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**Issues in
Contemporary Mizo Society**



Mizo History Association

October 2019

The main objective of this journal is to function as a mode of information and guidance for the scholars, researchers and historians and to provide a medium of exchange of ideas in Mizo history.

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EDITORIAL

“It takes a perverse determination to drain that instinctive curiosity away and make history seem just remote, dead and disconnected from our contemporary reality. Conversely, it just takes skilful storytelling to recharge that connection to make the past come alive in our present.”

— *Simon Schama*

WE often hear people say that globalisation has turned the world into a ‘global village’, and what happens in the other side of the world affected the life of others in the other side. Through the ever-progressing information and communication technology, there could hardly be an area which is ‘remote’, and the virtual ‘global community’ is creating a culture, a commonly shared space where issues and ideas are shared and disseminated instantaneously.

When we consider about the issues and problems of contemporary society, there are many common subjects which concerns various groups of people all over the world. The contemporary Mizo society is much more complex than in the pre-colonial or even colonial period. Many new issues, such as child’s rights and child care, prohibition of liquor, women’s right, drugs, alcohol related debate, ethnic conflict

issue, corruption, etc. have emerged. These issues affect all of us in one way or the other as it is part of the global problems. It opens a new space for historians and scholars from other disciplines to try to understand the current situation and if possible, find solutions where required, or show the right direction for future development. Thus, for the theme of the Mizo History Association Conference cum seminar XXXVIII Session 2019, '**Issues in Contemporary Mizo Society**' was chosen. The conference threw open for academic contribution from various disciplines an empirical or theoretical paper on contemporary issues, covering any event, idea, opinion, topic or public discourse, which may be related to politics, social, economic or religion of the contemporary Mizo society which affects the Mizo society in a larger historical context.

One could ask how contemporary situation could be a product of history being created, maintained and changed; how do we contextualise contemporary issues in more relevant ways? Through interpretation of existing materials or original documents with a broader insight into the matter, there are ample scope to present or (re)present the 'contemporary as a product of history' or 'contemporary recollection of historical past'.

In the contemporary period, the understanding of Mizo history is becoming enlarged and diversified. The people are becoming more and more conscious about their historical past as much as they are looking forward to its development. Even at the local level, many villages in Mizoram started to

reconstruct their history. They became more concerned about their past and began to preserve and protect the historical places or monuments that connect them to their past. Though it is the Government, NGOs and various local agencies that take initiatives, these changes that occur in contemporary period is part of 'rewriting' of Mizo history by the people themselves.

In the Conference which was hosted by Department of History, Govt. Aizawl North College, Aizawl, during 27-28 September, 2018, scholars from various disciplines - Sociology, Mass Communication, Theology, Political Science and History gathered and deliberate on various topics concerning contemporary issues in Mizo society. The articles in this journal are a collection of the papers presented in the last annual seminar. There are eleven essays contained in this Journal on the various issues related to the theme of the seminar.

It was decided to conduct a peer-review for the papers in the Journal from this issue. The Editorial Board thank the reviewers for their hard work and support. We also thank all the scholars who have participated in the Conference and contribute their paper for publication in the Journal. We look forward to greater contribution from the scholars who are concerned with furthering Mizo history and the social and cultural development of Mizoram as a whole.

The Editorial Board, on behalf of Mizo History Association, also express thanks to the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) for their constant financial support.

The views and opinions expressed in this Journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Executive Committee of Mizo History Association of the Editorial Board.

October, 2019

Rohmingmawii
H. Vanlalhraia

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE EMERGING SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION FROM MIZORAM PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

MIZORAM is one of the three states having a majority of Christian population in India. The other two states are Meghalaya and Nagaland. According to Census 2011 Mizoram has 10,97,206 population,¹ whereas the total Christian population as recorded in the *Statistical Handbook Mizoram 2016* is 10,67,487.² This information is gathered from nine different denominational churches.³ Accordingly, the Christian population is 97% and PCI (MS), the single largest group with 5,94,457 adherents⁴ accounts for 55% of the total Christian population. Therefore, PCI (MS) has been occupying a very important place in the state of affairs in Mizoram.

In spite of a deep rooted presence of Christianity in the society, the socio-political situation emerging in Mizoram is not favorable. Social evils like alcohol related problems, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, sexual harassments, human trafficking etc. are on the rampage. A close examination of these issues thus convinces one to believe that the trend is unfavorably

moving towards worsening of the situation. In order to stop this trend, tremendous efforts are needed from the responsible stakeholders in Mizoram.

With regard to the political situation, the emerging trend is disheartening because the two components– socio-political aspects are complementing each other. In order to ascertain the fact, one typical example may be cited: the flagship program of the state government commonly known as New Land Use Policy (NLUP), an offshoot of the so-called Land Use Policy (LUP) is said to have led the people to rampant corruptions because the beneficiaries failed to utilize the money for the purpose. Therefore, in view of the emerging socio-political situation which is revolving around the people, the church leaders are afflicted with tremendous challenges. These challenges are precariously on the rise when the national political party – BJP emerged on the scene. The manner in which the church leaders tackle the challenges posed by the BJP in Mizoram *will be the real test*.

Meanwhile, it may be indicated that there are two forums where the church leaders have been working together for a common cause in Mizoram. They are *Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee* (MKHC) otherwise known as *Mizoram Church Leaders Committee* and *Mizoram People Forum* (MPF). While the former accepts membership only from a recognized denominational churches, the latter admits even Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) as well as the individual persons as members by paying membership fee. MPF is mainly concerned with election related issues. Through the forums, the individual churches and persons can make attempts to reform the society within their own sphere of interests.

Now, with this brief introduction, an attempt is made in this paper to discuss the emerging socio-political aspects thus facing Mizoram. As the title of the paper indicates, the discourse is subdivided into three sections - Social, Political and Response. Concluding remarks will also be included.

Emerging Social Aspects

Under this sub-title, topics like alcohol, child abuse, drug addiction & HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, climate change, violence against women and marriage will be discussed.

Alcohol

Zu, a Mizo word for alcohol, has played a unique role in the society. In the past, there was hardly any ceremony performed in which *Zu* was not served. Nevertheless, young men and women never drank *zu* except on special occasions like festivals and it was considered unseemly for women to drink in the presence of men.⁵ But, with the passing of time alcohol has become a problem in the Mizo society. Alcohol has an intriguing story in the history of the Mizo society.

In the annals of the history of alcohol in Mizoram, the year 1973 is remarkable. In 1972, Mizoram became a Union Territory and its first Legislative Assembly passed *The Mizoram Excise Bill of 1973* which was enacted in the same year. But the Act became effective only along with *The Mizoram Excise Rules 1983* with effect from 10 October 1984. Accordingly, Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) was made available for sale in the open market only under license.⁶ But hardly two decades had passed, there was strong pressures from the public to do away with the Act. In response to this, the Government abolished the Act and imposed total prohibition

of liquor by introducing *The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act 1995* which came into force from 20 February 1997. Under this Act, manufacturing, selling, transporting, buying etc., of liquor were prohibited.⁷ The Act was officially in force for 17 years in Mizoram.

After 17 years under dry spell, liquor shops were opened again in Mizoram under *The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) (MLPC) Act 2014* which was put into effect from 17 July 2014. Under this Act, once again, import, export, transport, storage, sale, consumption etc., under valid licenses were restored.⁸ The government introduced the Act on the pretext that: the Act 1995 was not successful, better quality of liquor would be provided to consumers and supply of drugs to which many youths have fallen prey would be much reduced in Mizoram. But the real motive of the government rather, was to get more revenues by way of this Act. But the assumptions were all opposite. This was substantiated by findings of the report of the Study Group. The government appointed *Study Group* submitted its findings to the Government of Mizoram on 5 May 2018. The report is being examined and its future is hanging in balance because the year 2018 is the election year in Mizoram. Hence, it is likely that the Act may vanish once again. The highlight of the report may be given as under:

The period of the study is only from April 2016 to April 2017, and contains 95 pages. The parameters used to compose the variance between social cost and social benefits incurred by alcohol in Aizawl during 2016-2017 are consumers, producers, taxes and duties, healthcare, education, police and justice, public authority, government, church and community, others in society and other externalities. The

study covers only Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. The report said that when Re.1 was earned from liquor Rs.2.85 was lost. In other words, while the total cost was Rs.299,49,25,550 the benefit was Rs.105,20,58,100.⁹ The finding would have been much different had the so-called consumer surplus(Rs.28,19,26,728)¹⁰ not included to the benefit. Besides the government, warehouses and vendors, the commercial sex workers benefitted most. They said their customers increased after opening of liquor shops.¹¹ The report thus left three options for considerations: total prohibition, partial prohibition and free sale.

It is reported that during 2008 – 2017, 887 serving policemen died due to alcoholism.¹² In Mizoram Assembly Budget Session 2018 the Honourable Home Minister R. Lalzirliana in his reply to a question of Honourable member Dr. K Beichua said that during 2015 – 2018, 435 serving policemen died because of excessive use of alcohol.¹³ Meanwhile, it may be recorded that according to World Health Organisation (WHO) alcohol kills 2.6 lakhs Indians every year. The same report says that alcohol kills around 6000 people every day across the world.¹⁴

Child Abuse

One of the social problems currently faced by Mizoram is child abuse. Child abuse is a complex as well as an international phenomenon with multiple causes. Child abuse by simple definition is maltreatment or neglect of a child or children by a parent or other caregivers. In general, abuse refers to acts of commission while neglect refers to acts of omission.¹⁵ According to World Health Organization (WHO), “child abuse and child maltreatment are all forms of physical and/or emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect or

negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power".¹⁶ Again, according to WHO, there are four types of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse and negligent abuse. Child abuse can result in adverse physical effects including all forms of developmental problems. Poverty and substance abuse are common social problems.

In India, the welfare of children has appeared more secure with the coming of *The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012*. In Mizoram, like other States in India, *Mizoram State Child Protection Society (MSCPS)* is dealing with child abuse cases. The MSCPS is a wing under Social Welfare Department. Under the present set up, the MSCPS has various components like Mizoram State Child Protection Society, Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), etc. The Society is looking after altogether 52 Child Care Institutions (CCI) like Special Homes, Observation Homes, Children's Homes and Specialized Adoption Agency. Of the institutions, 20 are under the care of the government and the other 32 are under the care of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). According to the data, of the reasons why children are kept in CCI, *neglect* is the highest with 24% followed by *extreme poverty* with 20%. *Incapacitated parents* have 16% with *substance abuse* 11%. *Sexually abused* is ranked after *substance abuse* with 6%.¹⁷ The remainders are caused by other reasons. During the period from 2015 to July 2018, CWC has received 3793 cases and year-wise presentation indicates that 1303 cases were presented during 2015 – 2016 with 1064 cases during 2016

– 2017. During 2017 – 2018, 1055 new cases were received and during the current year (2018) up to July the number of cases presented is 371. During the same period 1103 cases were presented before JJB with 324 cases during 2015 – 2016, 347 cases in 2016 – 2017 with 335 during 2017 – 2018. During April – July 2018, 97 cases were presented before JJB.

Based on the available data with the MSCPS, of the cases produced before CWC during 2015 – July 2018, cases with *incapacitated parents* has the highest with 16%, *extreme poverty* 9%, *sexual abuse* 12%, *substance abuse* 4%, *physical* 7% and *neglected* 11%. Likewise, cases produced before JJB during 2015 - July 2018, *theft* being the highest with 53%, followed by *sexual offences* with 10% and *assault and drug/substance* related have the same percentage of 5% each.

It is interesting to note that CWC has received 444 cases on *sexual abuse* during 2015 – July 2018 and year-wise classified cases may be shown below.¹⁸

| SEXUAL ABUSE | Classification | 2015–2016 | 2016–2017 | 2017–2018 | April–July 2018 | Total |
|--------------|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| | <i>Penetrative Sexual Assault</i> | 53 | 35 | 44 | 21 | 153 |
| | <i>Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault</i> | 9 | 20 | 35 | 15 | 79 |
| | <i>Sexual Assault</i> | 32 | 47 | 54 | 6 | 139 |
| | <i>Aggravated Sexual Assault</i> | 6 | 6 | 15 | 4 | 31 |
| | <i>Sexual Harassment</i> | 6 | 8 | 16 | 7 | 37 |
| | <i>Use of child for Pornographic Purposes</i> | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | TOTAL | 111 | 116 | 164 | 53 | 444 |

From the study noted above, it is clear that children in Mizoram have been abused for various reasons. Penetrative sexual assault and sexual assault are the two highest cases recorded. Therefore, it is imperative to say that every stakeholder is expected to do his or her duty to prevent children from this kind of maltreatment. More efforts have to be made to make the public aware that it is the duty and responsibility of every section of people in the society that children are not abused in any form. These cases, therefore, have clearly indicated that children in Mizoram are vulnerable for these two cases in particular and more awareness is needed.

Drug Addiction

Drug is any substance that negatively affects the functions of living either physically or psychologically. Drugs are used for treating, diagnosing and preventing diseases and these are legal drugs. The excessive addictive use of drugs for non-medical purposes may be understood as drug abuse. Drug addiction is the inability to stop using the drug in spite of numerous attempts. Drug addiction which is a serious and expensive societal problem is actually a mental illness and should be treated as a medical issue just as any other illness.

In 1964, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended a new standard that replaces the term drug addiction with the term “drug dependence” which is considered as substance use disorder.¹⁹ A drug user becomes an addict when he experiences withdrawal symptoms when not using the drug and where drug use is continued in spite of harm caused to the user’s life and the lives of those around the user.

Like other states in the North-East region of India, drug addiction/drug dependence has been on the rise in Mizoram. A recent survey has revealed that drug abuse in Mizoram is indicating an upward trend. In 2017, a Baseline Survey on *Extent and Pattern of Drug Use* was conducted in 8 districts of Mizoram. The survey was carried out by a team of 32 researchers in which 2633 drug users were interviewed. As per the survey reports, of the drug users interviewed 81.6% were jobless while 32% male drug users had permanent jobs. Among the female drug users 12.9% sold drugs and 33% were commercial workers.²⁰ The survey further revealed that pharmaceutical opioids are the most common abused drugs followed by heroin, sedative drugs and inhalants.

According to Excise and Narcotics Department, Govt. of Mizoram 20 kgs of heroin, 24 kgs of opium, 1777.88kgs of cannabis and 146730 tablets of methamphetamine have been seized during 2010 to July 2017. It is also reported that during 1984 to August 2018, 1504 people have died due to excessive use of drugs.²¹

To combat drug menace in Mizoram, the role of Young Mizo Association (YMA) is immensely remarkable. In 2006 Supply Reduction Service (SRS) was formed. During 2006 to August 2018, the SRS has seized and destroyed drugs of different kinds worth Rs.282,62,59,871.²² Recently, leaders of Central YMA and Upper Chinwin Youth Network of Myanmar signed an agreement on 22 May, 2018 at CYMA Office, Aizawl, to curb the menace and to the fight against drugs. Again, Central YMA leaders visited Khawmawi (Myanmar) and met some ringleaders of drug peddlers on 25 June 2018. In the fight against drugs, CYMA and other voluntary

organizations in Mizoram have good cooperations with the state government through Excise and Narcotics Department.

One aspect which is connected with drug addiction is de-addiction centers or homes. In the state of Mizoram there are 35 recognised de-addiction centres or homes.²³ In Aizawl district alone, there are 18 centres.

In this connection, a few words may be said about HIV/AIDS which is associated with drug users. It happens primarily in two ways: when the user injects drugs and shares needles or other drug equipment and when the user has unprotected sex with the infected partner. In Mizoram, according to expert opinion, alcohol is also directly or indirectly responsible for the rapid rise of HIV/AIDS.

In Mizoram HIV/AIDS is administered by Mizoram States AIDS Control Society (MSACS). During March 1990 to March 2018, of the blood samples of 4,47,800 tested among the general clients - 15,340 were found HIV +ve which is 3% and among 2,25,323 Anti-Nuptial Clinic (ANC) tested - 1,526 were positive which is 0.6%. But the overall result, out of the total number of people tested (6,73,123) 16,866 were positive. This is 2.5%.²⁴ With this percentage, according to HIV Estimations 2017 prepared by National Aids Control Organization (NACO) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS) Mizoram has the highest tested positive followed by Manipur with 1.45% and Nagaland with 1.15%.²⁵ According to National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) Mizoram has the highest tested positive among pregnant women in India with 1.19%.²⁶

Meanwhile, according to MSACS record, currently (2017-2018) there are 851 women sex workers who are registered as Female Sex Workers (FSW) and there are 543 men who are registered as 'man having sex with man' (MSM). Among, MSM 9 of them are commercial sex workers.²⁷

Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking may be defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer etc., of persons by means of the threat or use of force and other forms like abduction, deception etc. It is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers. It is a worldwide phenomenon and as a result, almost every country in the world is affected by human trafficking.

