

## Glimpses of Aizawl City Through Songs

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### ABSTRACT

Literature is a window to the world whether it is a novel, drama or songs. It projects the people and the city of the time it is written. Information regarding the landscape, the culture and its people are reflected through literature which may have been passed on orally or through writing. The paper aims at depicting the city of Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram located in the northeast of India. The dwellers are mostly Mizo and the official language is English and Mizo. There are also sub-tribes of the Mizo using their own languages. Mizo people are fervent singers, songs which have been passed on through generations tells the story of the land and the people. Mizo songs that expose the city will be discussed which are not many. Aizawl is often referred to as “Zawlkhawpui” meaning Aizawl city. It was under the British rule gaining its statehood in 1986. Therefore traces of the turbulence within the state of Mizoram will also be included in the essay. The insurgency movement within the state left several impacts upon the land its people. The landscape, the people and political upheaval will be mentioned through songs selected for the study. The works of poets such as Rokunga, Lalsangzuali and others will be examined to glean information regarding the city of Aizawl.

**Keywords:** Mizoram. Aizawl city. Mizo songs. Zawlkhawpui. Rokunga. Lalsangzuali.

### AIZAWL:

Aizawl is the capital of the state of Mizoram in north east India. It is the largest city of the state located at north of the Tropic of Cancer situated on a ridge 1132 metres (3715 ft) above sea level. Aizawl is the place of all important Government offices, State Assembly House and Civil Secretariat also a commercial hub of the state. Flanked on the north by the lofty peaks of Durtlang, the hill city is set on ridges of steep hills overlooking the sylvan valley of the river Tlawng in the west and of the river Tuirial in the east and south. This picturesque and peaceful city also commands exotic landscape of verdant hills stretching away to the horizon. Aizawl literally means “a field of wild cardamom”, a name which originated during the days of the great Mizo chiefs Lalsavunga and Thanruma who had set up villages in and around the present site of Raj Bhavan in the early nineteenth century. The area, however, was deserted when the British administration established a military outpost "Fort Aijal" in the spring of 1890, following which it became a permanent settlement and eventually, the headquarters of Mizoram. Being the state capital, Aizawl is also the political and cultural centre of Mizoram.

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The Mizo people are mostly Christians and lead westernized life-style.

The writing is based on songs composed about Aizawl city projecting myriad pictures of the place, physical, social and emotional aspects of the people. The songs depict the landscape of the city with its surrounding hills and rivers. The emotional state of the Mizo regarding the city as they witnessed varied hardship and joy they faced within the city. The diverse pictures of Mizo society are also gleaned from some of the songs. The majority of the dwellers are Mizo and the official language is Mizo and English. Number of clans and refugees from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Manipur are presently inhabiting the city too.

### **SONG WRITERS:**

The song writers studied for this writing are: Rokunga (20 February 1914 – 12 July 1969) the pioneer in Mizo songs, composing over 127 songs. He was posthumously honoured as Poet of the Century by Mizoram Millenium Celebration Committee in 2000. In 2008 a life-sized statue was erected at City Park in Aizawl. Lalsangzuali Sailo (15 May 1949 – 14 October 2006) was a writer, gospel singer and music composer from Mizoram. She has written over 300 songs, in Mizo, Kokborok and English. She received the All India Radio Outstanding Artiste Award in 1998. The Government of India awarded her the fourth highest civilian award of the Padma Shri, in 1998. Roliana Ralte (1 March 1951 – 19 December 2003) composed 40 songs during his time. Mangluaia, though a prominent composer did not produce much songs. P.B.Lianmawia a resident of Dawrpui locality in Aizawl was born on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1981. He is a modern composer with his band Boomarang sings of the City – its charm and alluring condition.

### **HENRY LAFEVRE:**

To study City Songs reference will be made on Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. His influence on how we interpret city songs that argued that space is not just a container or a stage but a social product. The application of his concept of Spatial Practices to music reveals city songs as a tool that "produces" the city rather than just describing it. The present study will be divided into three levels following Henry Lefebvre seminal work.

**(1) Perceived Space:** According to Lefebvre this level dwells on the daily routine of the commuter within the city. The spatial practice about commuting, working, walking on the streets and other activities which is experienced every day.

Mangluaia writes about the practice of Mizo youth playing guitar and singing leisurely in the streets of Aizawl at night time. His song clearly projects nature and the youth which is not evident in the other songs. His last stanza implored upon the town to continue its beautiful impact upon the inhabitants.

“We mizo are nurtured by you  
Who pray that you keep moving on  
Let the people's life be enriched  
At Aizawl town where we dwell”

Roliana Ralte in his song “Zawl Khawmawi” which means “Beautiful Aizawl” touches upon another dimension of the town. This song was composed in 1976 when Roliana visited the town. Comparing the town to a beautiful rose he called upon his partner to walk upon the streets. Poignantly pointing out the possibility of its decay, he professed his sadness. He writes that though the town may not remember him, his joy resides on the beauty of the town. He also advises the youth to live peacefully not to indulge in mere enjoyment.

“Beautiful Aizawl, beautiful people

I enjoy watching your face.

