous also held that the departed spirits

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\[191\] Keitzer opcit p. 71.
\[192\] Jeyaseelan, Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur (New
acted as agents or go-between spirits and God. But Thadous do not subscribe to this view of the soul acting as agent between God and spirits. Instead, at death, the soul leaves the body never to occupy it again. They are said to be tired of being enslaved in the body of human beings.

The following sacrifices are common to all the hill tribes of Manipur in general and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people in particular.

1. **Sacrifice for the good health of the village.** This may include Hun and other.

2. **Sacrifice for jhuming cultivation.** It has to do with Loumunchan (selection of site for jhuming cultivation), Louvat (clearing of jungle for jhuming cultivation), Louhal (burning of the field for cultivation). Lhalho is one of the most important rites here.

3. **Sacrifices to the spirit of ancestors.** Paites and other practised this. Thadous do not worship or sacrifice anything to their ancestors.

4. **Sacrifices for successful hunting.** This is common to all hunters.

5. **Sacrifices to repel the evil eyes of the enemies**

   Thempus or priests are the sole intermediary between God and man. In Thadou society, the priests are married who have their wives and children. The priests are respected by the community and they are expected to show good life. So, in the life of Thadous and other tribes, the priest plays a very important role. His role is seen in the different
sacrifices he performed for the individuals, for the family and for the whole village.

4. The concept of life after death

Thadous along with the Chin-Kuki family of tribes firmly believe in the existence of life after death. The souls of the dead persons are believed to live in a land called mithikhuo or the abode of the dead people. Though it has been named differently by different tribes, the belief is almost the same. Mangkhosat Kipgen, while writing about the concept of life after death of the Chin Kuki Mizo group of people says:

*Mithikhuo* was the abode of the departed souls of the commoners. It was believed to be a shadowy world while everything was on much a lower scale than in the present one. It was comparable to the Hebrew concept of sheol. 194

All tribes who belong to Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people believe in the continuance of life death. They have given different names to it. The exact location of this village or mithikhuo is not known. But its clear that life is expected to continue there. Some called it heaven or *van* and say that heaven is above us. Based on this concept of life after death, they comforted themselves when they faced problems such as death and calamities. When they lost their dear and near ones, they look to heaven to be with God. Khaikhotinthang Kipgen writes, “It seems that even the non-Christians believe that the soul goes to heaven after death. A Song composed by a grieved father of a deceased child is cited for illustration:

194 Mangkhosat Kipgen opcit p. 118.
Lengvan sannan, kabanjal aneme,
Ka tuoı buolna chung thangvan hung khe nem in.

In English:

Tired are my hands stretched towards heavens,
Descend nearer, high heaven, my beloved child’s abode. 195

The composer of this song explicitly mentions his child’s abode as Lengvan. Thadous, like other tribes divided heaven into five categories: Vansam, thangvan, lengvan, vanlaijol and vanthamjol. Vansam is known to be the abode of the high God. Thangvan is the abode of the spirit of the dead people. Lengvan is the abode of the planets and the spirit of the dead. Vanthamjol is said to be the abode of evil spirits. Vanlaijol is where birds fly and is visible. 196 We have not come across other tribes describing the heaven as done by Thadou. From the song composed by the father of a deceased child, it is clear that the child’s soul is in heaven. Some people opined that life there in the village of the death is in much lower status than our present life here on earth. All tribes do not subscribe to this view. Mithikhuo and heavens are perhaps identical. Mithikhuo may be compared to what is called paradise. Some scholars opined that the abode of the dead is like a resting-place for the souls of the dead.

One cannot easily and simply enter mithikhuo. It is held that a woman called Kulsamnu is at the gate of mithikhuo. She is believed to be a big woman with big breasts and unkempt hair. The Vaipheis also called

195 Khaikhotinthang Kipgen opcit p. 100.
196 Goswami opcit p. 166.
this woman *Kulsamnu*. Prim Vaiphei says, “They also believe that on the way to mithikhuo, there is a woman called *Kulsamnu* who sits by the roadside and troubles the poor souls compelling them to catch the lice from her head.” The Vaipheis also believed *Kulsamnu* to a woman, who, like traditional woman wants her lice to be caught. Thadous also held that the person sitting at the gate of *mithikhuo* is a woman. But the Mizos and Hmars held that it is a man called Pu *Pawla*, who is said to guard the entrance of *mithikhuo*. *Pawla* sees to it that no one escapes from his hand. He shoots the intruders with his pellets, which is believed to be as big as an egg. When he hits someone with his pellets, it takes three days to recover from the painful tumours. The wounded soul cannot enter *pialral*, but is determined to stay in *mithikhuo*. The idea of *pialral* or *pialgal* is absent in the Thadous concept of mithikhuo. It may be what is called paradise by Christians and Muslim. The following qualifications are set by Mizos, if a person wants to enter *pialral*:

(a) Those who died in infancy, are the first group to enter *pialral*. These children were buried without any ceremony, under the house.

(b) A person who had sexual relationship with three to seven virgins during his lifetime.

(c) The third groups of people who will enter *pialral* are those overcomers thangchuah. The one who obtained *thangchuah* are known for their skill in killing animals in the chase, performing the ai ceremony for

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197 Prim Vaiphei opcit p. 42.
each animal killed or by giving la number of public feasts. Hmars also firmly held that after death, the soul of the death person goes to *mithikhuo*. On reaching the abode of the dead, the soul would be given a cup of water called *luonglotui*, which is believed to remove all ties and feelings of the living. After this welcome water, little girls welcome the dead person with a beautiful flower called *Hawilopar*, which is a flower, which means no turning back. After receiving the water and the flower, the spirit is said to have no desire to go back to the land of the living. This idea of water and flower is unknown to Thadous.

(d) The idea of pialral and thangchuah are also vague in Thadous concept of life after death. But they strongly believed that persons who had performed chon feast, *sa-ai* and *chang ai* are assigned a very important place in *mithikhuo* in recognition of their outstanding performances. It is wrong to equate *pialral* with *mithikhuo*. They are different from each other. Thadou will find it very difficult to say which heaven is *pialral*. Since pialral is for achievers or overcomers, people who had performed the said festivals must be living in one of the said places. This idea of *pialral* is clear and distinctive of Mizos and Hmar. The idea is firmly supported by a kind of cloth called *thangchuah puan*, which is not given to an ordinary person but to achiever or overcomers.

Thadous, on the other hand, believed that there is a plum tree, which grows upside down, called sohlhubungbu? It is in the centre of

198 Mangkhosat Kipgen opcit p. 120.
199 Jeyaseelam opcit p. 37.
mithikhuo. As many have died, and many animals have been killed as kosa (last game killed for the decease on his funeral) for the dead person, the tree is about to fall down. It is believed that this tree will fall one day. As soon as this tree falls, life will be impossible on earth. This will be a great catastrophe, which will bring the world to an end.

All tribes mentioned already held that life does not end with death. Life will continue in the land of the dead people. There are places for people based on their achievements on earth. As they have the idea of the next life, life here on earth is moulded and shaped to meet the next life. All grief stricken parents and family members of the dead person hope to meet their love ones in that land of no return. It is this hope that sustained them.