In the case of Mizoram human trafficking is a newly emerging phenomenon with few cases. The cases are mainly linked with persons who were sent to work at spas, parlours, etc., outside Mizoram. Till now, only few cases have been registered by the concerned authorities. Based on the information collected from the Department of Police, during 2000 to May 2018 24 cases of human trafficking have been recorded with 38 victims and 46 accused have been arrested. However, no one is convicted till now.²⁸ According to a practicing advocate, the cases are not strong enough and could be won without much plead as the victims were taken at their own will.²⁹ Till now, in Aizawl district, 17 cases are registered and in Lunglei, Champhai and Kolasib districts 1, 2 and 4 cases have been registered respectively. Therefore, it appears that till now human trafficking is not a serious problem in Mizoram.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women (VAW) is used interchangeably with crime against women. VAW is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women. It shall mean all acts of gender - based violence that result in physical, sexual, psychological and economic suffering to women. It is reported that at least one out of every three women around the world has been abused in her lifetime. VAW may, therefore, result in long term effects of various forms. Meanwhile, economic cost of VAW is always considerably high because it has resulted in serious physical injuries and even death. It is a worldwide phenomenon which is common in every country.

In Mizoram 38 crimes have been classified and 342 crimes have been committed between 2016 and April 2018. The case against *outraging/molestation* is recorded as the highest with 29% followed by *hurt* with 13%. The case recorded against rape is 10%.³⁰ So far, according to the available information, out of the total 38 identified crimes, 12 crimes have not been committed or violated.

At the same time, it may be noted that during 2012 to 2015, 1036 violations of the crime had been committed.³¹ The violations have clearly indicated that VAW is on the rise in Mizoram and every section of people should be aware of it.

Climate Change

Climate Change is used interchangeably with global warming. Till now there is no general agreement in scientific and policy document for the precise term to refer to this forced change here on earth. Life on earth is now much

threatened by human activities which have contributed to an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which in turn has led to what is known as global warming. Global warming is the current increase in temperature on the earth's surface as well as its atmosphere which is affecting many places around the world. Burning of fossil fuels and deforestation are the activities which have caused global warming. The increase in the man-made emission of greenhouse gases is also the cause of global warming.

What Pope Francis has said is very relevant. He said, "This sister (earth) cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen. 2:7); our bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from the waters".³²

In Mizoram, the State Climate Change Cell was established under the Mizoram Science, Technology and Innovation Council (MISTIC) to carry out its own work plans and project works within the objectives of two missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) prepared by the Government of India. The Cell also functions as an agency to take care of the district-wise vulnerability and Risk Assessment of Climate Change for the state of Mizoram on four different selected sectors such as health, water resources, forest and agriculture.³³ The Cell is also assigned to organize programmes and workshops on climate change related issues and to create educational programmes and events to make the public aware of climate change in Mizoram.

It is known that Mizoram is a fragment of Lower Himalayan Range and according to Forest Survey of India 2009 its forests cover 91.27% of the state geographical area which was the highest in the country.³⁴ However, the major constraints for the state are higher rates of deforestation due to jhum cultivation of slash and burn and forest degradation caused by anthropogenic pressure. According to the State Forest Report 2015 Mizoram had 138 sq.km of very dense forest, 5858 sq.km of moderate dense forest, and 12752 sq.km of open forest with 88.93% of total forest.³⁵ In terms of percentage of forest cover, with respect to total geographical area Mizoram has the highest.³⁶ However, in the State Forest Report 2017 Mizoram has 18,186 sq.km which is 86.27% of the state geographical area. In terms of forest canopy density classes, the state has 131 sq.km of dense forest, 5861 sq.km of moderately dense forest and 12194 sq.km under open forest. Hence, within 2 years Mizoram has lost 7 sq.km.³⁷ Therefore, in order to prevent the current trend of deforestation in Mizoram, more efforts have to be taken. Therefore, with a view to creating awareness and increasing green cover, the Government of Mizoram launched Green Mizoram Programme from 6 May 1999. Since then, till 2016 under the programme, 36,58,174 trees have been planted.³⁸

Marriage and Divorce

Christian marriage is a reflection of the union between Christ and his Church and is fully realized in the union between a man and a woman who give themselves to each other in a free, faithful and exclusive love who belong to each other until death.³⁹ Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.⁴⁰

As noted elsewhere in this paper, in Mizoram about 97% of its population is professed Christians who are committed to their Christian faith. In spite of this fact, marriage is an emerging social problem among the Mizo people because of the rise of divorce cases. Pope Francis says, “Drug use and alcoholism are the scourges causing immense suffering and even breaking up of many families”.⁴¹ This is absolutely true among the Mizo people. The so-called “culture of the ephemeral”⁴² could have been one of the factors for divorce among the married couples in the Mizo community. The far-reaching consequences of divorce in the society is the emergence of what is called ‘broken – family’ which in turn has given rise to ‘problem - children’ in the families and the society as well.

Emerging Political Aspects

In this discussion, themes like NLUP, emergence of BJP and Yoga will be attempted.

NLUP

NLUP is attempted in this paper because the policy has led the people to rampant corruptions in Mizoram. In spite of this fact, the Congress (I) Party now in power has been using the policy as a vote buying programme.

It has already been pointed out that NLUP is an offshoot of LUP, the scheme, introduced by the Congress (I) Party in power, was put in to practice during the years 1985 and 1986. The idea was to allot particular areas of land to selected families who would engage themselves in the occupation as their main source of livelihood such as agriculture, sericulture and others thereby confining their activities within the

allotted areas of land only.⁴³ For this purpose Rs.2873.13 crores were earmarked. Out of this outlay, the Central Government would provide Rs.2526.98 crores and the remaining amount of Rs.346.15 crores would come from the beneficiaries as their contribution.⁴⁴ The scheme envisaged complete abandonment of jhumming in Mizoram.

NLUP, the revival of successive schemes, is the flagship programme of the ruling Congress (I) Government in Mizoram. When the elections of 2013 was about to take place, the Congress (I) Party mooted the idea to revive the scheme under the new nomenclature as 'New Land Use Policy' to woo voters with five aims and objectives as 1)provide sustainable income to farming families, 2)provide urban poor with livelihoods, 3)converging schemes funded by Government of India, 4)Land reclamation and forestation, 5)Environment protection and restoration.⁴⁵

The main plank with which the Congress(I) fought and won 2013 elections being NLUP in which the party promised to pay to the extent of Rs.1,00,000/- per family for the improvement of their economy. The amount should be given in two installments. The NLUP has covered 1,31,940 beneficiaries from 2011 against the original target of 1.2 lakh beneficiaries.

In 2016, the Government introduced a new scheme called New Economic Development Policy (NEDP) which was affiliated with NLUP and called it as NLUP-NEDP Convergence Scheme Phase II. This scheme came into effect from 2016 – 2017. Under this scheme the government has doled out Rs.80 crores for 16400 beneficiaries.⁴⁶ To select the

beneficiaries only ruling MLA were appointed. As before, under the convergence scheme the beneficiaries will be provided one lakh each. The amount will be credited to the different departments known as 'line Departments' of NLUP. The Government has directed the selected beneficiaries to have their own bank accounts ready for easy payment.

The NLUP Implementing Board has further directed all the District Collectors (DC) to constitute a district level bankers committee to facilitate quick distribution of money. It also directed DCs to identify villages without banking facilities and to make alternative arrangements for every payment to the beneficiaries in the villages. It is a common belief that Congress(I) Party was given mandate in 2013 elections because of the easy money given to the people by means of NLUP.

Emergence of BJP

It is a common knowledge that Bharatiya Janata Party, abbreviation BJP was formed upon the ruins of Bharatiya Jana Sangh which was established in 1951 as the political wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS).⁴⁷ The BJP forms a triad with RSS and the Vishwas Hindu Parishad (VHP) and is normally known as Sangh Parivar (Family of Organizations).⁴⁸ A right- wing party the BJP advocated Hindutva, an ideology that sought to define Indian culture in terms of Hindu values. The BJP was officially created on 6 April 1980.

Meanwhile, it may be noted that the methods of Hitler continue to be a source of inspiration for the Saffron Brigade today. Hitler had set up his notorious private army called

the 'Brown Shirts' to browbeat the opposition and terrorize the society. In a similar way, the Bajrang Dal, a militant organization, soon after the assumption of power by the BJP led Government at the center announced that it would set up centers "to train Hindu youth in martial arts in order to give a 'fitting reply' to the 'objectionable' activities of the Christian Missionaries and cultural invaders (read Muslims)".⁴⁹ Instead of the Hitler's 'Brown Shirts' the Hindu cadre shall have 'Saffron Shirts' as the Saffron Brigade's private army.

In Mizoram, the BJP was formed on 10 March 1993⁵⁰ and since then the party has made its presence felt in Mizoram. In 1998, the State and Lok Sabha elections were held simultaneously and in both the elections the BJP contested but with negligible results. But the presence of the BJP has become a landmark with formation of the BJP led NDA Government at the Centre in 2014. It became more significant when Prof. J.V Hluna was elected President of State BJP on 4 January, 2016. The position of the BJP in Mizoram was ensured when the government was formed with Congress (I) Party in the Chakma Autonomous District Council for which the elections were held on 20 April 2018. Normally, Mizoram is going to poll for the Assembly elections in the month of December 2018. Let us see how the BJP performs as a political party.

In this connection, a few lines may be added on Yoga because Yoga and BJP have some similarities. As Hindu nationalist Party the BJP has been promoting Yoga which stems from Vedas – the Indian holy text. It is true to say that Hinduism, Yoga and Ayurveda are integral part of one another. Hence,

there can be no Yoga or Ayurveda without Hinduism and vice versa. At the same time, the truth is that Yoga has different connotations and as such among the Mizo different views have been made on Yoga. There are opposite views.⁵¹ Anyway, the truth is that Yoga is a part of Hindu philosophy which is purely stemming from Hinduism.

Christian Response

In this section, attempt has been made on the nature of Christian response to every topic that has already been deliberated in the preceding pages. The response is discussed topic-wise.

Since its inception in 1894, Christianity is against consumption of alcohol by its adherents in Mizoram. For the first time in the history of Mizoram, drinking of alcohol was totally prohibited for the new Christian convert at their first *Assembly* held at Sethlun village, now within Lunglei city, in 1904.⁵² Coming from civilized countries, the missionaries left the matter to the local people to decide and so they took the decision. The same is the case today. This clearly indicates that alcohol, a liquid, is not like the water we drink every day.

In this connection, it may be noted that BCM took initiatives for the total prohibition of liquor in Mizoram during the District Council. In 1954 BCM appealed the Council to prohibit drinking and selling of alcohol in Mizoram. But the Council did not pay heed to the request.⁵³ In spite of this, the new ministry formed in 1972, under Union Territory for the first time passed *The Mizoram Excise Act 1973* which came into force in 1983 by which Act permits

were issued for sale of liquors in Mizoram. It may be reported further that BCM discussed drinking and selling of alcohol in its annual Assemblies in 1917, 1939, 1944, 1952, 1954 and 1972 and passed resolutions against alcohol.⁵⁴

In matters relating to alcohol and its related issues the role of the PCI (MS) is remarkable. Being the single largest denomination with 55% of the total Christian population PCI (MS) has contributed commendable efforts to do away with alcohol in Mizoram. PCI (MS) like BCM in the same period put forward strong measures to the Government to stop sale of liquor and to withdraw the permits. According to H. Lalrinthanga, *The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP)* 1995 which came into force on 20 February 1997 was the fruit of seven years of continuous pressure made by PCI (MS) to the Government of Mizoram.⁵⁵

PCI (MS) has put more efforts to fight against the menace of alcohol in Mizoram when *Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod Social Front* in short Synod Social Front (SSF) was formed on 2 May, 1979.⁵⁶ As the demand of social and political concern was increasing day by day in the society, it became difficult to handle all the issues for the single committee alone. Hence, the different committees or cells were formed under SSF to handle particular issues. The different cells are: economic development cell, education development cell, political education cell, alcoholism, drugs and AIDS cell and rescue home management committee.

The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) Act passed in 1995 was implemented on 20 February 1997. It was implemented with the blessings of MKHC because the

government had to take consent from the church body. PCI (MS) was of the view that MLTP was the best way to eradicate the problems relating to alcoholism in Mizoram.

In 2011, SSF undertook research on MLTP. In the study, different levels of people in the society were interviewed. Interesting findings were made. One of the most significant findings made in the study was the 21.13% of respondents said that the teaching of the church on alcohol was satisfactory and whereas 75.29% of the respondents said that the teaching of the church on alcohol was not satisfactory, it should make more efforts towards this end.⁵⁷ Again, during 2014 – 2016 SSF also undertook a research on 'Zu In Mizote Min Nghawng Dan' (The Impact of Alcohol on the Mizo). In this study, like the other one the interesting finding was 'alcohol is the root cause of social evils in the society'.⁵⁸ Of the respondents 86.01% said that an easy availability of alcohol in the open market does not reduce the supply of drugs in the society.⁵⁹ There are so many other interesting findings. From the two research findings it is evident that SSF has made commendable services for the Mizo society. The role of PCI (MS) through SSF to meet the challenges posed by alcohol in the society is remarkably significant.

When The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC) was in force since 15 January 2015, there had been no strong opposition from any quarters. The opposition from individuals or local churches was very nominal, except for a few local churches in collaboration with NGOs organized sitting demonstrations. The demonstrations have had no serious impact on the society. The role of every local church including the two largest denominations PCI (MS) and BCM

in this direction is also nominal. It appears that no major programme of opposition has come forth from any of the denominations in Mizoram. However, PCI (MS) organized a prayer meeting programme on 3 June 2018 throughout Mizoram. One of the points/agenda for the programme was for the end of alcohol selling in Mizoram.⁶⁰ In this way PCI (MS) has done something against the current MLPC in Mizoram. Meanwhile, it may be noted that the churches under the auspices of MKHC has not taken any tangible measure against the MLPC.

In matter relating to *Child Abuse*, every local church is much aware of the necessity of holding awareness campaign against it in its local churches. This is done by every individual local church by hiring experts in the field. In this way, the common people in Mizoram are being made aware of the dangers of child abuse.

Drug addiction & HIV/AIDS is another area where Christian response is focused much. In this respect, The Salvation Army has played a leading role for the care and rehabilitation of addicts & HIV/AIDS patients through its Community Health Action Network (CHAN).⁶¹ Similarly, PCI (MS) is not lagging behind. Through its alcoholism, drugs and AIDS cell the church has taken many steps for the rehabilitation, prevention and awareness to the people. In 2005 Synod 'a special budget' of Rs.41,25,000/- was passed and approved for the treatment of drug addiction.⁶² The amount was distributed among the different pastorates. Besides, rescue home for HIV/AIDS patients has been set up since 1987. A Community Care Centre for the victims of HIV/AIDS was established at its Hospital at Durtlang, with the funds

received from National AIDS Control Society (NACO) through MSACS. Awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS were also jointly organized with MSACS and Mizoram Social Defense and Rehabilitation Board (MSDRB), Social Welfare Department. The efforts made by the PCI (MS) towards this end through its SSF are immense. The role of the Catholic Church through the Bethany Welfare Society, Mamit and Bethany Health Centre, Sihphir Venghlun which are run by Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany and Peace Home, Durtlang run by Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC), where children with HIV/AIDS and the deprived are sheltered are worth mentioning. *Zoram Entu Pawl* otherwise known as Social Service Commission established to work in Aizawl Diocese is also making valuable contributions for the upliftment of the poor in the society. So in this aspect, every denomination is doing whatever it can.

Unlike drug addiction & HIV/AIDS churches are not giving much attention to human trafficking and violence against Women. At the same time, as a type of social reform, awareness programs have been held for the masses at the local churches. In this way the two issues were made known to the public. In this case, the role of BCM youth wing called *Ṭhalai Kristian Pawl* (ṬKP) is remarkable. Awareness campaigns by means of print media and electronic media are being held.⁶³ The role of PCI (MS) youth wing *Kristian Ṭhalai Pawl* (KṬP) is also worth mentioning. The youth wing of every church is doing its best in one way or another in this area.

Climate change is another important sphere of interest wherein the local churches are expected to make valuable contributions towards making our planet a better place to

live in. But contrary to this expectation, the contributions of the individual churches are still minimal. However, the role of PCI (MS) cannot help mentioning in this case because in its 2015 Synod, a notable resolution on the conservation of the natural source of spring was passed.⁶⁴ Following this, SSF invited subject experts from the concerned departments, Government of Mizoram and CYMA. With the help of these experts, SSF prepared valuable papers.⁶⁵ When the papers were ready they were sent to all the member – churches for their deliberations. In this way, PCI (MS) is educating its members.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that Aizawl Theological College and Save Chite Lui Coordination Committee jointly organized a seminar on ‘Lui Leh Tui Hna Humhalh’ (Conservation of River and Natural Source of Spring) at Aizawl on 16 June 2018.⁶⁶ In this seminar the participants had a comprehensive discussions on the exigency of the conservation of Chite river and natural source of spring in Mizoram.

Because of high rate of divorce among the married couples in Mizoram, marriage has become one of the contributing factors for the so-called ‘broken family’ in the society. The impact of divorce is felt so much that unless some constructive measures are taken in this direction through MKHC or some other body, the future of Mizoram is uncertain.

Now, before coming to a conclusion on Christian response to social situation, a note may be added on how individual churches are making valuable contributions towards this end.

With a view to strengthening the hands of NGOs like YMA and others in their formidable fight against drugs and some other abuses, churches are giving financial assistance amount of which may vary from one another. For example, during January 2011 – September 2012, YMA (SRS) received financial assistance amounting to Rs.7,55,500/-. The donation is largely from individual churches. In this way, churches are contributing liberally in support of NGOs in their endeavors to suppress drugs and other menaces in the society. Therefore, churches are indirectly making valuable contributions for the society.

