

Nature, Dynamics and Praxis of Faith, Reason and Wisdom

A Northeastern Indian Tribal Perspective

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Abstract: In the absence or the near absence of written literature among the tribals of Northeast India, the nature of the notions of faith, reason and wisdom are to be gleaned from the daily ordinary use of these terms. These terms in daily parlance are more personal and relational terms than abstract concepts. There are faithful persons; they are reasonable and wise too. Because they are personal, they are relational too and act in mutuality. And in harmony with tribal culture characterized by solidarity with nature, egalitarianism, and non-competitive collaboration, the triptych of faith, reason and wisdom function in interdependence as well as mutual enrichment and can be illustrated in their institutions, laws and myths and legends.

Key words: Faith, reason, wisdom, personal, relational

Brian Myers, in a book on development, *Walking with the Poor*, writes that the Western mindset of dichotomies in speaking about development “in terms of two separated realms – material and spiritual with a gap between the two, “the excluded middle,” may be the reason why western Christianity is struggling with the tensions between faith and reason, evangelism and development, church and state and values and facts. These dichotomies are major hindrances to finding a genuinely holistic Christian approach to human transformation.¹ In the face of uncontrolled development, causing rapid depletion of natural resources and harm to the ecology, last year’s Rio Summit (20-22 June 2012), the largest gathering of world

leaders, unequivocally opted for “sustainable development and green economy.”²

This option for ‘sustainable development and green economy’ can be seen as the first step at removing the hindrances to a more holistic approach to development and human transformation. It is also the model that is in tune with the traditional indigenous/tribal way of development and economy. It is, perhaps, an indication that the indigenous/tribal people may have something to teach the world today. In fact, they have an alternative to offer: “Their culture which can broadly be described as ‘tribal,’ includes extraordinary values of solidarity with nature, egalitarianism, a non-competitive collaboration with one another, and a filial (not mercantile) relationship with the land, which offer a valuable alternative to the rampant individualism, unchecked greed, aggressive competitiveness, and a growing alienation from nature which is leading the postmodern world to nuclear and ecological disaster.”³ If tribal culture offers something in the field of human development, it may also contribute towards a more holistic approach to human knowledge. Albert Einstein, the most celebrated scientist of the twentieth century, describes what such a holistic approach to human knowledge could mean: “Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”⁴ This paper is an attempt to indicate such a holistic theory of knowledge from the perspective of the tribal tradition of Northeast India which is a mutuality of faith, reason and wisdom. We shall first analyze the notions of faith, reason and wisdom in tribal societies and illustrate the close relationship of these through a folktale.

Faith, Reason and Wisdom in Northeastern Indian Tribal Traditions

Northeast India lies between 22 and 29.30 North latitude and 89.46 and 97.50 East latitude with an area of 2, 55, 983 sq.km.⁵ The area is said to account for nearly 9 per cent of the total area of India, with a population of 38, 444, 026 according to 2001 census; and the total tribal population is around 10, 354, 493 which is about 27.67 per cent of the region’s total. About 12.28 per cent of India’s Scheduled Tribe population lives in Northeast India.⁶ The creation

of the Northeastern states as one, unified unit started in 1971 when the *North Eastern Council* (NEC) was launched by the Central Government.⁷ These states are popularly known as the ‘Seven Sisters’: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Tribals are the majority in four of these states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Till today, nobody knows exactly how many tribes live in the Northeast. The approximate number, according to Prof A. C. Bhagabati, former Vice-Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh and present Director of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, Northeastern Regional Centre, Guwahati and a leading anthropologist of the region, is about 300 distinct tribes who speak about 400 dialects.⁸ The reason why exact data regarding the number of tribes is difficult is because some smaller tribes who were attached to bigger groups are beginning to assert their uniqueness or distinctness. Our discussion on the notions of faith, reason and wisdom would be limited to some tribes, but hopefully, it will apply to most of the tribes. Some of the languages of the tribes of Northeast India, (fifty at least), were given written forms by missionaries in the latter part of the nineteenth century.⁹ The first written literatures of these tribes were the translations of the New Testament. Hence, biblical terms like faith or wisdom are quite familiar to them. The term reason might be the least familiar.