Though I may not be in your thoughts

Happy am I being close to you”

Modern composer of songs like P.B. Lianmawia (Atea) Dawrpui, Aizawl with his band Boomarang projects the magnetic pull that engulfs the city. The city where he and his mother was born and raised up, his brother’s resting place too. Streets busy and full of vehicles honking only to bid greetings – the peaceful silence dominating the town. Lights flickering at night welcomed the inhabitants and church bells echoing on Sunday mornings followed by choruses sung in the church.

Elysium, My Utopia, the streets where I belong.

Synching with the song,

Sing this song forever, Aizawl Aizawl

If we stand together, we will never fall,

We can face whatever, Aizawl Aizawl.

**(2) Conceived Space:** The representations of spaces comes under this heading where the description of the city is **revealed through songs.**

Rokunga’s song, *Ka Pianna Zawlkhawpui* means ‘Aizawl, my birthplace.’ The location of the city is evident in Rokunga song “Ka pianna zawlkhawpui”; the song “Aizawl town where I was born” was compared when Aizawl was still a town. As the town was on top of hill huge water reservoir was built by the government that supplied water to the main center of the town. Tuikhuahtlang and Laipuitlang are the name of the hill that holds the water conserver which supplies water to the city. The town is surrounded by Laipuitlang hill on the north and Tlangnuam hill on the south. Not much is written about the location of the town by the composer. In the song, Rokunga mention that the people of Mizoram originated from Chin hills. This song was composed in 4<sup>th</sup> February 1969 when the underground movement was at large. The people of Mizoram were experiencing treat from the government as well as the militants so there was unrest within the state.

During the 2nd World War when mizo people lived in fear of the invasion from Japan forces Rokunga composed” *Zawlkhawpui Venna*” meaning guarding Aizawl Town. He mentions that there was a kind of fort on top of the town where the civilian gathered. Writing

on the beauty of the town he highlighted that the town is covered by beautiful mist. Its beauty equalled the power of the British who ruled over the place. Here the power of the British regime is emphasized by the poet. This song embarked upon the danger lurking from Japan invasion. The composer wanted the town to prepare itself against the impending danger. He also prayed to the Lord to keep the town safe. Hence the song exposes the fear faced by the people of Mizoram during World War II. Rokunga's two songs selected display the love for the town as well as the unknown fear that may befall upon the inhabitants.

Mangluai also known as M.Luaia composed "Aizawl Khawpui" meaning "Aizawl Town" His depiction of the town differs from other composer as he dwells more upon the physical view of the place. His song portrays the atmosphere of the town. The beautiful mist coupled within breeze that envelops the town. Trees of different kinds surround the town giving a natural look and peaceful air. The moon and stars and beautiful dusk witnessed from the hills are a beauty. The beauty of autumn beautified by rising sun and the dew shining upon the leaves are also visible in the town.

"Engulfing all-progressing Aizawl town

Happily living under God's care

Your beauty is sufficient for all

Bloom and your name spread out"

**(3) Lived Space:** Lefebvre refers to the emotional and mental state of the minds of the people. The citizens overlay their dreams, memories, and art onto the physical world which is often regarded as the heart of the city.

Rokunga discloses his feeling as he viewed the town pointing out the bad practices of the people. He urges the town to rise up from the sinful acts lamenting on the degrading life of its inhabitants. His last line "Felnah silhpuan sinin tho leh la, hlim ten I leng zawk ang" means "Rise up cloth yourself within righteousness and let us live happily" He tries to instill hope and happiness amidst the sway of restlessness in the town.

"My birthplace Aizawl town

Your beauty surpasses all

Never will you perish..."

Lalsangzuali Sailo composed one song on Aizawl town. "Zawlkhawpui meaning" Aizawl Town" She highlighted upon the comfort emitted by the town on its inhabitants. The town harbours various clans and people peacefully occupying the town. She dwells upon the minds of the people who do not envy the whites ruling over the state. The village Chiefs efficiently ruled over their subjects who yearn for nothing else. Nature untouched by men beautify the place where youth enjoyed its beauty.

A song "Damtakin, Zawlkhawpui" bidding farewell to the Aizawl town "Farewell, Aizawl town" displays the emotion of the composer. The song writer is not known but his reluctance on leaving the town is evident in the song. He had to leave the town to pursue

further study outside the state. His purpose for further study is for the sake of the town which he furnished in the song. The beauty of the town and the British ruling over the place are mentioned in the song.

“Farewell Aizawl towns, peaceful place farewell

Let me go on westward for now

Study I will to enrich your name

Heartache will I bare congenially”

P.B Lianmawia declares his love for the city and the comfort offers by the city is clearly witnessed in the song. The sense of belonging felt by the youth as a resident of the city is reflected here.:

Here forever I belong

There’s a lot of love here

A lot of love here at home.

In another song of his, his promise to return to the city is spelled out in the song. The nostalgic emotion and the longing he felt for the city could not be equalled by other places. Though he may be far away at present his decision to return is seen here:

Different parts of the world I travelled

There is none like you

Your fresh air and mild nature

For me the only one I chose

Aizawl... I Love you

I will return soon.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The composers mentioned represents the view of Henri Lefebvre revealing Aizawl city through their songs. Not many songs are found that dwells on the city but the present songs selected are also sufficient for the present study. The music of the songs differs according to the composer’s style but it all carries the mood that clings to the city.

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