Coming to the emerging political situation, it has been pointed out that NLUP has led the people to rampant corruptions. It has also been said that NLUP is a vote buying program. In spite of these known facts MKHC as a church body is keeping quiet, perhaps because the body does not want to come in complicity with the Government. But, seeing the consequences of the NLUP programs, MKHC or churches should come forward in criticizing the policy. The church should be bold enough to oppose such a corrupt policy.

After five years of its implementation, NLUP was audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India for the year ended 31 March 2016. The findings of the audit report 2015 – 2016 may be summarized as follows:

The main objective of NLUP was to put an end to wasteful shifting cultivation or jhumming. During 2010 and 2011 the number of jhum cultivators in Mizoram were 68,433 families, the number of farmers who practiced jhumming had reduced to 60,338 during 2015-2016. This shows that

NLUP had not achieved its objective of putting an end to jhumming cultivation. Before the commencement of the program about 38% of the people practiced jhumming but after five years of the implementation only one third had given up jhumming.⁶⁷ Percentage contribution of import from other states remained around 70% during the period and the report said that the state (Mizoram) was not able to reduce imports.⁶⁸ It is further stated that the State Government has not initiated any action to fulfill its objective of increasing the total Forest Reserve Area to 80% of the state geographical area.⁶⁹ The financial management was deficient and unspent amounts were kept in Civil Deposits in the bank account and the same was shown as spent. This was irregular. The report concluded that the desired objective for which NLUP was taken up had not been achieved in any stated areas.⁷⁰ The Report, therefore, recommended that village level NLUP committee should be made involved and prescribed rules and procedures should be followed with respect to financial management.

Meanwhile, a few lines may be said on the role of MPF as a forum in which besides NGOs and individuals, some of the church denominations are its members. It was formed on 21 June 2006.⁷¹ The aims and objectives of MPF, among others, is to have free and fair elections in Mizoram.⁷² It is a four-tier system having a central, district, constituency and local forums. The General Body is the highest decision making body. It was the creation of PCI (MS). Unlike MKHC in MPF some of the major churches like BCM, SA, SDA and UPC (NE) are not the members. As noted before the forum is dealing only with election related issues.

Another important emerging political issues now facing Mizoram are BJP and its affiliate Yoga. Viewed from all India perspective, these two forces are threatening Christianity in Mizoram because they are the means used by Sangh Parivar. In order to make the people aware of the danger of these two agencies MKHC and individual churches are taking steps in their respective sphere of interests. As a precautionary measure to counter the advent of Yoga in Mizoram MKHC organized a seminar on **Yoga** on 17 July 2015 which was attended by representatives of member churches.⁷³ As a follow-up measure, MKHC again issued a **Press Release** on 6 June 2016 requesting all the faithful to be aware of the nature of Yoga.⁷⁴ MKHC also organized awareness campaign in the form of seminar which was held on 26 September 2017. The title of the paper was “Issues Facing Christian Today”.⁷⁵ In this seminar, more than 300 representatives from member churches attended. More efforts are needed to convince the faithful that BJP and Yoga are the secret agents of RSS and others.

MKHC also submitted representation to Prime Minister of India on 22 December 2014 requesting him to withdraw ‘Good Governance Day’ slated to be held on 25 December 2014.⁷⁶ Perhaps because of MKHC intervention, the day was not observed in Mizoram.

Besides MKHC, there is a group called ‘Daitheupawl’ otherwise known as the ‘barricade’. They are taking keen interest in this matter. They have written a number of papers on Hinduism, BJP and Yoga. These papers are read in a congregation organized by youth wings of various churches. They are actively motivating others. In this way, the group

has made more contributions than MKHC in this field. There are other individual persons who are also making valuable contributions through their writings in local newspapers with a view to teaching the faithful more about the dangers of BJP for the Christians of Mizoram. MKHC should take more stringent measures to stop the advent of BJP in Mizoram.

While giving a Christian response, it is appropriate to give a brief account of how Hindutva has been penetrating Mizoram. Mizo Janajati Vikash Samiti was founded in 2005. It was founded in collaboration with Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) and My Home India.⁷⁷ About 30 Mizo boys were sent to study somewhere in Jharkhand, Haryana etc. With the auspices of Janajati a Mizo indigenous religion called 'Zo Sakhua' (Zo Religion) was established.⁷⁸ They were the group who had organized themselves as a religious sect called 'Nunna Lal Chhungkua' and their belief was based on animism. They believe that they are not the children of Adam and they called their religion as 'Sa'.⁷⁹ They have translated Ramayana and Srimad Bhagavad Gita into Mizo. How to counter the penetration of Hinduism through various functionaries into Mizoram and North East India is now an exigent issue that requires a befitting reply.

Concluding Remarks

From the accounts thus explained above, it may be concluded that the Christian response to alcohol and drug related issues is said to be satisfactory because every local church is said to have made utmost efforts in the fight against these two elements. At the same time, they are also expected to do more with the other elements which have

been described above. Likewise, MKHC as a rallying point can do more in this direction by encouraging them with a support of lending expertise to find out the best possible way of dealing with the issues discussed above.

With regard to NLUP, MKHC ought to do more in helping the Government in implementing the programme by giving proper awareness to the beneficiaries by telling them that they should utilize the money for the purpose. This can be done without much difficulty by lending man-powers of individual members of the affiliated churches. As a matter of fact, in every village MKHC has its branch or branches. In this way, NLUP could have been made beneficial to the farmers. This can be done without much problem as MPF is utilizing the services of individual local members in times of elections. In times of elections, MPF throughout Mizoram can do a great job with the help of people who contribute their services free of cost. Had the MKHC been active in this way, NLUP could have been a big boost for the economic growth of Mizoram.

Again, from the study thus highlighted above it can be asserted that the role of MKHC in its endeavors of putting measures against the advent of BJP and yoga in Mizoram is not up to the mark because it is the only body in which almost all the different denominations in Mizoram are the members. It can do much more in this sphere.

Finally, in order to reform the society, the Government is in the forefront and next is the Church. If the Government fails the whole society fails. The Church should guide the

Government with boldness but not interferes in day to day affairs of the government.

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**IDENTIFYING THE QUEER AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE
IN CELIE’S CHARACTER FROM THE NOVEL
THE COLOR PURPLE : A COMPARATIVE
OBSERVATION WITH
THE MIZO PERSPECTIVE ON QUEER**

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LGBTQ studies is the study of issues relating to the sexual orientation and gender identity of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. The Objective is to examine and better understand the lives and representations of individuals and groups considered sexual minorities as well as the various forces that have affected them across cultures and throughout time.

The LGBTQ issue is not only a contemporary issue across the globe, it is a burning issue which influence Cultures, Religions, Governments, Academics, Discourses and the individual. The Supreme court in India has recently discriminalised homosexuality by declaring Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code unconstitutional. On 6 September 2018, the Supreme Court of India decided to announce that the application of Section 377 to consensual homosexual sex between adults was unconstitutional, “irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary”, but that Section 377

remains in force relating to sex with minors, non-consensual sexual acts, and bestiality.

According to Your dictionary definition, “Gender is the state of being male or female with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.” Gender involves society and culture, while sex involves biology, so there are two sexes but there could be different genders. Gender is socio-culturally constructed while sex is fixed and biological. Gender difference refers to those continuums of meaning governed by the binary terms man and woman whereas sexual difference may refer to those governed by the binary terms heterosexual and homosexual.

Judith Butler, an American Philosopher and Gender theorist transformed how gender is studied and understood in philosophy literature. She deconstructed the traditional feminist understanding of Gender which says Gender is culturally constructed while sex is biological and fixed. Butler theorises that not only gender but sex and sexuality are also performative, that is they are culturally constructed through the repetition of stylised acts in time. In her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, which was published in 1990, Butler argues that people must rethink the most basic categories of human identity to make society better. She achieves this by asking questions about sex, gender and sexuality, and how these define people’s identities. Butler’s revolutionary ideas regarding gender identity, the relations between gender and sex, and her argument that gender is essentially an improvised performance forcing both women and men to inhabit roles, came to be seen as foundational to queer theory.

According to the definition given by wikipedia “Queer is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or cisgender. Originally meaning “strange” or “peculiar”, *queer* came to be used pejoratively against those with same-sex desires or relationships in the late 19th century.

Queer theory’s origin is hard to clearly define, since it came from multiple critical and cultural contexts, including feminism, post-structuralist theory, radical movements of people of color, the gay and lesbian movements, AIDS activism, many sexual subcultural practices such as sadomasochism, and postcolonialism. Queer theory is a field of critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of queer studies and women’s studies. Queer theory includes both queer readings of texts and the theorisation of ‘queerness’ itself. The core of queer theory includes; challenging the obsolete traditional norms and opposing social hegemony, which categorize people with specific label, queer theory deconstructs all strict binary classifications and advocates people to live in a natural and Free State, to establish a harmonious world among genders and races.

Queer theorists contention is that there is no set normal, only changing norms that people may or may not fit into, making queer theorists’ main challenge to disrupt binaries in hopes that this will destroy differences as well as inequality.

The Color Purple, written by Alice Walker in 1982, is an epistolary novel. It is the story of Celie, a poor, rural, uneducated black woman who writes letters to God and

her sister. She does this as a way to express and vent the horror, loneliness and self-hate she experiences in her daily life. She got married at 14 to a cruel old man who abuses, rapes and beats her, with two illegitimate children supposedly fathered by her own father which later in the story turns out is not her real father. The protagonist finds escape and comfort through the relationship she builds with God, and later with her sister, through her letters and her relationship with Shug. In life, Celie knows little of love. Her only friend, Nettie, her sister, was taken away from her and Celie presumes she is dead as they promised to write letters to each other but she never got any from Nettie. Later, she falls in love with her husband's, longtime girlfriend, Shug Avery. The relationship between Celie and Shug blossoms into a deeply intimate and sexual relationship that spans the course of decades. In this love, Celie embarks on a journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance. She learns not only that she is worthy of love but also how to love herself, love others and offer forgiveness. She realizes her mistake and her ignorance towards her own life. Through her capacity to love even those who have hurt and abused her, they too are able to find redemption and grasp their own ability for change.

Celie did not know how to react to oppression, especially because, since her stepfather raped her, she believes that all men are like him and, so, Albert, her husband is acting normally. Celie has suffered psychological harm through verbal maltreatment, physical maltreatment and sexual force all her life. This caused Celie to see herself as worthless, powerless and had already internalise this with time. She imagines her life was normal and the fright she felt for these forces was natural and accepts them as her portion of life.

In the novel we had not seen or heard of Celie's attraction towards the same sex until she heard about Shug Avery. The awe and adoration she developed for Shug began even before she actually met her. She was first introduced to Shug through a concert poster. From the first time she laid eyes on Shug's photograph, Celie was mesmerized by Shug's larger than life image.

Then, she had the chance to meet and nurse her when her husband brought Shug home as she was sick and had no one to take care of her. In a typical relationship, a wife would be outrageously jealous and mad over this act. But, Celie was not only delighted but she was excited to have met Shug in person and she devotedly nursed her back to health. She performed this task in such a way that it was an act of worship for her.

It was during this time that Celie and Shug developed physical and emotional intimacy. Celie revealed that she had never enjoyed being with her husband and that it was only a duty and a performance on her part. She never realized that she, as a woman should and could enjoy intimacy with a man, her experiences and patriarchal hegemony forbid her to contemplate otherwise.

Most times I pretend I ain't there. He never know the difference. Never astme how I feel, nothing. Just do his business, get off, go to sleep[...].

Do his business, she say. Do his business. Why, Miss Celie. You make it sound like he going to the toilet on you. That what it feel like, I say.(p-81)

Through Shug, Celie learns a lot about her own sexuality. After her experience with her, Celie learns to accept her body and to love herself, and gradually she begins to grow and understand the concept of respect and she eventually stop submitting to oppression. Celie had grown accustomed to the verbal and physical abuse imposed upon her by the male oppressors in her life. She had internalised all the negative comments about her, regarding her looks, her intelligence and her worth. She could not imagine that anyone could love and appreciate her as she is. Therefore, when she had physically, emotionally and sexually experienced the love and acceptance from a fellow woman whom she had long admired and worshipped, the relationship has a constructive impact in her life.

Celie's growth and self realization story involve many aspects of queer theory: such as Celie's homosexual love to Shug, bisexuality, the reverse gender roles of Sofia and Harpo and the deconstruction of black/white binary oppression. Celie and Shug, of course, cross traditional gender boundaries as soon as they enter into their relationship. All the characters started out their journey confronted by and with a series of oppositions and sufferings, but Celie and the other prominent characters ended up having a happy and harmonious life.

On her road to freedom from the internal and external oppressions, Celie started wearing pants. She not only wears pants, she even makes pants for the people she loves. In her own words –

“I got pants now in every color and size under the sun. Since us started making pants down home, I aint been

able to stop. I change the cloth, I change the print, I change the waist, I change the pocket. I change the hem, I change the fullness of the leg. I make so many pants Shug tease me. I didn't know what I was starting, she say laughing" (Walker 211).

The pants in *The Color Purple* symbolize Celie's positive transformation and her liberation. It may be understood that wearing pants by women was an unconventional act in Celie's world and culture. She's been told her entire life that a woman is to wear a dress and that pants belong to man's clothing. Again, we see the strict binary classifications based on constructivism. Celie's pants not only symbolize her liberation from the patriarchal oppression, but it also declares her independence and liberation from the gender roles of her time.

Deeply influenced by Christianity and its teachings, the adopted form of sexuality in the Mizo society is the normative heterosexual relationship. Sexuality beyond this is considered a taboo. Historical and Literary (even though very limited) evidence also show the existence of Queer even in the early mizo society (British colonisers and oral tradition).

Even before the influence of Christianity, the early Mizo society being a Patriarchal one did not accept Queer. Men who show effeminate character were given a derogatory name "Tuai" and their aberrant behavior was considered to be disgraceful. Likewise, women who behaves and dress like men were given another derogatory term, "Patil".

Lalhmingmawii in her article "*Transcending Boundaries : Alternative Sexuality and Church Response*" writes, "Despite the limited literature evidence that homosexuals, gays and lesbians have always been there in Mizo society could be traced because there is an indigenous terms for different sexual orientations in the native language. J. Herbert Lorrain, a Scottish Baptist Christian Missionary who had served in Mizoram from 1894 and a pioneer in the creation and development of Mizo script had mentioned in his Dictionary of the Lushai Language that *tuaipheng* (noun) refers to a man who practices sodomy and dresses and works like a woman; a sodomite who masquerades as a woman. *Patil* (noun) means a woman who behaves and dresses like a man; a kind of sex pervert." Therefore, the presence and the degrading perspective on the issue of queer were apparent since the early Mizo society.

On 18th Sept. 2018, the *Times of India* flashed, the "Mizo Churches 'reject' SC's Sec 377 ruling". Reacting to the historic ruling of the Supreme Court regarding the scrapping of Section 377 on 6th September, 2018, the MHKC (Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee) said, homosexuality and lesbianism should continue to be criminalised. The churches in Mizoram had always given a strong reaction against the legal acceptance of gays.

In June 2012, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, snapped their ties with the Presbyterian Church of North America after the latter allowed ordination of gays as priests. "We, the members of Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, cannot accept ordination of homosexual people as pastors and regard homosexuality as against the teachings of the Bible and

Christianity,” said D P Biakkhuma, a church elder and secretary of the Synod Executive Committee (SEC), the second highest decision making body of the Presbyterian Church in a Times of India report dated June 12, 2012.

Since 2009 when the Delhi High court had scrapped Section 377, not only the churches in Mizoram but the NGOs like the YMA and the MHIP had responded against the scrapping of Section 377. Yet, With the church and the influential NGOs still adamant in its denunciation of alternate sexuality, youth with queer sexual orientations come out more audacious than before; permeating a wide range of business entrepreneurships and becoming extremely successful. Therefore, the thought-provoking question would be, how would the recent Supreme Court Ruling further impact the Queer community in the society? Deeply aware and sensitized of their Right, will it elevate the appearance and audacity of these marginalized group? Another sensitive question regarding the response of the Church is what strategy will the Church adopt and apply to diminish or abolish this issue or the community itself ? Or rather, Can the churches in Mizoram and the NGOs eventually accept it?

Celie from the novel, *The Color purple* was in a way liberated from an abusive patriarchal dominance by finding a voice she thought she never had through her queer experience. Her financial independence further gives her mobilization and the freedom of choice. Her queer experience helps her to develop a sense of understanding for the others after she starts to understand and accepts herself. In the end Celie develops a peaceful and harmonious correlation with others, even with her enemies

From the few professing queer in the mizo society, could we identify the positive impact their gender has in their lives as well as to the lives of others, specifically in the area of their natural talent and creativity. Once they shed their inhibitions and accepts their sexual orientations instead of hiding or rejecting it due to social norms and acceptance, they start exploring their interests and dreams, and when they do that, they usually excel in those areas; for example, in the area of sports, fashion, different forms of art and creativity. By accepting themselves, are they more successful in life than trying to live a life that fits with the norm of society?

Looking at the current scenario, one interesting question is, do their financial independence and economic breakthrough give them the audacity to choose and publicly profess their gender in a society where alternate sexuality is still considered a taboo? Yet, the fact remains that even though there have been many people who show tolerance and acceptance for the queer, the mainstream Mizo society still do not and cannot tolerate the legality or outright expression of queerness in the society.