Faith in Tribal Tradition

Faith, as already noted, is familiar to tribal Christians but in their pre-Christian days, faith is often associated with trust and reliability. In Mizo, faith is *rin* or *rina*. It means faith, belief, confidence, trust or reliance.¹⁰ In two other sister languages of Mizo, namely, *Zou* and *Paite*, faith is *ginna* which means trust. In Kuki (my language), of the same family, the usual word for faith is *tahsan* which has a similar connotation with the Hebrew word *amunah*. It stands for firmness, steadfastness and fidelity. *Tah* means firm or solid. The basic notion of faith as trust, trustworthiness or reliability is significant and flows from the tribal sense of community-orientedness and non-competitive collaboration.

Tribal languages do not usually have abstract nouns. They would rather speak of a faithful person, a person who has faith or one who can be trusted. Faith is, therefore, personal and relational because it is trusting someone who is trustworthy, reliable and confidence enhancing. Faith is not belief in doctrines or truths. Faith in the tribal world, then, would be closer to the biblical idea of self-surrender to someone whom one trusts and relies upon. The Bible, according to George Soares-Prabhu, is a “book steeped in tribal culture.”¹¹

Wisdom in Tribal Tradition

The term wisdom is also familiar to the tribals through the Bible. Tribals would speak of a wise man/woman. However, the abstract noun wisdom has become part of their religious vocabulary. It has been translated as *finna* in Mizo and the verb *fiug* is to be wise, sagacious, clever, astute, etc.¹² A wise person is *mi fing* and proverb is *thufing* which means clever, wise or smart word. In Kuki, wisdom is *chihna* and to be wise *aching* or *chihna nei* (one who has *chihna*). A proverb is called *thuchih*. *Thu* means word. The term *chihna* or *chih* is connected the Kuki traditional drink called rice-beer. To the fermented pot of rice, water is added and siphoned out by a pipe after a few minutes. The first that comes out is called *ju-chih* (strong rice-beer). *Ju-chih* is used for religious rituals and served to honoured guests but never offered to youngsters. Similarly, *thu-chih*, proverb, means word/words that have deep, dense and intensive meaning.

Besides the terminology, tribals also have institutions and narratives of wisdom. The *council of the elders* in the village which oversees the day to day affairs of life in the community is the *practice of wisdom*. It honours the wisdom of experience of the elders. Secondly it signifies the wisdom of many heads rather than that of one. They also have narratives of wisdom centred on some personalities. The most popular one among the Kukis and some Naga tribes is a person called *Benglam*.¹³ This is similar to the personification of wisdom in the Bible (Proverbs 8, Lady Wisdom). Wisdom literature in tribal tradition, like in the biblical one, also

contains its opposite, namely, folly (Wisdom of Solomon 13-14, etc.). There are many episodes, some of which show the super-wisdom and cunningness of the character or extreme naivety and foolishness. An example each may illustrate this:

Benglam Calls His Hut

Once upon a time Benglam was returning to his hut in the *jhum* field and his enemies were waiting for him inside the hut. Sensing the presence of some people in the hut he called out “*O Ka Buh*”- “Hello my hut”. There was silence. He said, “How come my hut is not responding to me today. Perhaps it is afraid to answer me because some people are there”. Now, thinking that the hut used to respond to Benglam, his enemies decided to respond to him if he calls again. So when Benglam called out again, “O my hut!” the enemies responded “Ku!.” Thus, Benglam confirmed the presence of his enemies and ran away.¹⁴

