

SHORT STORIES

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How Creation Came To Be

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A Mizo folktale in translation. Translated by Margaret L. Pachua, originally published in 'Folklore From Mizoram' (Writers Workshop 2011). All copyright is vested with the author/translator.

In the beginning of time, much before the formation of the world as we know it now, there existed a world that was bereft of human beings. However, there was a powerful deity who was known as *khuazingnu*. *Khuazingnu* was regarded to be the all benevolent deity who created the earth and all that was around it. It was believed that she also created the environment that surrounded all creation. Amongst this was the land that covered all the earth. However, the earth by itself, was very dry and so arid was the land that the trees and the grass could not survive for long.

Finally, *khuazingnu* found a solution to the problem. She would throw open the windows that grew out of the sky. After this, she would also hurl water from these very windows out from the sky and onto the arid dryness of the earth, all in order to maintain the greenery that was slowly but steadily diminishing. To this day, very often when the rains fall, some Mizos still exclaim that “the goddess of the heavens is dousing us with water.”

Khuazingnu's solution to the dryness of the earth proved to be greatly successful and very soon the land became lush and fertile. Gradually, there grew various kinds of vegetation on earth, and these included fruits and vegetables that were ready to be eaten. *Khuazingnu* realised that there was a need to create both animals as well as human beings who could consume these. And so she created both human beings as well as other living beings in order to surround and fill the earth, and she also ensured that the various living creatures that she created could communicate with one another. This she did by entrusting each living creature with the power of speech. So in this manner, both man and animal could speak to one another.

Khuazingnu created a world that was harmonious and she also ensured that there were no wicked beings around. In this manner, she had supreme control over the face of the earth and there was no harm done to anyone. There was plenty of food and water to drink and the inhabitants of the earth had no need of anything and so every creature was content and happy. However, with the passage of time, the human beings as well as the animals grew in number and very soon there were differences that arose between them. There was growing enmity between them and gradually, hostility pervaded all over the earth. At length there came a time when they all lived as constant enemies with one another. Eventually, the human beings began to encounter problems between themselves. And thus, there arose the need for a ruler amongst them all, and so they elected someone amongst them to be the chief and to rule over the land.

Now when *khuazingnu* created the earth, it was bereft of any soil. The entire earth abounded with rocks and thus there was no vegetation around. The inhabitants of the earth were confused and perplexed. However, there was a huge expanse of water that covered a larger portion of the earth and it was known as

tuihriam (Water that was considered to be akin to sharp or keen edged instruments). It was called so because the waters within this area were always very cold and freezing. And true to its name the waters of *tuihriam* would be so sharp and piercing that if any creature dipped even a hand in it, there would be a sharp sensation, that was akin to the feeling of a hand being chopped off. And because of this, everyone was afraid to swim in its waters.

Now, on the bank of the *tuihriam* was located a place which was filled with mud and all the creatures of the earth would make an attempt every once in a while, in order to procure some of the mud. In their effort to do so they would all often try, at sometime or the other, to swim across the *tuihriam* but as its waters were icy and cold they would not even succeed in swimming even half way across its waters. Thus, precious as the mud was, the inhabitants of the earth could not secure any of it and their attempts to do so failed bitterly and so they continued to live in a state of anxiety.

Eventually, one day a little porcupine made a brave and determined attempt to procure the mud and so he swam across the *tuihriam*. He managed to get a bit of the mud onto his snout and after having done that, he swam back all the way with the bit of mud stuck onto his snout. His friends who were watching him from across the *tuihriam* thought that he would even die in the attempt and so all they could do was to cheer him on valiantly. The porcupine was greatly encouraged by their support and he was able to gather enough strength in order to accomplish his task, and eventually he was able to swim back with the bit of mud. As soon as he reached the bank, all the other animals began to contemplate upon how to multiply the bit of mud which the porcupine had gathered. Even as they were contemplating upon the same, the earthworm said,

"If you will abide by what I say I shall tell you how to multiply the bit of mud."

All the other animals then gazed at him in awe and said,

"Please do tell us how to multiply this bit of mud."

He then replied,

"All right I shall tell you how to do so. I shall consume this bit of mud and then later it will come out from my body in the form of excreta and we can gather it and place it in various corners of the earth. I shall continue to multiply the mud in this manner and very soon, the earth will be filled with mud."

Now all his other friends had never heard of such a plan before, and even though they were eager to multiply the precious bit of mud, they began to be suspicious about what the earthworm had suggested and so they retorted,

"We do not believe you. You may have made all this up only because you want to taste and eat a bit of the mud."

However, the earthworm replied boldly,

"Your accusations are not true at all. Why don't you give me a chance? If the idea does not work out, you may even cut me up into three different pieces."

And because he was so brave and confident about the matter, all the other animals wanted to give him a chance and they decided to do as he had suggested. Eventually the earthworm was given a bit of the precious mud to consume and sure enough... he ate the same and after a time, just as he had suggested he multiplied the mud in the form of excreta. Gradually more excreta and mud began to multiply in a similar manner and soon there was a huge mound of mud that was heaped alongside the earthworm.

The inhabitants of the earth were very happy, even as they saw what was taking place. They gathered together in unison and they began to keep themselves busy by scattering the mud in various places across the earth. They also called upon a

creature called *chultenu*, who was called so, because she had the incredible gift of smoothening over uneven surfaces. *Chultenu* was requested to gradually smoothen the creases and the uneven folds over the mud. And in this manner, smooth surfaces of mud filled the earth and the inhabitants of the earth were filled with joy and happiness all over again!!