The issue of Queer is yet a very sensitive subject, especially from a Mizo Christian Perspective with the teaching of the Bible tucked at the heart of decision making, both mentally as well as physically. Therefore, I may conclude my paper with two contradicting questions. As mentioned above regarding the queer theory viz.

The core of queer theory includes; challenging the obsolete traditional norms and opposing social hegemony, which categorize people with specific label, queer theory deconstructs all strict binary classifications

and advocates people to live in a natural and Free State, to establish a harmonious world among genders and races.

Can the Mizo society eventually accept alternate sexuality for the sake of peace and brotherhood, thereby establishing a harmonious world and environment among gender or race? Or, will by accepting this world of Queer, the Mizo Society as well as the Mizo Christian community stand a high risk of decadence and debauchery which may lead to the deterioration of the whole Race?

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‘ZU’ AND ITS CONTESTATIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD : MIZORAM

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THIS article discusses the current debates on *Zu* (liquor) and the restrictions made by the Government of Mizoram and its effects on the society. It is a study of the current issues as a result of the introduction of the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act (MLTPA), 1996 in Mizoram (which was made effective in 1997) and high light the challenges and experiences pertaining to social issues. The paper mainly focus on the debates on the eve of the publication of the Government Notification of the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Control (MLPC) Act, 2014 which made effective in 2015 (The Act replaced the MLTP Act of 1996 until the annulment and introduction of a new Mizoram Total Prohibition Act, 2019).

During the colonial period drinking of *Zu* was quite limited but from 1947 till 1966 it became quite popular again. Unlike today it was not a major social issue and the churches were not excessively vocal in its expression. This was due to major increase in the brewing of the local wine along with new

mechanisms of making different local wines and without exception, imported *Zu* gradually increased in Mizoram.

When the MNF began the independence movement against the Union of India, priority was given to totally put a stop to the selling of *Zu*. They argued that it damaged the morality of the Mizos to which the people would easily succumb to their adversaries. Propagandas were made especially to their recruits to be free from *Zu* and this was notified to the whole hills. Such unanimous decisions made in the beginning was taken seriously by the public due to fear of further consequences from the MNF volunteers.¹

Rev Chuathuama, stated (between 1966-1986) that 'there were more pressures from the MNF, even at gunpoint and due to fear of further consequences, the sale of *Zu* decreased.'²

Till the end of the 1970s, the MNF, Village Defense Party(VDP) and Churches could somehow check the growing increase of *Zu* in the hills, however, from March 26, 1971, with the declaration of Bangladesh independence, and declaration of war by Pakistan on India on Nov.14,1971 the urban-based MNF power deteriorated and the control of *Zu* has now become beyond their purview as they were also busy in shifting their headquarters from Bangladesh then East Pakistan to the Arakan hills in Myanmar. Rev Chuathuama noted that 'As the security forces were always pursuing the MNF, the latter could not, however, prolong their activities of checking *Zu* from the commuters.'³ He also cited several reasons for the increased consumption of *Zu* and one point he noted was due to the influence of 'western lifestyles' and 'movies'.⁴ He also lamented that "once

foreign liquor became rare, drugs addiction came in the limelight and could not be reduced even when Zu (foreign liquor) is available.”⁵

But from 1980 the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) strongly advocated the prohibition of *Zu* as even school children began to consume *Zu*. Therefore the sale of *Zu* and brewing decreased to some extent.⁶ Apart from this, there was the Village Defence Party (VDP) to fight against anti-social elements and to help the government forces in maintaining peace in the hills. Within the encompass of the society there were the Village Council, YMA, Churches and organized ‘Zu Do Pawl’ (Resistance Against Zu) for the measurement of civilians safety and to maintain law and order in the Mizo Hills. All these groups were instrumental in helping out the society for annihilation of anti-social elements like *Zu* especially contraband or illegal drugs.

However, it has been argued that from 1984 Mizoram started to experience the abuse of drugs and trafficking especially heroin. This was mostly found among the children of the wealthy family.⁷ After a few years ‘proxyvon (pain reliever/killer used the commuter for injection) was commonly known among the youth including school children of the rich and soon even the economically backward were also greatly affected by the said drugs.⁸ Ellis H.Pachau further cited that “*Between 1990-2002, our youths were invaded by these drugs who became a slave for the same, and it is the darkest hour.*”⁹ ever experienced in Mizoram.

It is also to be noted that when the popularity of the MNF waned, *Zu* once again came to the limelight and continued

unabated. From 1980-1995 it has become the most controversial issue –neither the Government nor NGO or the churches has put so much pressure on the selling and consumption of *Zu*. In the mean time the MNF and the Union of India had a round of talks which conversely affected the restriction imposed on the sale of *Zu*.

The social condition has become deplorable as the Khawpui Service (Prostitution) commonly called/known as KS was on the rise especially in Aizawl town wherein even married men and women involved in such cases. Commentators of the period highlighted the social degradation and deterioration of the Mizo social life. One observation was that when the MNF started negotiating with the Union of India, immediately restrictions made by the former too was almost defunct, and the fear psychosis that was inherent in the public minds was now torn apart. There was no longer the controlling forces that put pressure on the wine vendors. The Government of Mizoram sanctioned notification to certain firms to open wine bars in the city. Bars and *Zu* as a ‘commercial commodity’ reached its highest point during this period. One can easily observe the changing situations even during the MNF revolutionary period. Government servants, contractors and all individuals were involved in the consumption of *Zu*. One of the obvious results was an increase in the number of KS which ultimately led to adultery, making the ‘moral character of the family shame to the society’.

Hence every year consumption of *Zu* has been on the increase, wherein almost every households were effected and which soon became major social issues in the hills. *Zu* and illegal drugs increased which affected not only the family

but also social relationships in the society. Most of all, it affected everyday life, especially of the Mizo work culture.¹⁰ The morality of the society was at a low level especially during the first fifteen years of the MNF movement. This was so because the men folk could hardly cultivate their lands and the only option was to earn a living by any means. However, the short-lived MNF government made no further restrictions on *Zu* or selling of wine. Even under the ten years of the Congress rule in Mizoram no significant absolute total prohibition was experienced as illicit *Zu* continued to be easily available.

Under the second ministry of the MNF, more and more pressure for the prohibition of *Zu* was insisted by the churches. Finally, from 1988-89, there was a consensus for the restriction of selling and brewing of *Zu* in the whole hills and this has continued amidst much-heated debates. Even though the NGO and the Churches took certain measures by 2005, '*Zu* and drugs, sex or promiscuity' continued unabated and '*degraded the morality of the society.*'¹¹ By 2009 the All Mizoram Graduate Unemployed Association (AGUA) organized a debate on the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act. The contenders from the treasury bench for the anti -*Zu* strongly advocated '*Zu as a sin which affected the family and the society*'. The debates continued until the government made the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition & Control) Act and notified it on 17 July 2014.¹² The Act superseded the MLTP of 1995) and the government henceforth endorsed the free sale of liquor in Mizoram.

There were many freelance writers in the daily papers of Mizoram who had their own views and opinions on the

controversial 'Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act'. Commentators of the day were mostly contented with the MLTPA, while critics considered the latter unnecessary as the concerned authority could not totally implement the provisions of the Act. Others based their arguments quoting the Bible as the basic measurement for seeking opinions against *Zu*. The legacy of the white Christian missionaries continued to linger in the minds of many of the Mizo elders. There were others who pointed to other states and countries where total prohibition has been practised, but without success. Critics also pointed out that if *Zu* is made for commercial purposes, it would be a great asset for the Government and would also increase the state income. But such assertions may not be in the general minds of the Mizos and may not be the best explanation.

According to the daily newspapers those in favour of continuing the MLTPA outweigh those who thought that the Act was not successful and not required for its continuation and to freely sell in the state. Therefore, further opinion has been sought for consensus and this could be read from the debates reviewed from the two daily newspapers (local newspapers) of Mizoram.

Even before the passing of the MLTPC Act, there were many critics who argued that *Zu* itself or drinking the substance cannot be considered a sin. They cited the Bible (Timothy 5:23) where it said that "*stop drinking nothing but water: take a little wine for your digestion, for your prequels ailments.*"¹³ However, the contender of prohibition further argued that in the past when *Zu* was permitted many had lost their moral character; many families spent huge sum of money which

were for the maintenance of their daily economy. Not only in the street but also in the household families all wickedness and doing evil things were the day to day experience.¹⁴

Rev.K.Ramlana in his article has given a ten points on the negative aspects of *Zu* and one of which that it 'would affect the individual health, service, and most of all disrespect for law and order, increase of family expenditure etc'.¹⁵

The contender of the free sale of *Zu* may be few but they also had a point. Vanlalsiama Fanai stated that it would be more profitable to make good wine so that those who were addicted to 'drugs' would decrease in number.¹⁶ A person who called himself Khumtea pa(incognito) argued in favour of the free sale of *Zu* and cited *"simply lifting of total prohibition would not make Zu free. During total prohibition years, the success of such prohibition was different from one individual to another. Therefore Zu has not become totally ceased."*¹⁷ Lalngheta Sailo stated :

"MLTP does not totally abolish *Zu* because drunkards continued unabated. Not only drunkards but also heroin, No. 4 and others were addicted making the youths to face their untimely death. KS were still in large number, and there were countless addiction centres. If one compared with other countries of the world there would not be like Mizoram where *Zu* is regarded too precious."¹⁸

Further, a question always posed by contemporary critics was *who benefitted (the MLTP Act) the most?* The answer is not far to seek. It was the bootleggers or vendors who illegally brewed *Zu* in factories on a small scale and who illegally imported *Zu* from outside the state. Lalngheta even lamented by stating '*Zu* is a curse to all'.¹⁹

Rev. Darchungnunga in anticipation of the future election stated that the ruling party and the political leaders were always aware of their future prospects and apprehensive of the future election. Their mindsets were always whether they should use it for the success of their party or would it be instrumental in their defeat. He further suggested that the government should face reality instead of apprehending defeat.²⁰

Among the contenders to uplift the MLTP Act, 1996 was M.Lalmanzuala who also published a book on debates on the prohibition of Zu in the state.²¹

While others were contented with the government initiatives, however, contemporary critics were not convinced with the deployment of law enforcement under the MLTP Act and made several remarks on the “unsuccessful’ total prohibition and its effects it had on the society.²² On the other hand, most contenders of the MLTP Act suggested preventive measures to Zu addiction.²³ Further in anticipation of the free sale of Zu C.Sangzuala apprehended that, *“If Zu is permitted the pastors would groan aloud because they are the persons who wanted the best for the morality of the people for which they also spent their whole life for the same. If Zu is freely sold the burden of the pastors would also be increased and be more difficult.”*²⁴

In fact the church leaders were very much annoyed as they were not consulted in framing the MLTP Act by the government. It was lamented that *“The MLTPC Act, 2014 was made without consulting the churches. If we think that under the new (modification) Act/rules all the contaminated Zu*

bootlegging would be done away; it may not be so. The Act was born to replace the MLTP, 1995.”²⁵

M.Lalmanzuala wrote an article wherein he stated *“Let the church leaders have self-assessment and accepted their true nature and that would be for the good of all. They were aware of what Zu could bring, but they hated Zu. As long as there is a single drop of Zu in our state, they would not be really happy.”²⁶*

In support of the assertion made by the contenders to do away with the 1996 Act on the prohibition of Zu, Lalbiakluanga cited:

“Are we aware that the initiatives of the Churches and the NGOs’ is too Pharisees and Taliban?. We claim to be a Christian state but there are still a large number of Zu vendors and drunkards. There are no persons who could control such activities...We are forcing the government which cannot even be upheld by us...If they really hated Zu let the NGO and the churches punish their members who sells Zu and drunkards. Unless they act in such a way I would not at all believe in what they say....the MLTP benefitted mostly the lawyers and the Zu vendors.”²⁷

R.Laldanglova stated:

“While the government was trying to be liberal by deleting some of its rules and reviving the existing rules some churches were very much against the lifting of the total prohibition. According to them if this was done it could bring all sorts of bad elements to the society. But while such strict Acts (MLTPA,1995) has been in used, Zu is still freely sold. Due to this reason, our

children are buried almost every day and accidents are prone in the state because of Zu. While the NGOs' took the initiative, the church members are silent and have become mere spectators. If we really hated Zu let us give at least some employment or small business works to the Zu vendors in order to keep them away from the selling of Zu."²⁸

Due to a series of debates finally, the government passed the *Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Control Bill (2014)* to replace the MLTP, 1995(enforced from 1997). Once again due to opposition from the churches and political propaganda, after five years under the MNF government, the Mizoram Assembly unanimously passed the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition)Bill on 20 March 2019 to replace the previous Bill.

One thing is certain that while the contemporary critics and the churches were for 'total prohibition' however, no initiatives or propaganda was made against the so-called 'corruption'. As a 'Christian' state, it is also the duty of every citizen to look into such illegal acts, however, major concentration was given to the prohibition of Zu only. There was no single demonstration nor pressure from the NGOs to openly agitate against the so-called 'corruption'. Within the encompass of the Christians, it can be noted that the agitation or to fight against 'corruption' was never in the picture. It was always Zu where the poor vendors were usually victimized but not against the so-called 'corrupted' households of Mizoram. Since this was the case, one can definitely say that the majority of the church members were 'not corrupted'. It can also be stated that Zu is a mere

diversion to fight against ‘corruption’ as there was no single demonstration nor slogan nor open confrontation with the government forces. Till date such incident has never been experienced in Mizoram. Finally one should consider the contribution (tithe) of the church members- whether it was declining during the total prohibition(MLTPA) or increasing under the MLTPC?

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TOWARDS PEACE : A NARRATIVE ON CONTEMPORARY MIZORAM

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CLASHES of thoughts and ideas that resulted into armed confrontations in Mizoram, and even spread elsewhere, in 1966 turned into amity. Conflicting parties have been brought into terms and the baffled spaces have become tolerant. The journey towards Contemporary Mizoram's peace and tranquility after two-decades of turbulence and unrest attracts interests and curiosities. The more than three decadal years of peace after the accord deserves a relooking at how and why understanding between the contending parties was possible.

The essay attempts to narrate steps taken by different protagonists in initiating truce and cease-fire between the two conflicting and battling parties, reconciliations in the conflict-affected community and ultimately the time-tested peacetime of more than thirty years in the Contemporary Mizoram.

The initial total submission of the Mizo National Front (MNF) cadres to Laldenga's call in the early stage of the movement; the East-Pakistan crisis of 1970-1971 that brought ample problems in different aspects among the Mizo volunteers; the changing of approaches among the "educated group" of the MNF that had resulted into their ouster from the movement are the main threads of the preliminary part of the narrative. The second portion of the account deals with the role played by the Church in evolving dialogue between the government of India and the MNF - its (the Church's) part as the Citizens' Committee and the Christian Peace Committee. The move towards commencing dialogue of the two conflicting groups made by the first Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Mizoram and its obstacles soon after; the formation of Mizoram Peace Advisory Committee and its part in preparing grounds for talks; the "Agreement" of 1976 and the "Calcutta Convention" thereafter follow. The narration culminated with the changing of guards in the Indian Parliament; involvement of the Mizoram Church Leaders Committee in bringing the new Indian Government's leadership and the MNF leadership for talks; hurdles and complications and finally the reaching of an accord.

I

Laldenga, the president of Mizo National Front (MNF), left Mizoram for East Pakistan soon after the Assam Rifles post in Lunglei was captured by the Mizo National Volunteers on the 5th March, 1966. By the end of March, the entire high command of the MNF had established its headquarters in Chittagong Hill Tracks of East Pakistan.

In response to Laldenga's call, the MNF cadres scattered in different places within and outside Mizoram, started moving down towards Sazek range of Chittagong Hill Tracts in East Pakistan by 1968 end. All important leaders of the MNF reached Sazek range in April 1969 and stationed themselves together in one place. Laldenga, the president of the MNF was accommodated in a bungalow at Mirpur colony, Dacca and was given the secretary level treatment by Pakistan.¹

The East Pakistan crisis of 1970-1971 posed a serious logistical and strategic problem for Mizo undergrounds. 'Intellectuals' among the MNF leaders eventually suggested a peaceful dialogue with the Indian government within the framework of the Indian constitution. This group felt that the MNF should now adopt a conciliatory stand towards Government of India for the solution of Mizo problem.² Laldenga, who anticipated Mizo independence at the defeat of India by Pakistan-United States alliance, with his loyalists among the cadres opposed to this proposal. The Pakistani leader Z.A. Bhutto had even promised 'Pakistan's recognition of Mizoram independence' at the time of India giving its recognition to Bangladesh independence at the UNO.³ However, Laldenga's expectations were not to be realized. The birth of Bangladesh geographically cut off the MNF from Pakistan, its main source of material support. It also deprived the MNF of its hideouts as the new government in Dacca was a political ally of India. The circumstances, then, forced the MNF to shift its headquarters from Chittagong to the Arrakan in Burma.