Benglam Hides Salt in a River

Once upon a time Benglam went to a far off village and managed to return with a bag of salt. When approaching his village, he was thinking of how to hide that precious bag of salt as it was a rare commodity in his village. He tried many places but thought they were not safe enough. So, at last he hid it under water and placed a big stone over it. When he went to take it with his wife nothing was left as it had dissolved in water.¹⁵

I believe the teachings on the values of life of most races began in stories and folktales. It is true particularly of the tribes of Northeast India.¹⁶

Reason/Rationality in Tribal Traditions

Reason or rational thinking may appear to be the least visible trait of tribal life to the outside observer. They have terms for reason, *ajeh* in Kuki¹⁷ and *chhan*¹⁸ in Mizo which means reason in the sense of ‘the reason for or of,’ or motive of or for,’ etc. Rationality in Kuki means *lung phataha gelthei* (one who can think correctly,

adih adihlou gelkhenthei, one who can distinguish what is false and true, and to think means *lunga gel*, thinking in the heart.¹⁹ In Mizo, rational means *chhia leh tha hriatna nei*, sense of right and wrong²⁰, or *awmze (awmzia) nei*, has reason for being, or *awmze neia siam*,²¹ meaningful and to think means *ngaihtuah*.²² In general, for the tribals, the heart is the centre of life, they think with their hearts. Though lacking well-defined terms for reason, rationality or thinking, the tribals demand and expect a reason for everything that happens. The most effective way of correcting children for their misbehavior is not corporal punishment, scolding or yelling at them; rather it is to gently make them see the irrationality of their behaviour.

The best known aspect of tribals in the Northeast to the rest of India is the insurgent movements, militant groups and violence. The popular perception, and perhaps the assumption as well, is that these movements betray a lack of rational thinking: Tribals are driven by impulses and emotions which are not grounded on rationality. However, for the tribals themselves, these movements are the most rational outcome of the step-motherly treatment they get from New Delhi. B. G. Verghese, one who understands the Northeast better than most other mainland Indians, is right when he says: “The various movements in the Northeast all have to do with identity.”²³ What could be more rational than trying to assert one’s identity? And these movements are “essentially manifestations of extreme frustration”²⁴

According to Sanjoy Hazarika, one of the powerful voices of the region, Delhi’s lack of understanding of “the compulsions and beliefs of proud but small nationalities” is the reason for the many insurgencies in the region.²⁵ To have a sense of self pride and the desire to have the right of self -determination has nothing irrational about it. Elsewhere I have tried to show that these movements in the Northeast are expressions of the tribal people’s *Liberating Quest for Identity, Equality and Respect*.²⁶ If these movements have become violent, it was not their original intention. It is because the Government seems to hear only the voice of violence.

In a seminar held at *North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU)*, Shillong, in 2001, Professors of the Department of Philosophy

examined rationality in the traditions of various tribes in the Northeast. The fruit of this seminar was a book, *Rationality and Tribal Thought*.²⁷ The department of Philosophy was established at NEHU in 1974 with the “express aim of helping the students of the Northeastern region to achieve an authentic awareness of their own culture and traditions.”²⁸ Tradition embodies not just a way of life but a way of thinking, and therefore a kind of rationality.²⁹ I wish to refer to two studies of the seminar.

The first is “Rationality and Tribal Folklore: An Exploration” by S. C. Daniel.³⁰ The author shows that tribal folklore exhibits rationality. In an analysis of a *Liangmei*³¹ Naga folktale of *Two Orphans*, the author defines rationality in terms of the Kantian notion of universalizability³² and argues that tribal folktales “thematically carry with them moral principles that ought to be followed by the tribes concerned. Different folktales have different moral principles and a particular folktale is for the purpose of exemplifying “the notion that a ‘universalizable’ moral principle is a moral principle fundamentally because of the fact that it is rational.”³³ The moral virtues embedded in this story are: philanthropy; compassion for the sick, needy, and poor; keeping promises; humility and forgiveness. These cardinal virtues can be universalized. It may be reiterated that I identify rationality with universalizability. Rationality and universalizability can be substituted for each other since they have the same value.”³⁴

This study, I think, is indicative of how to read tribal myths and legends. They are the sources to discover, not only rationality but also their philosophy of life, theology, the values and their meaning systems. Contrary to popular perceptions of myth as something not true to life, scholars are increasingly appreciative of its significance and importance. “Myth possesses an intensity of meaning that is akin to poetry.”³⁵ For Joseph Campbell, the author of *The Power of Myth*, described as “the rarest of intellectuals in American life,”³⁶ “myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life.”³⁷ To J. R. R. Tolkien, author of books like *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, described as “among the greatest works of imaginative fiction of the twentieth century,” “just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, myth is invention about truth.”³⁸ Myth is the Bible

of the indigenous Latin Americans.’ It is the expression of their way of life, nature and the world, the consciousness the tribe has of itself as a tribe, the tribe’s Old Testament.”³⁹ Loss of myth can result in the disappearance a people as people.⁴⁰ Hence, “evangelization resulting in a people’s exile from their identity is contrary to the pedagogy God used with the twelve tribes of Israel. It is also contrary to what the church has always taught, namely that ‘grace builds on nature.’”⁴¹ The same can be said about the myths of tribals of the Northeast.

Another significant study is that of C. P. Alexander’s “Ethos and Postulates of Nagas: A Philosophical Approach,”⁴² in particular, on the Naga tradition of the so-called ‘head-hunting.’ The raw expression ‘head-hunting’ could be one example of what has been lost in translation or become crude in translation. Head-hunting has a dual purpose, ontological and existential. Ontologically it was believed that in the world of spirits, the spirits of the heads hunted would be slaves to the one who hunted them. Existentially, the head-hunters were soldiers and head-hunting was a defence mechanism.⁴³ I think, the main reason for head-hunting must have been an existential need justified by an ontological reason.

‘Head-hunting,’ need not be condemned as if it was barbaric compared to the civilized world today. “Don’t we still practice the same in our day in a much more sophisticated manner? Don’t we give *viracakra* to our brave soldiers for their valour, as an honour?”⁴⁴ The only difference is today’s head-hunters know how to disguise these practices. The army calls it ‘combing operations.’ If nations, in today’s world, find rationality for pre-emptive attacks, attacks with drones, the Nagas and other tribes of yore too, had rational grounds for doing so. It was an existential need for preserving their identity, in fact, for survival as a tribe.

Faith, Reason and Wisdom: Their Mutuality in Folktale

Having discussed the theoretical notions of faith, reason and wisdom in tribal traditions separately, I shall now try to illustrate the mutuality of the triptych through a folktale which is quite common among the various tribes of the Northeast.

Chemtatpa Thusism: The Story of the Dao Sharpener

One day a man was sharpening his dao/knife on a stone by the stream. A shrimp/crayfish crawled up to him and pricked his testicles. Howling in pain and anger the man sliced off the bamboo nearby. The sliced off bamboo piece flew and hit the cheek of a wild fowl. The wild fowl, out of pain scratched the ground and opened up an ant hill full of red ants. The red ants ran helter-skelter and bit the testicles of the wild boar nearby. The wild boar got wild in pain and swung its head wildly cutting off a wild banana plant on which was a bat. The bat got so startled and flew off and went right into the ear/nose of an elephant. The elephant got so disturbed and angry that it ran and knocked down the hut of the widow. The widow got so angry and ran off and took shelter by the water pond of village and dirtied the place.