The Mizo church leaders, right from the beginning of the MNF armed struggle tried to mediate between the MNF and the Indian government. Reverend Zairema, a senior church

leader managed to make contacts with the MNF leadership through his brother-in-law, Lalkhawliana, finance minister of the MNF government. Lalkhawliana, supported by Thangkima, education minister of the MNF government submitted a resolution in the cabinet meeting of the MNF. A part of which reads-

“we will not defeat India by might. However noble our pursuit be, we would never attain it by force”⁴

Though the resolution was rejected, it could be seen as a pivotal point for the clash of interests among the MNF leadership that would later emerge. The educated group, holding high ranking offices in the organization was not satisfied with the organizational structure, particularly with the president being too powerful. On June 30, 1966 a cabinet meeting was held at Rulpuihlim in the absence of the president. It resolved that the presidential form of government adopted by the MNF should be changed into parliamentary form of government. However, due to the overwhelming popular support enjoyed by Laldenga across the ranks and files, the resolution could not become effective. Indeed, after his first five years presidency, the educated group failed to unseat Laldenga in the 1971 MNF elections.

The idea of statehood gradually became popular among the educated group. To this end, members of the intellectual group, known as “*a dumpawl*” (the blues) kept pressing on to further this aim. In the joint parliamentary meeting held on November 27, 1969, Senator Bualhranga moved a resolution- elucidating his desire of having meaningful talks with India since the Mizo problem with India was a political problem. Saying-

“Our problem with India is a political problem; therefore, it has to be solved through a political dialogue. Considering our present situation, we need to search for a solution of our problem with India”⁵

He also advocated either for the status of statehood, protectorate state or even the status given to Bhutan.⁶ The resolution was turned down by the speaker Vanhela on the ground that it was against the MNF ideology of complete independence.

The educated group was frustrated and disinclined to believe in the viability of an independent Mizoram due to the stagnant relations the MNF had with foreign authorities. This group felt that “although countries which were decidedly hostile to India were outwardly sympathetic in their dealings, they were not ready to initiate concrete and tangible help to realize the MNF cause. They felt being used by enemy countries of India as puppets to create internal troubles within India.”⁷

After Laldenga’s re-election as the president of the MNF on February 9, 1971, members of the educated group were accused of continuing their attempts to overthrow Laldenga’s government. They were arrested and held in the MNF jail in Pakistan. On October 11, 1971, some of them managed to escape from detention and fled to Mizoram to surrender to the Indian government. R. Zamawia and Lalnunmawia, who were sent to Mizoram to initiate talks with the Government of India ultimately, surrendered themselves to the Indian government.

In general, the MNF underground personnel continued to firmly commit themselves to the ideology of political self-determination even after the Bangladesh episode. They even tried to win public support by adopting favourable code of behavior and involving themselves in social and community enhancement activities after 1971. They committed themselves to the eradication of social evils like drinking and selling of alcohol. In doing so, the MNF largely won back public confidence. This allowed them to mix freely with the people. They were even known to have access to the residences of Mizo government officers as well as ministers in the Union Territory government of Mizoram.⁸ Fear, admiration and social approval of its ideology as a symbol of Mizo ethnic group identity and cohesion made the people of Mizoram obey the MNF and their desires.⁹

II

Right from the start, different organizations and parties strived towards solving the insurgency problem. Situation in Mizoram had rapidly deteriorated and Aizawl literally became the battle ground. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, realizing the need of restoring normalcy issued a pamphlet condemning violent activities. Citizens' Committee, which included members from all religious denominations, was formed by the standing committee of the Presbyterian Synod.¹⁰ The Committee initially focused on relief and rehabilitation. It also made efforts to bring mutual understanding between the two parties – Indian security forces and the MNF. Amnesty for the MNF personnel who wished to come over-ground was suggested by the

chairman of Citizens' Committee to Mr. B.P. Chaliha, the then chief minister of Assam, when the later was on a visit to Aizawl in May 1966. Mr. Chaliha declined to this suggestion mainly because he did not trust Laldenga, the MNF president, whom he felt had "back stabbed" him.¹¹

As disturbances escalated in Mizoram, leaders of both the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches felt for the need of creating a peace committee. Accordingly, "Christian Peace Committee" was formed on September 8, 1966. The main aim of this committee was to bring mutual understanding and goodwill between the Indian government and the MNF, and to restore peace and normalcy in Mizoram. "The Peace Delegation" of the Christian Peace Committee, comprising of Rev. H.S. Luaia, Rev. Zairema and Rev. L.N. Ralte while meeting Laldenga on November 3, 1966, besides other things, suggested for meaningful dialogue with the Indian government within the Indian constitution. Laldenga, while pointing out difficulties of backtracking from the demand of self-determination, mentioned that he was always ready to have political dialogue for peace with the Indian government.¹²

The Christian Peace Committee also expressed its views to the Indian government representatives of the situation in the hills. The Committee conveyed that- though all the demands made by the MNF may not be possible to be granted, there were substantial reasons behind these demands. The Committee felt that the central government was responsible for the underdevelopment of the region. This lack of development created the sense of alienation and a feeling of not belonging to India. The Committee also

informed the Indian government its mistake of considering all the Mizos as rebels. It also conveyed the sufferings of women and children and other innocent citizens at the hands of the Indian security forces. The peace committee even pointed out its annoyance towards the bombing of Aizawl town by the Indian air force jet fighters. Because of these views held by the Christian Peace Committee, representatives of Government of India accused the committee as pro-MNF. They were even regarded as “the overground voice of the underground.”¹³

The arrest of some of the MNF top leaders by the Indian forces created problems for the Christian Peace Committee and its Peace delegation. Members of the Peace Delegation were also arrested by the Indian security forces. Minutes of the Christian Peace Committee were also seized twice by the Indian military.¹⁴ Thus- *“their mission became ultimately stale to the eyes of both MNF and the Government of India and it was no longer effective as it ought to be”*¹⁵

In the meantime, Laldenga too resorted to find solution to Mizoram problem through peace talks with the Indian government. His first move towards peace talk with the Indian government was in April, 1969 when he sent Vanlalngaiia and R. Rozama to find ways for peace talks with the central Indian government evading the state government of Assam.¹⁶ The two agents could somehow meet M.V. Thomas, Asst. Director of S.I.B. on June 22, 1969 at Dholai through the Christian Peace Committee members, Rev. Zairema and Rev. Lalsawma.¹⁷ Even so, on their way back to the MNF president, they were arrested and jailed by the Assam police and they could not convey whatever message

they got to the MNF president. On December 18, 1971 Laldenga sent Lalnunmawia and R. Zamawia as “special envoys of the president” to act and speak on behalf of the “Government of Mizoram” [Mizoram Credentials, No. M-7/71/139, (MNF), dated December 18, 1971]. However, according to C. Nunthara “this should, perhaps, be regarded as a pretext by Laldenga to expose them to the security forces so that they may have a chance to get themselves surrendered to India.”¹⁸ Ultimately, the two did surrender themselves to the Indian authority.

III

Meanwhile, political leaders in Mizoram made all out efforts to facilitate peace talks between the MNF and Government of India. Mizoram was given the status of Union Territory in 1972. Mr. Mukherjee, the first Lieutenant Governor was convinced to try and initiate peace dialogue. At the initiative of the Lt. Governor, Malsawma Colney, chairman of the MNF National Emergency Committee, together with a few other MNF leaders were brought to Aizawl in the month of February, 1973 and had a round of talks with the Lt. Governor and political leaders of Mizoram. They could not come to any substantial agreement as Malsawma Colney did not regard them to be representatives of the Indian government. However, the political atmosphere in Mizoram became more conducive to peace. Unfortunately, the Lt. Governor was ambushed and wounded by the Mizo National Army while on official tour on March 10, 1973. This incident sullied the hitherto peaceful atmosphere and retarded the possibility of further peace talks.

Laldenga, at this point of time tried to find ways to initiate peace talks with India by sending Zoramthanga and Lalsangliana to Kabul. There was no positive response from the Indian embassy there and Zoramthanga was again sent for the same purpose. An arrangement was made for Laldenga's meeting with Indian government official in Geneva. On August 20, 1974, Laldenga reached Geneva and had discussions with Mr. Singhal, the Indian official. Laldenga, after the Geneva talks sent a letter to the Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi from Cologne, Germany saying

"In pursuance of these discussions, I have already written to you a letter mentioning therein about my willingness to discuss the solution of the problem within the constitution of India...I would like to put forth that our social, cultural and religious traditions and customs would necessitate some special safeguards...in order that I could contact my underground colleagues for injecting into them my belief and convictions so that they come round to my line of thinking..."¹⁹

Laldenga also made a request that a number of his aides be allowed passage to meet him in Germany. There was a long gap between Laldenga's letter to Indira Gandhi and New Delhi's nod in giving free passage to the MNF leaders, this was perhaps due to the Government of India's wanting to verify the influence and control Laldenga had over the MNF cadres.²⁰ During this gap of correspondence, Mizoram Peace Advisory Committee was formed on November 11, 1974 under the initiative of Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. The committee believed that it was important to facilitate dialogue between the MNF and the Indian government.

The killing of three top police officials of Mizoram on January 13, 1975 by the MNF cadres drastically curbed the enthusiasm of Peace Advisory Committee. Nonetheless, it continued to pursue its aim and met the Union Home Minister Mr. Brahmananda Reddy during his visit to Mizoram on January 21, 1975. The Government of India, apparently encouraged by the idea of the Peace Advisory Committee gave a safe passage to three MNF top leaders in November 1975 to meet Laldenga in Cologne, Germany.

On January 24, 1976, Laldenga, along with other three MNF leaders arrived New Delhi from Cologne. After a five-day meeting with the Indian Government officials including S.L. Khurana, Home secretary, S.K. Chibber, Lt. Governor of Mizoram and M.L. Kampani, joint secretary (Home), they arrived at an “agreement”. The MNF delegation acknowledged Mizoram as an integral part of India, agreed to lay down arms and accepted the settlement of Mizoram problem within the framework of the Indian constitution. Government of India agreed to give facilities to the members of the delegation to hold meeting with 25 other MNF leaders at Calcutta during the second week of March, 1976 to discuss upon the “agreement” made between the two parties. Accordingly, the National Emergency Convention of the MNF also known as “Calcutta Convention” was held at Bullyganj, Calcutta during March 24 to April 1, 1976. After the convention Laldenga, with six other MNF leaders had a series of discussions with the Indian officials. On the first day of July, an agreement was signed between the two, Laldenga, on behalf of the MNF and S.L. Khurana on Indian Government’s behalf. At the end of the statement it was mentioned that “it was agreed to continue the talks further.”²¹ There was a general enthusiasm

and hope as many thought that this statement was the “peace accord”. The MNF hardliners felt that it contained obligations only for the MNF and none for the Indian government and were not contented with the contents of the “agreement”. Thus difficulties arose over the implementation and continuation of further talks. The “National Emergency” declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the beginning of 1977 and the subsequent imposition of “President’s Rule” in Mizoram in May, 1977 and again in November 1978 enormously hampered and delayed the peace process.

IV

Changing of guards in the Indian Parliament, right after the lifting of “national emergency” in March 1977 resulted into the further withdrawal of the MNF from peace talks. The Janata party, that came to power in March 1977 general elections with Morarji Desai as the prime minister, even so resumed talks with Laldenga, ended up with bitter conclusion. The MNF president accused the Janata government of not favouring honourable settlement but wanted to make a settlement dishonouring the MNF and underground government.²² Zoramthanga, the general secretary of the MNF, who was on his way to Arrakan from New Delhi was detained by the Indian Intelligence officials in Calcutta for some days and then sent back to New Delhi on 25th March, 1978. There was leadership turmoil in the MNF, but was soon resolved with the “uncontested re-election” (in absentia) of Laldenga as the president on April 19, 1979. However, in a little while, Laldenga was arrested and imprisoned by the Indian Government in Tihar Jail on 8th July, 1979.²³

The Indian Government was also not smoothly functioning as there were differences between Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, the prime minister and the home minister respectively. Lok Sabha was dissolved on 23 August, 1979 and the interim government was taken care of by Charan Singh as prime minister. During this regime, Laldenga and his son Danmawia were bailed out from prison by Sainghaka and Lalthanhawla on 29 October, 1979 at the instance of S.B. Chavan, the then home minister of India, which had brought back peace talks between the MNF and the Indian Government on track.

When the Congress(I) was voted back to power in January, 1980 elections, G. Parthasarathy, a veteran journalist and a diplomat was entrusted with the responsibility of negotiating peace with Laldenga, on Government of India's behalf. Laldenga also appointed Aichhinga as his emissary. Military operations were also suspended in Mizoram by the Indian Government. At this juncture, Indira Gandhi, the prime minister of India in her reply to Dr. Roṭhuama's²⁴ letter wrote-

I do hope that the political initiative that we have taken will bring lasting peace to Mizoram. We are seeking the cooperation of all right thinking people in our efforts...It is only then that the people in these areas, while preserving their cultural identity can share in the nation's progress and take their rightful place in the Indian scene.²⁵

G. Parthasarathy's mission did not bear much fruit yet, as the People's Conference party which was in power in Mizoram Union Territory Legislature had acrimonious

relationship with Laldenga's MNF and also perhaps due to certain other demands made by Laldenga to the Indian Government. The Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee, embarked on a campaign for attaining peace and normalcy, persuaded the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that- with her help, the Congress party in Mizoram would be able to achieve the settlement of Mizoram problem. Mizoram Church Leaders Committee met with Indira Gandhi while she was on election campaign in Aizawl on 16th April, 1984. Mrs. Gandhi told the Church leaders that Indian government is always ready to talk with the MNF and the door is never closed for any talk. She, at the same time, admitted her resentment over the fact that the last talks between Laldenga and the Indian government had to end abruptly and also suggested that any attempt to start any further talks should come from Laldenga himself.²⁶ Rev. Lalsawma and Upa Chalhna who went to London as part of the Mizo Gospel Team Choir in June, 1984 impressed upon Laldenga their assessment of political scene in Mizoram and the wishes of the people in general. They also informed him about the discussion they had with Mrs. Gandhi. About a month-after, Laldenga made proposal to the Indian government for further talks.²⁷

The Congress party won the 1984 assembly elections in Mizoram and Lalthanhawla became the chief minister in May 1984. At the initiatives of both the church leaders and the new Congress government in Mizoram, peace talks were about to resume as Laldenga returned to New Delhi from London on 29th October, 1984. Unfortunately, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was shot dead the very next day by her own security guards and Laldenga's peace mission obviously was halted. It was a great setback for the recommencement of

negotiations slated to be held on 30th October, 1984. Indira Gandhi's assassination changed the general mood of the country, particularly in Delhi where people got emotionally charged leading to a dreadful communal riots. The shift in the attention continued for almost six months, without any tangible step being taken by the government in Delhi to have a dialogue with the MNF leader.

As nothing was forthcoming from the Indian Government, the Church leaders thought it proper to put some pressure on the government. They sent a delegation of six members of the Church Leaders Committee to meet the new Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and had a meeting with him on 12th April, 1985.²⁸ Lalthanhawla, chief minister of Mizoram, on his part made an all-out effort for resumption of peace talks. Peace process finally resumed in mid-1985 and after a series of meetings, a Memorandum of Settlement, also known as "Mizo Accord" was signed between the Mizo National Front and the Indian Government on 30th June, 1986.

After the signing of the "Peace Accord" and as per an agreement made between the MNF and the Congress (I) party, Lalthanhawla relinquished the seat of Mizoram chief minister followed by all his council of ministers. On the 21st August, 1986, an interim government was inducted with Laldenga, president of the MNF as the chief minister of Mizoram.

Conclusion

Protagonists of various types played diverse roles in initiating and bringing back peace and harmony in the state. The first visible rift in the MNF that shook the very foundation of

the movement was the conflict of approaches between its president and the educated group within. The heads of the Indian Government representatives of the Union Territory of Mizoram, the Lt. Governors, consequently, played dominant roles in embarking on peace initiatives. The political leaders from Mizoram, unanimously or otherwise made their presence felt throughout the peace process. The Church Leaders role, on the other hand, can always be seen as the central thread in initiating, routing and determining the peace process till its signing. However, widening of networking among different church denominations proved highly commendable as when the issue was single-handedly taken up by the church denomination with the highest membership, it impacted significantly yet limited. The Citizens' Committee, though included membership from other denominations, it was spearheaded by the single largest church and its influence was, more or less, felt within Aizawl District, the reason, however, could have been because of the specific agenda of the committee. The Christian Peace Committee, the joint platform of the biggest church denominations in both north and south Mizoram had a much wider and expanded influence than the earlier initiative. The ultimate peace was yet routed and channeled by the *Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee* (Mizoram Church Leaders Committee) where almost all the leaders of the institutionalized church denominations put their concerted efforts. The persistent presence of the religious front-runners throughout the course of the journey towards peace, and its channeling of the dialogues between conflicting parties that resulted into the fruition of Peace Accord exemplify how the ecclesiastical network provides intellectual and moral leadership.

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ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING : THE SOMBRE SIDE OF MIZORAM

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BY a critical definition, ‘drug’ are psychoactive substances and commodities which for a variety of reasons since 1900 have been construed as health and societal dangers by modern states, medical authorities and regulatory cultures and which are now globally prohibited in production, use and sale.¹ The illicit drug problem can be divided into three categories: first, those illicit drug that are either produced or processed from natural plant products such as opium poppy: opium, morphine and heroin; secondly, synthetically produced illicit drugs such as amphetamine; and thirdly, psychoactive pharmaceutical drugs that become illicit as a result of being diverted from licit uses or purposes.²

Mizoram has been plunged by a series of internal and external threat ever since India’s independence and the formation of Mizo District. The porous borders of Mizoram have harness all sorts of illegal activities, which hampered the security of Mizoram. Being on the periphery of the Golden Triangle, Mizoram remained prone to a host of illegal activities, most

notably drug trafficking. Despite an uninterrupted peace in Mizoram since 1986, criminals and militants have used the State as a conduit for illegal activities alike due to its porous international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh.