When the whole village came to know of what the widow had done, they called a village meeting and questioned the widow: "Why are you camping at our water source and dirtying it?" they questioned. The widow said: "Because the elephant destroyed my house." The villagers then summoned the elephant and asked him: "Why did you destroy the widow's hut?" "Because," the elephant said, "the bat flew into my ear and I was so disturbed and so ran." Then the bat was summoned and questioned: "Why did you fly into the ear of the elephant?" The bat said: "because the wild boar cut down the wild plantain plant on which I was resting and I had to fly away suddenly." When the wild boar was questioned, he said: "I was resting peacefully and suddenly the red ants were all over me and I had to swing wildly to get rid of them." The red ants while questioned said: "We too were peacefully staying inside our home and were disturbed by the wild fowl." The wild fowl too was questioned by the villagers. In reply it said "the man with the dao sliced off a bamboo which hit my cheek and I was in terrible pain." And when the man with the dao was questioned, he blamed the little shrimp/lobster for biting him causing him to react in pain by slicing of the bamboo.

Finally the shrimp was summoned and questioned. The little shrimp admitted he was the culprit behind the chain of events. He

himself suggested the punishment to be meted out to him. He said: “You can either put me back into the stream in which case, I would remain darkish in colour or boil me alive in water in which case, my appearance would become red and colourful.” The villagers decided to put the shrimp in a pot of water to boil him alive. While the shrimp was half-dead on the dry land, it was fully alive again in the pot of water and happily jumped out of the pot back into the stream. Shrimps always appear darkish in the water but become red and colourful when boiled, to this day.⁴⁵

A Tale True to Rural Environment

First of all, the story is set in quite a realistic rural context of Northeast India. Men always carry a dao or knife when they go to the forest. Such a man sharpening his dao on a stone by the stream is quite realistic. By such streams are found stones (sand stones) which are good for sharpening daos. Men usually try some stones to sharpen their daos and if they find a good stone, they would carry it home. A stream surrounded by a forest of bamboos, trees, wild banana plants as the habitat of wild fowls, wild boars, bats, and elephants are also plausible and realistic. A village in the vicinity of such an environment where the hut of the widow poorly constructed with bamboos and thatch, at the outskirts of the village, and becoming an easy target of such mishaps is also quite realistic. At the same time there is an air of artificiality in it. Everyone who reads or hears it, will know that it is a story. It could have happened as narrated, but it probably did not. A wise storyteller has created it to teach some lessons of life. As children we know this story mostly as a funny one. It can be read at various levels. Nobody knows who the author is, and perhaps, nobody bothers about it too, as a Spanish poem says:

Until the people sing them

Verses are not really verses;

And when people sing them

*No one remembers their authors.*⁴⁶

Faith, Reason and Wisdom: Their Mutuality

Reason appears to be the first casualty when the story is read in a casual way. The sequence of events narrated in the story appears to be the result of impulsive emotional reactions on the part of the characters. A closer look at the story, however, reveals that the chain reaction is the result of the rational behaviour of characters. What each character exactly did may be incidental – the man cutting the bamboo, ants biting the boar, etc. What is rational is that they had to react in such situations. If they did not, it would have been inhuman or un-animal-like behaviour. It may be an instinctive reaction, but instinctive reaction is rational. It is being true to one's being. Only the dead would not react in such a situation. The collateral damage caused by the characters is practically forgotten because of the rationality of their behaviour.

Faith comes into play to accept the reasonableness of the sequence of events. Each character is asked to explain the why of their behaviour and their explanation is accepted on faith. Readiness to listen to each character itself presupposes a community life that is lived on mutual trust/faith. There is no hint of suspicion about the veracity of the account given by each character.

Wisdom stands in the middle, as it were, to draw from both faith and reason to find a resolution to the crisis in the community. Wisdom calls on the community to see the rationality of the events and invites it to have faith in the reasonableness of the accounts given by the characters and accept it. Wisdom is the foundation on which the traditional societies live and conduct their daily lives. Though not always obvious, it is imbedded in the authentic traditional institutions, practices and myths. It has a particular concern for the widow, the one who suffered most in the story, as she so often does in real life as well. The resolution to the crisis is set in motion because the widow is deprived of the bare minimum she had. Finally, another aspect of wisdom comes into play which makes the culprit suggest his own punishment which also contains a clever device to escape from it. He is allowed to do so because had he in anyway anticipated the consequences of his silly prank, in wisdom's view, he would not have done it. So he is forgiven. After all, wisdom in the person of a wise story teller created this tale.