It is believed that drug trafficking in Mizoram dated back to 1982³ although the illegal trade in such goods could be much early and remain unnoticed by the concerned authorities. From 1989, the pattern of drugs abuse underwent significant change. From illicit and expensive heroin purchased from Myanmar to cheaper legally available and less potent medicinal drugs such as proxyvon, morphine, ganja, pethadine, diazepam, nitrosum, phensedyl, corex, alprozelum, ketmin, etc.⁴ But, the banned on the manufactured of Spasmo Proxyvon/Parvon Spas (the main misused drugs during the 1990s) by the Government of India in 2013 has a negative impact on the abusers who then turns towards Heroin as a substitute, which has largely increased the inflow of heroin from Myanmar. Moreover, the existence of opium cultivation in the eastern and western parts of Mizoram adds to its enhancement. The destruction work executed by the Excise Department shows a rapid decline in the cultivation of opium, which was common during the 1980s. The last destruction was done in 1989 by the Excise department.⁵ Since then, illicit cultivation of opium poppy plant in Mizoram utterly ended. Despite the efforts taken by the Excise Department to eradicate opium cultivation and smuggling, the illegal flow of opium continued on a low scale.

It has been observed that Heroin or No. 4 has been the most abuse drug in Mizoram and Heroin produced in the 'Golden

Triangle', especially Myanmar is trafficked into India through the India-Myanmar border into the states of Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland from Bhamo, Lashio and Mandalay. The most important route is the one which starts from Mandalay, continues to Monya and Kalewa and then bifurcates to enter India at two points. The first moves northwards, enters Moreh in Manipur through Tamu and travels thence to Imphal and Kohima via National Highway-39. The second branch moves southwards and enters Champhai in Mizoram.⁶ From Zokhawthar (Champhai), an intermediary received most of the consignment who then distributes it to different parts of Mizoram. Occasionally, such contraband goods instead of halting at Zokhawthar moves directly to the city, which was then sold to aficionados. Infrequently, the commercial quantity (above 250 grams) would reach Silchar and then to Metropolitan cities where it was adulterated and sold for a higher price.⁷ According to the records of YMA, about 80 percent of controlled substances mostly drugs originated from Myanmar where Zokhawthar in Champhai remains the main transit point for such markets while few arrived at Vaphai in Champhai District and from Moreh in Manipur. Apart from Myanmar, the Bangladesh border also served as drug trafficking route. Reverse trafficking of precursor chemicals from India to Myanmar takes place through the same route.

Big operator from Aizawl, Silchar, Guwahati and Shillong worked through the local agents at Champhai, Vaphai, Khawzawl, etc., along the border. It has been stated that people in public life and administration, educated unemployed youth and common people are involved in such illicit drugs trade.⁸ Although vast literature highlighted large

and durable organisations known in different terms throughout the world such as Cartel, Mafia, Syndicate, Tong, Brotherhood, Triad, Secret Society, and so on.⁹ In the case of Mizoram, individuals, flexible and less durable alliances team up to carry on such trade on drugs. Likewise, the majority of people arrested for small-scale drug selling are not gangsters or organized criminals. They are people who are exploited to do the risky work of street selling, dependent drug users trying to raise money for their own supply, or couriers coerced or intimidated into taking drugs across borders. As borders represent a staging point, passengers as well as goods carriers were mostly exploited to deliver such illicit drugs to their destinations. These people are generally prosecuted with no impact on the scale or profitability of the market and the key players continued their operation.

The usual modus operandi include keeping in bags along with other food products, hiding in shoes or suit cases, soap cases, toys, cosmetics, children's cycles, watermelon, women slippers, pumpkin, etc. Drug trafficking by way of concealing in postal parcels and courier parcels were also a preferred technique as the cost of transportation was minimal and risk of interdiction was less. It has been observed that since 1995, all seizures of heroin is packed using transparent polythene and further kept in soap cases made with various colours. The original packets, which originate from the Golden Triangle, were known to be of a larger quantity, about 1 kg. bearing certain trademarks or brand names such as Double Globe, Double Lion etc. Based on an interrogation of arrested persons, it was strongly suspected that such original (larger packets) were re-packaged into smaller packets weighing approximately 14-16 grams and kept in plastic soap

cases by some organised gangs of either Tahan/Kaletwa or Mandalay and the smaller packages were then trafficked into Mizoram.¹⁰ Such smaller packages were locally termed 'Hawng'. The 'Hawng' was again repacked into Penicillin glass container called 'Can' which is then replenished anew into smaller Insulin cover. This Insulin cover (Chhin sen) is then sold to aficionados throughout the state.

Trafficking of drugs has reached a new level with the discovery of Methamphetamine (Meth). 'Pseudo-Ephedrine' (drugs used for a cough and cold medicine) called 'Khehpum' by the local people – the drugs used for creating Methamphetamine have been in transit frequently. Such Precursor chemicals are trafficked from India into Myanmar to cater to the demands of numerous mobile laboratories manufacturing heroin and Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS).

Illegal trafficking of Pseudo-Ephedrine is believed to have started in 2009 and came to limelight in public in 2013. Pseudoephedrine was first seized in Mizoram in June 2011, where approximately two crores of such tablets were seized near the border of Mizoram by Mizoram State Excise, Narcotic Control Bureau and Assam Rifles.¹¹ The adulterated Methamphetamine, which was smuggled and caught from time to time is believed to be designed for the Metropolitan cities and foreign countries. In fact, Mizoram has become a transit point of Methamphetamine smuggling from Burma to major destinations being Europe and America.¹²

Undoubtedly, Mizoram has become a centre of transit point for various illegal activities. Further, as drug trafficking is both

complex and sophisticated, it facilitates other organised criminal enterprises such as human trafficking, gun running, money laundering, etc., all of which use the same networks and routes. Moreover, modern communication technologies give drug Mafias efficient and safe remote control over their drug trafficking empires.

For the majority of people, the most fascinating aspects of the history and work of the Customs and Excise are those which relate to smuggling/trafficking. Indeed, the Central as well as the State government has stepped up to check such illegal drugs trafficking. Traffic in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was launched by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs on October 24th, 2004. Mizoram has received Rs. 2,34,89,864/- from 2004 – 2015 which is among the highest among the Indian states.¹³ During the year 2016-2017, Mizoram received Rs. 33,48,000/- to strengthen the enforcement capabilities of the State machinery working in the field of Drug Law Enforcement.¹⁴ Apart from government agencies, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) indeed played a crucial role to check the flow of illegal drugs and has made a significant seizure. From February 2018 to June 2018, the Drug seized amount to Rs. 4,16,00,000/-¹⁵ which clearly signifies the huge flow of illicit drugs across Mizoram borders.

Drug policies were initially developed and implemented in the hope of achieving outcomes in terms of a reduction in harms to individuals and society – less crime, better health, and more economic and social development. However, we have primarily been measuring our success in the war on drugs by entirely different measures – those that report on

processes, such as the number of arrests, the amounts seized, or the harshness of punishments. These indicators may tell us how tough we are being, but they do not tell us how successful we are in improving the health and welfare of mankind. Besides, while seizures conducted throughout the region attest to the existence of various and numerous smuggling and trafficking activities, the scope, diversity, nature and mechanisms of the overall phenomenon are far from being satisfactorily studied and understood. In fact, this condition owes largely to the relative failure of concerned authorities and bodies, both at the national and international level, to monitor illegal drugs trade across national borders. Indeed, the huge flow of illicit drugs in the hills accounts to absent of proper invigilating authority at the border areas. Enlarging security force and equipping them with modern surveillance materials to check the illegal flow of such goods is the need of the hour to safeguard Mizoram from such threat.

Illicit trafficking of drugs can affect the internal structure of a society by creating new actors, power bases, and patterns of consumption and can result to extreme and instance loss of state control. Thus, illicit drugs are an attack on the integrity, character, and health of the individual. It is a threat to national security as it had created disorder on the social life of its citizens. Easy availability of drugs, stress arising from socio-political unrest and frustration born out from lack of employment opportunities for the increased educated youth were often cited as the major causes of drug abuse. Today, the drug culture is very wide and extensive and has become a serious problem eating into the very fabric of our society. On account, the availability and easy access of

narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the state has threatened the social, economic and environmental security of Mizoram. Given these challenges, protecting the borders against violations by traffickers becomes critical. At the same time, reducing the demand for drugs in domestic markets is also essential.

Several transit countries along trafficking routes are consequently showing evidence of increasing drug abuse and consumption and despite years of drug suppression and prevention efforts, the cycle of drug trafficking and drug abuse continues. If allowed to remain unabated, the menace will considerably destroy the quality of life and hamper social, economic and cultural development of Mizoram.

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THE DEMAND OF THE MIZO : FROM HILL STATE TO INDEPENDENCE

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Introduction

DURING the colonial period, the British administrators acquired many of the Mizo chief's rights and privileges which reduced the position of the Mizo chiefs. Therefore, the Mizo chiefs only acts as an agency of the British in their own village and all the powers were vested in the hands of the British. Meanwhile, the Govt. of India Act, 1935 has excluded the Lushai Hills from Indian Union which alienated the Mizo people from the mainstream of India. Thus many of the Mizo began to feel that 'we are not Indian'. Mizo has different distinct cultures, traditions etc. which was far different from Indian culture. So there was a need to formulate the future of the Mizo hills in respect of administration.

Thus, there was political consciousness among the Mizo which later resulted the formation of political parties in Mizoram.

Political Background : Demand of Greater Autonomy

On the eve of the independence of India from Britain, there rose a question over the future administration of the country and particularly the excluded areas as declared by the Government of India Act, 1935.¹ The Act excluded such areas in all legislations and executions meaning which such excluded areas should have no representatives in all Federal and Provincial Legislative Assemblies of the British India.

Being located in the remotest area of Assam province, the Mizo district was economically and politically backward in comparing with other districts of Assam. Politically, many of the educated Mizo began to have interested in politics and then initiate to form the political party in 1946.² Thus, the leaders and prominent citizens of the Mizo felt the need to formulate for future administration of the Mizo district and provided concrete ideas to the authority for this purpose. To them, the prevailing District Conference is not enough for their future administration.

In view of the disadvantageous of the District Conference, the Mizo leaders felt the need of greater autonomy for the district.³ Accordingly, a number of petitions on this regard were submitted to the authority. For instance, when the Bordoloi Committee visited Aizawl during April 17-18, 1947, the demand of greater autonomy was submitted by the Mizo Union leaders. To them, it was an autonomy in which the rights, customs, and traditions of the Mizo should be protected and of protection against exploitation from outside. They also demanded that the Mizo in living in Lushai Hills, Manipur, Cachar and Chittagong districts should be put under one administration i.e. under Assam (Thanhranga 2007 :36).⁴

Apart from Mizo Union party, the demand of political autonomy was also made by some individuals before the Bordoloi Committee. For instance, Rev Zairema advocated the local autonomy with full self-determination within the Assam province (Thanhranga 2007 : 76-77) and he was the first person to use the term 'autonomy' in the case of Mizoram (Prasad 1994:6) while R. Thanhlira demanded much autonomy as possible for the Lushai hills(Prasad 1994:6). The autonomy of the hills as advocated by Rev Zairema, would have National Council with supreme power to make laws and executive authority for enforcement of the laws. He suggests that the Mizo should be given full self-determination within the province of Assam; and there should division of powers and functions between the province of Assam and Mizoram. He also suggests that the form of government shall be the purest form of democracy. Meanwhile, HK Bawihchhuaka (Prasad 1994:6) also advocated that the Lushai Hills should be given a widest possible self-determination and his proposal includes the amalgamation of the Mizo territories (all areas inhabited by the Mizo) into one administrative unit under Assam province. He also said that there should be a clear division of powers and functions between the Government of Assam and the Mizo National Council.

Thus, in view of the the political situation of the Mizo hills, the Bordoloi Committee (Committee of North East Frontier Tribal Areas and Assam Excluded and partially Excluded Areas, a Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly, finally recommended the formation of autonomous district council in Mizoram. Accordingly, the

Mizo District Council was inaugurated on April 25, 1952 by Bishnu Ram Medhi, then Chief Minister of Assam.

Hill state to Mizo State

While working of the District Council was in progress, the hill leaders were not satisfied on the powers granted to them by the government. Meanwhile the demand for separate hill state from Assam was underway, some of the Mizo political leaders began to took keen interest in the movement. But some, particularly the leaders of Mizo Union party were divided on these issues. Later, the Mizo Union decided to support the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) for separate hill state without liquidating the party or merge with other party (Khuma 2001 :203). In this connection, T. Raatan highlights the situation of how the Mizo leaders turned their attention towards hill state, below:

“...but when they felt that the Assam Government, whom they had been looking to for their own sustenance, became unappreciative of the workings of the Mizo District Council, which they were running, the emergent elites then came up and joined the Hill State Movement in the early fifties. Again, the hill state movement also did not very well suit their attempt to hold power because such movement was highly broadbased and their power equations with the other hill leaders were poor (Raatan 2004 :242).”

The Mizo leaders then actively involved in the movement and joined All Party Hill Leader Conference (APHLC), which was formed in 1960 following the introduction of official language bill in the Assam Legislative Assembly on June 22, 1960. Meanwhile, a contrasting view on the hill state

movement among the Mizo Union leaders was witnessed in one of the secret meetings of the party councilor in which the party policy on whether to choose separate hill state or separate Mizo state was to finalise. It is said that Ch.Saprawnga was in favour of a separate hill state while Ch.Chhunga spoke in favour of Mizo state. Likewise, R. Thanhlira, Chairman of the APHLC Council of Action expressed in favour of forming separate Administrative Region with Mizo District, North Cachar District, Manipur and Tripura states. However after a long deliberation, they could not arrive at any concrete decision on this regards (Sangkima 2004:65).

However, a procession was held at Aizawl observing 'Protest Day' against the passing of the official Language Bill of the Assam Legislative Assembly on October 14, 1960 in which the Mizo Union party and EITU were participated and expressed their unwillingness to accept Assamese as official language and demanded a separate hill state. Meanwhile, the Mizo Union proposed Federal Hill state in which equal numbers of MLA from each hill district but rejected by the APHLC in its third meeting at Haflong. Furthermore, officially the Mizo Union resolved to support the Hill state movement in its Special Assembly during November 2-3, 1960. At the same time the EITU Unit of Mizo District gave its all efforts for separate hill state and fully cooperates with the APHLC as it was formed for this purpose only. They also contact the leaders of the PL Regional Council to get support of the people to their demand for a separate state (Sangkima 2004:65).

Although the Mizo Union party was seen actively participated in the hill state movement, but it was only in

name. This is indicating that some of the leaders of the Union were not interested in the hill state but the Mizo state. At last, the Special assembly of the Mizo Union held on June 10, 1963 discussed about the hill state movement which was attended by some of the APHLC leaders to negotiate with the Union leaders for their continuing support of the movement. In this assembly, particularly Ch.Saprawnga, then Chief Executive Member(CEM) of Mizo District Council and HK Bawihchhuaka, then President of Mizo Union and Chairman of MDC, stands in favour of a hill state by saying the following points(Saprawnga 2007 :135-136)–

- a) Reservation of post in Police service in the Hill state would be mean for the Mizo as other hill peoples were not interest in the service
- b) It may be easy to have hill state than Mizo state

But the pro-state movement could easily tackle the above points in the assembly. Then, finally the Assembly resolved to adopt the Mizo state as a new policy of the Union which automatically closed the chapter of the hill state movement and cut its connection with the AHPLC by passing the resolution as below:

“ Indian Government not conceded to our demand for a separate Hill State, though we had been fighting so long. Therefore, this Special Assembly of Mizo Union, after a prolong deliberations on the issue of the party policy, unanimously resolved to adopt ‘MIZORAM STATE’ as party policy. Party Headquarters will find out ways and means to materialize it.” (Saprawnga 2007 :135-136)

Accordingly, the Mizo Union has submitted a petition to the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru regarding the formation of Mizo state. (Chhuanvawra 2008 :80) In view of the adoption of the policy of Mizo state by the Mizo Union, Ch. Saprawnga says that ‘we(pro-hill state) are much beaten by the supporters of the ‘Mizo state’ in the assembly, so it is difficult to estimate that the Mizo state was surely attain. So, we feel very despair... ’ (Saprawnga 2007 :136).

Thus the Mizo Union leaders decided that ‘Direct Action’ may be launch unless Mizo State is given by the Government of Assam before the end of 1964’. But the issues of ‘Direct Action’ creates disunity among them which led the resignation of Ch.Saprawnga from Chief Executive Member(CEM) of the Mizo District Council. Thus, the Mizo Union could freely launch the movement for ‘Mizo state’ and is interesting to note that a song has been composed for this purpose(Khuma 2001:219).