Conclusion

By opting for 'sustainable development and green economy' the world is in dialogue with the indigenous peoples in order to find a way out of a 'growing alienation from nature heading towards nuclear and ecological disaster.' The world can also be in dialogue with the indigenous in regard to human knowledge in order to come to have a holistic understanding of science and technology and religion so that science does not become devoid of religion, and religion devoid of science. This will happen in the mutuality of faith, reason and wisdom.

In its dialogue with the indigenous/tribals, the world also should become sensitive to the feelings of alienation, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, etc. of the tribals and their aspirations to be liberated from these, including being called by the derogatory term 'tribal' and be on equal footing with all. Finally, if the world is in dialogue with the tribals in order to learn from their traditions, the tribals themselves must be in dialogue with each other in the true spirit of their 'extraordinary solidarity with nature, egalitarianism, and a non-competitive collaboration with one another' for mutual enhancement among themselves and for that of humanity at large.

Notes

1. Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Revised and Expanded Indian Edition) (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2011) xxiv.
2. 57 heads of state, 490 ministers, 1,200 UN staff, 12, 000 intergovernmental organizations, 10, 000 NGOs and 63, 000 delegates representing around 195 countries and seven billion of the planet earth. Cf. Pushpam Kumar, "A Promising Pathway: Rio + 20 Green Economy and India," *Down to Earth: Science and Environment Fortnightly* (August 1-15, 2012) 52
3. George M. Soares-Prabhu, "Editorial, Tribal Values in India," *Jeevadhara* xxiv/140 (March 1994) 84.
4. Cf. Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium, published by the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in their Rela-

- tion to the Democratic Way of life, New York, 1941 as quoted in Steven L. Bridge, *Getting the Old Testament: What it meant to Them, What it means for Us* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009) 25
5. Ved Prakash, *Encyclopaedia of North-East India* Vol.1 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007) 37
 6. Birichi K. Medhi, R. P. Athparia and K. Jose, eds., "A Peep into the Tribal Scenario of North-East India: Introduction," in Idem. *Tribes of North-East India: Issues and Challenges* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 2009) xi-xii.
 7. Cf. Amar Krishna Paul, *Northeast Encyclopedia* (Guwahati: General Publication, 2004, 2nd Print) 1. NEC is a nodal agency under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1971. It started functioning in 1972 and was amended in December 2002 to induct Sikkim as the young sister of the state of NE region.
 8. A. C. Bhagabati, "North-East India: A Unique Home to Tribals," in Peter Haokip, Thomas Manjaly and Kuriakose Poovathumkudy, eds., *Know Your People: Cultural Sensitivity in Formation* (Shillong: Oriens Publications, 2005) 2.
 9. Frederick F. Downs, "Christianity and Cultural Change in North-East India," in Milton S. Sangma and David R. Syiemlieh, eds., *Essays on Christianity in North-East India* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994) 192
 10. James Herbert Lorrain *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, first published in 1940, 3rd Reprint in 1990) 389; see also Chuauthuama, *Zotawng Bible Dictionary* (Bible dictionary in Zo (Mizo) Language (Guwahati: Bhabani Offset & Imaging Systems, 2nd Reprint 2012), 938
 11. George M. Soares-Prabhu, "Tribal Values in India," *Jeevadhara* xxiv/ 140 (March 1994) 88. The whole issue is devoted to Tribal Values in the Bible and edited by George Soares.
 12. Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, 137; see also Chuauthuama, *Zotawng Bible Dictionary*, 29013 The Thadou-Kuki tribes call the hero of these folktales Benglam. The same folk character is known by different names among the other Kuki tribes. Among the Vaiphei, Lamkang, Tarao and Chothe tribes where, he is known by the same name, Benglam but the Zou, Simte, Paite and

Sukte (Tedim Chin) tribes use the name Penglam and Hmar, Lushai and Darlong Kukis call him by the name Sura.

13. The Thadou-Kuki tribes call the hero of these folktales *Benglam*. The same folk character is known by different names among the other Kuki tribes. Among the Vaiphei, Lamkang, Tarao and Chothe tribes where, he is known by the same name, *Benglam* but the Zou, Simte, Paite and Sukte (Tedim Chin) tribes use the name *Penglam* and Hmar, Lushai and Darlong Kukis call him by the name *Sura*.
14. James V. Haokip, *Benglam* (Unpublished Compilation of Folk Tales) (Shillong: North Eastern Hill University, 20013)
15. V. Haokip, *Benglam*
16. Cf. B. K. Borgohain & P. C. Roy Chaudhary, *Folk Tales of Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura & Mizoram* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1991); see also Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, ed., *Narratives of Northeast India-II* (Shillong: PROFRA (Programme of Folklore Research and Archive) Publications, 2002). Unfortunately, the documentation of most of these folktales has been faulty. They are third person summaries. They should have been documented as actually told by the indigenous narrators.
17. T. S. Agou Singson, ed., *Thadou-Kuki Suongmantam Dictionary* (Imphal: JB Offset Printers, 2001) 579
18. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, 73
19. T. S. Agou Singson, ed., *Thadou-Kuki Suongmantam Dictionary*, 577
20. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, 78
21. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, 24
22. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, 333
23. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1996) 285
24. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1996) 285
25. Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War & Peace from India's Northeast* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1995) 249
26. Peter Haokip, "The Tribal People of the Northeast: A Liberating Quest for Identity, Equality and Respect," *JPJRS* 2/2 (1999) 63-72

27. Sujata Miri, ed., *Rationality and Tribal Thought* (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 2004)
28. Sujata Miri, *Rationality and Tribal Thought*, 1.
29. Sujata Miri, *Rationality and Tribal Thought*, 3
30. S. C. Daniel, "Rationality and Tribal folklore: An Exploration," in Sujata Miri, ed. *Rationality and Tribal Thought*, 41-51
31. Liangmei Nagas are one of the components of three Naga tribes – Rongmei, Zemei who have amalgamated into one known as Zeliangrong. They are found both in Nagaland and Manipur
32. Sujata Miri, *Rationality and Tribal Thought*, 17
33. S. C. Daniel, *Rationality and Tribal Folklore*, 41
34. S. C. Daniel, *Rationality and Tribal Folklore*, 50
35. Arthur Cotterell, *A Dictionary of World Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 1.
36. Cf. Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers* (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1998) front cover page.
37. Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 5-6
38. Cf. *The Catholic Bible: Personal Study Edition*, "Myth," (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 21
39. Carlos Maesters, "Indian Myths and the Old Testament," *Sedos Bulletin* 24/3 (15 th March 1992) 69 [67-73]
40. Carlos Maesters, "Indian Myths and the Two Testaments," *Sedos Bulletin* 24/8 (16th September 1992) 227 {227-272}
41. Carlos Maesters, *Indian Myths*, 228.
42. In Sujata Miri, ed., *Rationality and Tribal Thought*, 121-129
43. C. P. Alexander, *Ethos and Postulates of the Nagas*, 126
44. C. P. Alexander, *Ethos and Postulates of the Nagas*, 127
45. This folktale is a common heritage of many tribes of the Northeast with minor variants. It belongs to the Mizo-Kuki-Chin tribes, the Nagas and the Karbis too. Cf. B. K. Borgohain and P. C. Roy, *Folk Tales of Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram*. See also Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, *Narratives of Northeast India II*
46. Manuel y Antonio Machado, *Obras Completas*, Madrid, 1947 as quoted by Louis Alonso Schökel, *The Inspired Word: Scripture in the Light of Language and Literature* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965) 229-230.