Mizo Independence movement

As cited earlier, there arose divergent views among the Mizo political leaders on the future of Mizo hills. Some preferred to join Burma instead of India (Sangkima 2004 : 8) while others prefer to remain as a part of India Union.⁵ Meanwhile, some sections of the Mizo favour self-determination rather than remaining a part of Indian union. For instance, it was when the public meeting was held at Aizawl (at Bengali Theatre Hall) on February 21, 1947, that the motion for independent of the Mizo hills was passed, as follows –

‘mi tam fe in ngaihnan hrang hrang an sawi hnuin leh hriatthiam loh zawng in zawhna leh in hrilhfiahna te a awm hnu in ban phara Vote lakna a awm a, heti ang

hian thu a tlu a ni. “Keini Mizote chu mahni a ro in relin mahni ke ngei in kan ding tur a ni” tih a ni. (chu chu Independent tihna a ni).”(after a long deliberations, the meeting unanimously resolved that ‘we, the Mizo should stand on our own feet and we should have self-determination i.e. independent).⁶

The meeting was attended by about 200 peoples from various walks of life including church worker, teachers, prominent citizen etc. The meeting was chaired by Pu Sainghinga, Assistant Superintendent and convened by Pu Pachhunga, Pu PS Dahrawka and Pu Hmartawnphunga.⁷ It discussed about the future of the Mizo hills after the withdrawal of the British and is indicated that the meeting desires for self-government i.e. independent which would be the only safeguard from annihilation by the larger communities, instead of putting the Mizo hills under Indian Union.

‘ tin, a reng reng thu an keini Mizote chu Kumpinu Sorkar hnuaiyah chauh lo chuan tu Sorkar hnuaiyah mah kan la awm ngai si lova, eng vangin nge Kumpinu Sorkar a kal avanga India Sorkar lo ding thar tur hnuaiyah chuan kan kuna kan luh mai ang? Keini chu Vai nen chuan hnam hrang daih, in an na nei hlek lo, hnam hlawmkhat fel hlak, tawngkhat hman thei ngat leh pian chhuahna lam pawh thuhmun vek kan ni si a, eng vang mahin Vai Sorkar hnuaiyah kan in barh mai tur a ni lo. Mahni ngeiin kan inti hrangin kan in bawh hrang tur a ni. Kan hnam zalenna leh thawvanna te kan Mizo nihna te hi chelh tlata humhalh kan duh phawt chuan tu bawih ah mah kan in tulut tur a ni lo.”⁸ (the Mizo never submit themselves except only the British, what reasons shall the Mizo submit into the Indian government after the

British regime ends. The Mizo are quite different from Indian peoples in respect of culture, habits, customs, language etc. They should be given independence and separate from the administration of India Union.)

Meanwhile, the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) party which was founded on July 5, 1947, have an objectives of joining Burma instead of Indian Union (Baruah 1992 :195). To them, the Mizo would have better and bright future if they opt out of India and join Burma. C. Lalthlengliana makes a few highlights the reasons which later steered the party to opt for Burma as follows -

‘it was chiefly because this small Lushai hills was not the only Mizo settlement, but also in Burma, whose kinship and appearance of these people were more similar to the Mizo besides the other Mizo settlements of Manipur, Tripura and East Bengal of India. They also once again hoped the old same policy to unify the whole Mizo settlements under one administration. The party therefore evidently aimed to join Burma, which they believed to be the nearest solutions’(Sangkima 2004 :8).

Therefore, the UMFO party prefers Burma to India as they were convinced that they should be comfortable more in Burma than India due to their(Mizo) closer affinity with the Burmese people(Keihawla 1992 :195) .

In case of Mizo Union party, when Assam Congress leaders such as Gopinath Bordoloi, Sir BN Rao and JJM Nichols Roy arrived in Aizawl on the eve of India Independence in 1946, to discuss the future of Lushai Hills. They consulted political leaders of Mizoram and persuaded them to join India which

later convinced the Mizo Union leaders to join India (Keihawla 1992 :195) and then the party decided to have 'full self-determination within the province of Assam'⁹ instead of independence or joining Burma. Though the political leaders of Assam advised the Mizo leaders to join India, they also gave alternatives other than joining India. For instance, Sir BN Rao when addressing the public at Kulikawn (Aizawl) says that 'the Mizo people would also choose independence if they wish' (Biakchunga 1996 :61).

In case of the questions on independence, though the Mizo Union was against independence, but there were differences of opinion among the leaders on this regard. For instance, R. Vanlawma, the founder of Mizo Union party, favour Independence by saying that 'we must govern ourselves. We have enough supplies; we will be able to produce a sufficiency of things. Now is the time to fight for independence' (Vumson 1987 :254 . On the other hand, Vanthuama, who was against independence, said as follows-

'it is impossible to fight for independence now. If we look around us we see the 'Darwin Theory', the more powerful swallowing up the less powerful. If and when we are more powerful, we will swallow the Indians, and if they are more powerful than us they will swallow us. Besides, if we are independence, where will we get salt, and iron ore to make our farming equipment, and how are we going to make money ?" (Vumson 1987 :254)

Thus, it is indicated that the leaders of Mizo Union were divided on the subject of independence, in which majority of them are in favour of joining India while others favoured independence. Interestingly, C. Pahlira, once the leader of

the party also revealed his ideas that ‘God will give us independence at the right time; we cannot have it by means of violence/fighting.’(Pahlira : 2011) Likewise, many of them believed that ‘after a numbers of years, we may have a chance to attain independence from Indian Union’. So they decided to join India first for the betterment of Mizoram.

Formation of MNF and Declaration of Independence

The Mizo National Front(MNF) with having ‘For God and our Country’¹⁰ as preamble, was formed on October 22, 1961 with Laldenga as Chairman and R. Vanlawma as Secretary General.¹¹ The party chooses ‘self-determination’ as its aim.¹² Soon after, the MNF party gained immense popularity within a short span of time and were confident enough to contest the elections of District council and Assam Legislative Assembly. In short, the MNF Party has submitted memorandum to the Prime Minister on October 30, 1965 demanding ‘self –determination of the Mizo’.

Finally, the Mizo National Front then declared independence for Mizoram against Indian Union on March 1, 1966 appealing to all independent states to recognize independent Mizoram. As a result, the Government of Assam declared the Mizo district to be a disturbed area under the Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955 and counter-insurgency measure were soon taken.(Hluna 2004 :78)

Factors for the declaration of independence

- a) As cited earlier, many of the Mizo feel that they are very strange to Indian and never accept themselves as Indian. The MNF believed that ‘the Mizo people had not been able to feel at home with Indians or in India

nor have they been able to feel that their joys and sorrows have really ever been shared by India. They do not therefore, feel Indian.’¹³

- b) Different political ideology – Hill state, Mizo state, Independence. - transition period. The idea of attaining independence from India was possessed by many of the political leaders of the Mizo hills instead of joining India or Burma,
- c) Poor developmental works of the government failed to satisfy the people which led maximum support of MNF’s independence policy
- d) Nationalism and patriotism inspired by the political consciousness led the cry for political self-determination among some section of the Mizo

Concluding remarks

Thus, there is indication that the ideas of independence or political self-determination or separation from Indian Union was possessed by most of the political leaders of the Mizo hills, but the way they wish to achieve was vary from party to party. It is also evident that there is a ‘desire for more political autonomy or self-govern/rule’ among the political leaders of the Mizo hills. For instance, they demand greater autonomy from District Conference, District council from Hill state, then separate Mizo state to independence/self-determination.

In view of the political situation of the Mizo hills, the period when MNF declare/fought independence may be appropriate as there was a thirst for more political autonomy among the Mizo leaders during those days.

Notes and References

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2. With the initiation of R. Vanlawma, the first political party in Mizoram i.e. Mizo Commoners Union' Party was established on April 9, 1946 at Aizawl. It was later renamed as Mizo Union party.
3. The Block Officers Conference of the Mizo Union held at Sialsuk during April 4-5, 1947 resolved that 'Mizoram may have District Autonomy and attached to Assam Province' along with other resolutions. Also see P. Lalnithanga, *Political Developments in Mizoram*, Aizawl, 2006, p.23.)
4. Also, see the resolutions passed by the Lakhipur Conference of the Mizo Union during November 21-22, 1946 at Lakhipur, Cachar District, Assam.
5. The Mizo Union party demanded full self-determination with the province of Assam, see *Memorandum* submitted to His Majesty Government, Government of India and its Constituent Assembly through the Advisory Sub-Committee by the Mizo Union party in 1947.
6. 'Mizo ram din dan tur ngaihtuah hona Vantlang Inkhawm' Resolution, February 21, 1947 at Bengali Theatre Hall, Aijal.
7. *ibid.*
8. *ibid.*
9. Memorandum submitted to His Majesty's Government of India and its Constituent Assembly through the Advisory Committee by the Mizo Union Party in 1947.

10. Constitution of MNF Party, Published by MNF General Headquarters, Aizawl, 2004p.6.
11. The other members of Office Bearers were– A. Rohnuna (Joint Secretary), Vanlalliana (Treasurer), Kailianchhunga (Executive members), H. Zirliana (Executive Members), C. Hermana (Executive members) and Lairokunga (Executive members). See R. Zamawia, *Zofate Zin kawngah*, Aizawl, 2007,pp.169-170.
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CONSTRUCTING THE HMAR IDENTITY THROUGH LITERATURE : A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

LITERATURE can be defined as the entire body of writings of a specific language, period, people, etc. It comprises writings such as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest comprises the basic characteristics or the essential features.¹ At the same time *Identity* can be referred to as who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others.²

The Hmars were believed to be among the earliest Settlers of the present Mizoram. The places they once settled still bear the names of the Hmar clans. For instance, *Thiek/Thiak, Darngawn, Vankal, Khawzawl, Zote, Khangbur, Lawihmun, Ngur, Khawbung, Chawnchhim*, etc are still known by that name even today.³ However, after the influx of the *Lusei*, insecurity and inter-tribal feud forced some of the them to moved westward and northward and thus, finding themselves living in the fringes of the present Assam, Tripura,

Manipur and Mizoram.⁴ As such, the studying of any aspects of the Hmar culture in isolation becomes next to impossible. For instance, the Hmar of Mizoram was no less effected by the events or phenomenon connected with the Hmars of Assam, Manipur and *vice-versa*. In fact, the so-called state boundaries served insignificant in comparisons with the cohesiveness by virtue of sharing specific cultural traits in the form of common theory of origin, common language, common belief system, etc. The missionaries were credited with spear heading of Western System of Education and the subsequent introduction of the Hmar language into writing. They are in fact the first one to comprehend essentiality of literacy for the Hmars since the Bible and Hymns book served as the sources of inspiration for their new found faith, being able to read and understand them was vital for the spread and growth of their new faith.⁵ Thus, henceforth there was no turning back towards the development of Vernacular Literature and the ensuing demands for the realization of minority protection status considered as their fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

Towards Identity Formation through Vernacular Literature

The first known orthography of the Hmar language was the translation of the biblical *Prodigal Son* in 1904.⁶ This was before the penetration of Christianity among the purely Hmar ethnic group. One supposition was that the missionaries get assistance from one of the first convert named, *Khuma*, who happens to be from the *Hmar Khawzawl* clan and was known to have visited *Senvon*, *Leisen* and *Parbung* to preached the gospel in around 1914.⁷ However, the prominence of *Zote* (one of the Hmar Clan) diction such as *bak-ding* instead of

Fak-ding (a situation in want of food) proposed another theory, that *Kuma*, a *Zote* from *Rengkai* who had completed Lower Primary in 1902 from Aizawl must have assisted the missionaries.⁸ Nevertheless, the recognition of the distinctiveness of the Hmar dialect by the missionaries was noteworthy.

The unanimously accepted literary language of the Hmar today is what was formally known as the *Khawsak Tawng* (Eastern dialect). It is a semi-tonal language where the meaning of a word was influenced by the tone and the accent.⁹ The grass roots of the formation and development of this particular language undoubtedly goes to the missionaries and the early Christian converts. The Hmars were a late bloomer when it comes to education. They were exposed to it only after the arrival of the missionaries in the Lushai hills and their subsequent opening of the educational institutions. That too, in the initial stage, adopted text books written in the *Lusei* language and used the *Lusei* language as the medium of instruction.

The arrival of Rev. F. J. Sandy and his wife in March, 1914 in the Lushai Hills could be said to have laid the foundation of the Hmar Vernacular Literatures. Although they might not be the first to be able to differentiated the Hmars, Ralte or Lusei languages, definitely they were the first who took action towards the '*gospel in one's own dialect*'. With the assistance of persons like *Thanga* and *Thangkehup*, F. J. Sandy translated the Gospel according to St. Mark in the Hmar language, which was later on Published by the Bible Society of India in 1920. In spite of some elements of opposition, the translation of St. Mark and other subsequent

development in this aspects led to the unprecedented development of the Hmar vernacular literatures. Within a span of three years, the *Hmar Kristian Hla Bu* (a devotional hymn in Hmar) was published in 1923, which was reprinted over and over again. 500 copies were reprinted and enlarged in 1928. In 1937, 20000 copies were reprinted again and enlarged containing 200 hymns. It was enlarged with the hymns totaling to 308 in 1945 after the Second World War came to an end comprising of 4000 copies. The translated New Testament in the Hmar language was published by the Bible Society of India in 1945.¹⁰ After a series of re-edition, the *Hmar Kristian Hla Bu* had been renamed the *Kristian Hla Bu (Tonic Solfa)*, published by the Hmar Christian Musical Society which serve as a devotional hymn book of the Hmar Christian even to this day. The latest edition was first published in 1999, 2003 and 2011 with 5000, 3000 and 5000 copies respectively. It contained roughly 455 hymns.¹¹

An element of the concept of cultural imperialism¹² or something that amounts to an attempt of cultural assimilation was visible concerning the actions displayed by some native missionaries and leaders of the Mission among the Hmars. For instance, there was a concern over the employing of a language other than the Lusei language in all matters related to the missions. To that end, all Assembly/Presbytery resolutions were recorded in the Lusei language, the new converts had to say their prayers only in the Lusei language, and there was even a circular that no hymns should be composed in a language other than the *lusei*.¹³ Nevertheless, once the Hmars had their language in written form, there was a leap forward in every possible manner. In 1945, the Hmar Literature Society was founded under the

leadership of Dr. Thanglung. With it came the gradual, yet steady growth of Hmar Vernacular literatures. Some of the remarkable ones includes *Buhmasa* by Dr. Thanlung and H L Sela published in 1946, Dr. Thanglung's *Sierkawp Bu, Geography. Geometry and Hriselna Kawng*, Dr. Thanglung's *English-Hmar Dictionary*, Dr. Thanglor's *Pherzawl Readers* published in 1960, H C Hrangate's *Hrietna Var* published in 1965, etc.¹⁴

The development of literature was accompanied by the urged to de-construct the history, thereby giving impetus to historicization of the myths, legends, folklores and folksongs to give meaning to the term 'Hmar'. In this aspects, mention may be made on the *Hmar History (History of The Hmar)* by Hranglien Songate who had claimed to have made an extensive study for more than four decades from 1928 to come up with the first book on the Hmar History that employed extensively primary sources.¹⁵ Prior to the publication of Hranglien Songate's book, H V Vara had undertaken the compilation of the Hmar folk Songs entitle, *Hmar Hla Hlui (The Hmar Folk Songs, Lyrics and Chants)* published in 1969, which was followed by the *Hmar Hla Phuoktuhai* (1889) and the *Hmar Nunphung (The Hmar Culture)* in 2000 with the financial assistance from the Government of Manipur. At present, there are a host of writings both in the Hmar language and English such as the *Hmar Folk Songs* (Lal Dena), *In Search of Identity; Hmars of North-East India* (Lal Dena), the *Education of the Hmar People* (Rochunga Pudaite), the *Oral Traditions of the Hmars* (Val Lal tluonga Bapui), the *History of the Hmars in North East India* (With special Reference to Assam) (Hrilrokhum Thiek), etc.

Conclusion

The initiative of the leaders of the Hmars through prayers and petitions within the constitutional means compelled the Government of Manipur to recognize the Hmar language as one of the Major Tribal Dialect in 1968 which means that the Hmar language could be used as a medium of instruction up to Standard VI. From 1977, with the initiative taken by the Hmar Literature Society, the Hmar language could now be opted as a full paper in the High School Leaving Certificate Examination in the State Board. It reached another milestone in the year 2000 after it was introduced as one of the subjects in lieu of Major Indian Languages (MIL) in the XI and XII standards. Finally, in 2003 the Hmar language was introduced as MIL in the degree level courses under the Manipur University.¹⁶ Similarly, the Assam University had introduced the Hmar language as one of the optional subject up to the Higher Secondary (XII) level and the subsequent introduction to the first degree level is still under way.¹⁷ As for the State of Mizoram, the Preamble to the Memorandum of Settlement Between the Government and the Hmar Peoples Convention (HPC), Aizawl, dated the 27th July 1994 stated *that the state government will initiate measures for use of Hmar Language as a medium of instruction up to Primary level and recognition of the Hmar language as one of the major languages of the State of Mizoram.*¹⁸ Although the above objectives are yet to be realized even after a long period of more than two decades, the Hmars are still hopeful and trusty towards the goodwill of the state government of Mizoram in fulfilling its parts of the bargain, thereby recognizing and be sensitive towards the protection and safeguarding of their assumed fundamental rights as a minority group guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

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‘BECOMING CHRISTIANS’ : SOME ISSUES IN PROSELYTIZATION IN MIZORAM

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Introduction

The nineteenth century experienced the ‘great Protestant missionary overseas enterprise’ which resulted in the formation of various missionary societies worldwide.¹ These new societies and boards were operating extensively during this period with the expansion of colonialism especially in Asia and Africa. The Christian mission not only aimed at converting people to Christianity but also took up the ‘civilizing’ mission. The European missionaries stressed the ‘civilizing’ objective in the areas they operated even in a developed culture like India and China; and ‘there was never debate about the legitimacy of the stress on the civilizing function of missions’ because the local culture was seen as ‘degenerate and superstitious’. Christianization and civilization were taken as complimentary to each and held the view that ‘a certain degree of civilization was first necessary to enable a people to understand and accept the faith’.² This gradually resulted into ‘the imperialist viewpoint’

of an 'ecclesiastical variant' which shared 'the white man's burden'.

With a shared objective, missions and colonialism interacted with each other, but in different forms and at different levels, and 'Christian mission and colonialism seemed to follow upon each other in Africa and Asia'.³ In the Northeast India, the mission followed the colonial power even if it was not pre-planned, and it is believed that 'the missionary work tended to legitimize the colonial occupation'. The colonial government generally patronized the missionary activities especially when the missionaries and the government belonged to the same nationality. In such a situation, the mission sometimes fell to the temptation to collaborate with the government and some with pro-imperialist leanings might even see colonial expansion as 'divine command'.⁴ To some extent, this has impacted on the process of proselytization and the native's response to the missionary activities.

Historical Background

The Mizo hills in the Patkai ranges that now formed part of the Northeast of the Indian Union after India's independence is inhabited by the tribes who were known variably as Chin or Lushai or Kuki⁵ by the outsiders. The preferred nomenclature, 'Mizo' came to be used for official purpose after India's independence and the land they inhabited is also known as 'Mizoram'. The land was occupied by the British in the last part of the 19th century after subduing its inhabitants.

The British rule in the Mizo hills was preceded by many violent encounters between the two parties. The colonial

expansion in the plains of Cachar where the British set up tea garden was taken as an encroachment to their area by the Mizo chiefs. Thus, frequent tribal raids to the plains was taking place. The earliest tribal raid was in 1826 when a party of woodcutters from Sylhet was massacred by some Kukis. The first ever British expedition to the 'Lushai' hills was sent in 1844 led by Captain Blackwood. From this time onwards, 'punitive' expeditions had been sent time to time to the 'Lushai' Hills against the tribal raids to the British territory to intimidate the 'Lushais' but there was no measure to occupy the area permanently until the end of the 19th century. The annexation of Burma to the British rule prompted the annexation of the 'Lushai' hills as it needed passage to connect their empire in India and Burma. Tribal raids were also intensified during that time and thus, a strong expedition was sent to the Lushai Hills in 1889-1890 known as the 'Chin-Lushai Expedition'. This resulted in the establishment of permanent posts in the 'Lushai' hills, two in South Mizo hills (Fort Lunglei and Fort Tregear) and two in North Mizo Hills (Fort Aizawl and Changsil). Thus, Mizoram came under the British rule with Capt. H.R. Browne, who was Personal Assistant to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, was appointed as the Political Officer in the North Mizo hills which became a district of Assam. In April 1891, the south Mizo hills were formed into a district under the Bengal government. Mr. C.S Murray was appointed as the first Superintendent of the district.⁶ Thus, by 1891, the whole of Mizoram was officially under the British rule and a new era began. The chiefs, who were supreme and independent in their own villages, were subdued and given nominal authority under the British government.

Close on the heels of the 'Lushai' expedition to Mizoram were the Christian missionaries in 1894 which began the uninterrupted presence of the missionaries in the hills till well after India's independence.⁷ The pioneer missionaries, Rev. J. H. Lorrain and Rev. F. W. Savidge were the Arthington missionaries who left the hills after a brief period of three year, were succeeded by the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries, Rev. D. E. Jones and Rev. Edwin Rowlands who landed in 1897. The London Baptist Mission later on sent back Rev. J. H. Lorrain and Rev. F. W. Savidge to work in the southern part of Mizoram in 1903. Thus, while the Presbyterian mission operated in the northern part, the south was under the Baptist mission, and these became the two largest denominations in Mizoram.

The Mission work

At a time when the area was forcibly occupied by the colonial rule and the engulfing atmosphere was resentment and hatred against foreigners especially white men, the evangelizing mission was a daring task. This was coupled by the fact that the society had been living beyond the reach of modernity with no script of their own. Thus, the first task was to translate the language into written form. The pioneer missionaries formulated the Mizo alphabet into Roman script and began a rudimentary form of modern education when Rev. F. W. Savidge started a school in 1895 on the site allotted by the government but this school ended soon as the missionaries left the hills.⁸ Later on, in 1898, Rev. D. E. Jones opened a mission school which was followed by the opening of many others not only in Aizawl but also in the villages near and far. Education, thus, became one of the key aspects of the mission work in Mizoram.

Apart from being unfamiliar with the western model of school, many parents did not see the need of attending school and considered it as an excuse of their children to escape their chores and it weakened Zawlbuk, the traditional structure for learning and discipline.⁹ The mission schools at the beginning did not attract much interest from the people, and even the government had to implore to find students by offering various concessions to the graduates and their parents. Zairema noted,

Early in the history, the government also tried to encourage education by exempting those who graduated Class IV Standard of today from forced labour which was a hated imposition by the British administration... To escape this degrading and laborious task a number of young people joined schools opened by the missionaries.¹⁰

Even the chiefs were encouraged to attend school with free ration in return where staying in a hostel was mandatory. Thus, the number of schools also increased in the whole district when the government permitted the District authority to open five (5) schools every year up to the maximum of 20 schools.¹¹

According to Vanlalchhuanawma, it was the 'close association with the alien administration, an association which meant not simply a superficial cooperation but a deeper level of relationship with a vested interest' that repelled the Mizos from joining schools.¹² Indeed, religious study formed an important part of the syllabus and the driving force of the missionaries to educate the masses was to enable them to read the Bible on their own.¹³ The mission education was criticized for providing low standard of

knowledge and its primary objective being to train and employ good preachers;¹⁴ and that higher education was reserved only for a few.¹⁵

Nevertheless, these students, under the influence of their studies, were ready to break the superstitions that bound them, which was also one of the signs of becoming Christians. D.E Jones, in his private correspondence mentioned that the boys who attended the school regularly cast off the charms which the 'Lushais' wear around their necks to ward off the evil spirits, and several were enthusiastic in their efforts to tell non-believers. The burning of charms and amulets by some of the pupils caused hostile reactions from parents and the public as a whole. They were threatened and punishment was inflicted on them; villagers tried to persuade them not to continue school. Rev. D. E. Jones says that some of the older boys were called upon to act as coolies as an excuse to send them away from the influence of the missionaries.¹⁶ Such was the aversion that the people felt against the influence of mission school as they related mission school with the new religion and disliked the ideas it represented. Yet, it was a successful venture for the missionaries in the long run as it produced a generation who embraced Christianity.

It was in evangelism that the pioneer missionaries have the greatest challenge, according to one author.¹⁷ The concept of sin and salvation was novel to the Mizos but it was contextualized in their own terms that helped their preaching easily understood. The Mizo term for supreme being, *Pathian* was used to refer to the Christian God, and early preaching included that salvation could be achieved by believing in

Jesus who has power over the evil spirits. This meant freedom from the costly and numerous sacrifices being to the evil spirits whom the Mizos think were responsible for many of their sicknesses, and offered sacrifices to appease their wrath. By 'obeying God's word' they would not only be saved from *hremhmun* or hell but will also have access to *pialral*, the Mizo equivalent of heaven, which had always been the highest desired goal of the Mizos.¹⁸ The prospect of evading costly sacrifices to have good health and access to *pialral* seemed to have the desired impression on the people. Many first generation Christians admitted that they became Christian because they fear '*hremhmun*' (hell, literally it means a place of punishment) and want to go to '*Pialral*' or '*Vanram*' (heaven or kingdom of heaven); others said they became Christians because Jesus was more powerful than the spirits that caused sickness and it shows a way to get healed without sacrificing to the evil spirits.¹⁹

The first Mizo converts, Khuma and Khara were baptized in 1899²⁰ and the number increased at a rapid rate especially after the revival movement was experienced in the hills. The new converts started to take tour to villages to preach the Gospel even as voluntary evangelists. This is one peculiar feature of Mizo Christians that as they became Christians, they were eager to preach to non-believers, so they traveled about preaching the gospel, and this was probably one reason for the rapid spread of the Gospel throughout the hills though there were paid evangelists, Bible Women and local pastors apart from the western missionaries. In the first decade of the 20th century, the growth was from 57 to 6134 in the north; and communicant members from 19 to 1931, an increase of 10761 per cent in the Christian community and

1016 per cent in the communicant membership and South Mizoram had a larger number of Christians than North Mizoram at the beginning of the decade.²¹

Becoming Christians

In traditional Mizo religious practice, there was a possibility of changing one's *sakhua* (generally translated as religion) by *saphun*. In Mizo traditional society, different clans had different *sakhua*, and if a person wanted to change his clan, he could do so through *saphun* by performing the required ceremonies; and there were many cases of *saphun* in Mizo history. Supposedly, therefore, converting to a new religion did not seem to be much of an issue.

With regards to conversion to Christianity, the real problem lies in the fact that many of the practices of the religion was new to the Mizos and a clash of culture was intensely experienced as the early church formulated its regulations in line with the western Christianity as preached to them by the western missionaries. To the Mizos, becoming a Christian was considered to have required them to desist from their old life and their old religious practices and submit to a new lifestyle. For example, every Mizo family kept a castrated pig for family worship and only the very nearest relatives may share in the feast performed in family sacrifice. Christians could not take part in this which amounts to cutting themselves off from blood family ties. The annual festivals were usually associated with the old religious worship and as the Christians refused to take part, they were regarded as anti-social elements.²² The newly converts were expected to observe Sundays, and could not participate in any village ceremonies which involved religious functions

related to their old religion, like, *kawngpui siam*, *Fano daw* etc. Becoming a good Christians thus made them a bad citizen. Thus, it is clear that conversion to Christianity has involved many things other than simply believing in Jesus. Since social and religious practices of traditional society were too closely intertwined, denouncing one means disowning the whole system.

Thus, the teaching of the new religion brought radical change in the whole existence of the Mizos in which the Mizo Christians were expected to adapt themselves. In the beginning, conversion basically meant giving up *kel mei* charm (a tuft of the tail of a goat the Lushai would wear around the neck to ward off evil spirits) and drinking *zu*.²³ It was a very common practice for the Mizos to chew and smoke tobacco, and drink rice beer. The Lakher and Lushei Christians, however, are not allowed to drink rice beer (*zu*) and no one can become a Christian who ever touch alcohol; they would be ex-communicated from the church if they were found drinking rice beer.²⁴ Though the missionaries did not allow smoking a pipe inside the place of worship, they did not prohibit its use among the Mizo Christians but total prohibition was enforced against taking liquor, and this has become the biggest obstacle for the Mizos to be a Christian. In traditional Mizo society, *zu* drinking was as common as drinking tea today, and was offered to any visitors as a sign of hospitality, and of course, an essential part of all 'Lushai' rituals but people hardly got drunk except the elderly members in special occasions like festivals, ceremonial functions, etc. Besides, the early church prohibited the use of drums in Christian worship and the traditional Mizo songs and dances, including its style were all banned. Thus, the

new convert must have felt and appeared as a complete stranger in his own home, and this not only caused emotional stress but also persecution in various forms, both physical and mental, including social ostracization and alienation from all that they had been familiar with.

Opposition to Christianity

As people began to be receptive to the Gospel, persecution soon followed mainly from the chiefs. The Christians were found to have developed a stronger obligation to their faith than to their chiefs, there was growing enmity between the Christians and the chiefs. There could be many reasons for the growing antipathy against the new converts. One of the foremost reasons was the apprehension by the chiefs as they saw in Christianity a possible threat to their already limited authority under the colonial rule and they recognized the close connection between the *Saps* (Whites) and the Christians.²⁵ For example, Mr. Thankunga, one Christian leader, was actually alleged by the chief as the one who attempted to deprive him of his chieftainship so that the case of an ignominy was filed against him. As the case was tried in the presence of the plaintiff and defendant, the court was on the rampage, condemned Thankunga guilty, sentenced him to ten years' imprisonment, and imposed upon him a gruesome task to dig the ground as a punishment.²⁶ In the meantime, most chiefs were hostile to the Christian movement, perhaps because they thought Christians were becoming disruptive elements in the normal village life.²⁷ The first Christians in the South at Pukpui village were accused by their chief of contravening orders as they were unwilling to work as coolies on Sundays. Therefore, they were accused of being offenders and a case was filed against them at the

court of the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Lunglei.²⁸ Some Christians were beaten and expelled by their chiefs from their villages at midnight or during a heavy down-pour of rain. The Christians were denied of their privilege of cultivation by the chiefs who also forbade giving of food to Christians. In some villages, non-Christians refused to bury when a Christian died, which was a real trial when there were only two or three Christians.²⁹

One of the most intense persecutions was seen in Khandaih village where the first permanent Mission school was set up. One spectacular thing recorded about the Christians in Khandaih village is that the newly converted Christian ladies began to wear a sacred cloth called '*thangchhuah puan*' which could be worn by only those who earned a coveted name *thangchhuah*. The local people, particularly the elders of the village, did not like this trend as it was an obvious challenge to their traditional belief. Besides, the number of Christians increased considerably especially after the 1906 revival that created a feeling of apprehensiveness. It was a general feeling that the Christians disturbed the normal life of the village and mistreating the Christians in this village began from May, 1906.³⁰ Those *Upas* (village elders in the chief's council) whose children were Christians were not allowed to drink with the chief unless their children revert to their previous belief. The Christians were beaten and looted of their possession and expelled from the village in the middle of the night in the midst of heavy rain and mosquitoes. The first Mizo martyr for the sake of Christianity was Chalbuanga from Khandaih village who lost his life during the persecution for his faith.³¹ When the persecution did not die down even after a year in the new village site, Rev. D.E Jones

(Zosaphluia) went to see the situation for himself. Vanphunga, the chief, and his brothers who were also chiefs in the neighbouring villages not only refused to listen to him but also mocked the missionary by pouring rice beer on his head. Christians who gathered at Zawlbuk were beaten by Thangkama, brother of Vanphunga in the presence of Zosaphluia at which Zosaphluia told him that he refused to recognize any authority other than the authority of King Edward VII.³² When the chief's representatives later came to meet the Superintendent in Aizawl, they were told that if the chief do not stop persecuting the Christians, his chieftainship would be put to an end. D.E. Jones also wrote, "*The chiefs soon found out that they dare not injure the Christians without bringing down upon their heads the punishment of Government.*"³³ Henceforth, Vanphunga did not dare to carry on his persecution and stopped hounding the Christians (Hluna 2006: 331).³⁴

The colonial government also showed favour to the new converts and responded to the need of the Christians in their own capacity. The government allotted a village site at Sethlun in 1902 for the expelled Christians in the South in which the first Christian village, which they called '*Pathian Khua*' meaning 'God's village', was set up.³⁵ There are few other such Christian villages like Durtlang³⁶ which was set up with the help of the government. The government exercised their authority as chief-makers in favour of the Christians which in a way, affirms to the local people their superior power. Thus, in subsequent years, the Mizos perceived all the White people, irrespective of their trade or nationality, to be a 'man of power' and Christianity was projected as the religion of the people in power. This added to the charm of

Christianity which many believed had influenced the people's mind towards the new religion to a great extent. In 1903, Rev. J. H. Lorraine and Rev. F. W. Savidge wrote in their report that the opposition to the Gospel which at one time was strong had almost disappeared and the people were willing to know more about their message.³⁷

Though the persecution by the chiefs was restrained with the help of the colonial authority, the opposition to Christianity from the whole Mizo tribe came as a movement in the first decade of the 20th century when it took the form of cultural upsurge which was termed by many as 'revival of heathen song'. In the year 1908, an unprecedented movement began in north Mizoram called '*Puma Zai*' which was to sweep the whole Mizoram. The *Puma Zai* was a *Zai* (song) composed of a double-lined refrain of any number of verses with an ambiguous appellation '*Puma*' at the end of the first line of every refrain³⁸ and it was sung in traditional tune. Group singing had always been an important aspect in Mizo culture of festive singing and dancing. The Mizos have special songs for every occasion, and public singing was usually accompanied by dancing and became livelier with a cup of rice-beer which was always served. As mentioned earlier, due to its close association with heathen practice, traditional songs and tune along with drums was forbidden by the early church for the Mizo Christians. The upsurge of '*Puma Zai*' was thus a strong challenge to the new faith. It was spreading like wild fire under the auspices of the chiefs who declared public holidays and prepared feasts for the whole village in honour of the music. Rev. J. M. Llyod says,

'one of the severest tests came in 1908, when there was a sudden resurgence of heathenism. An old Lushai tune was

set new words and became immediately popular. The words were generally in praise of a great chief (chiefs then were persecutors of Christians). It was reputed and by many, to have been sung by a jungle spirit. It spread like wildfire to all parts of the hills. Amazing manifestations of feeling accompanied the singing- almost as though the revival was parodied. Great feasts were held during which the young men and girls danced in ecstasy. These demonstrations were made in every village. The cause of Christ seemed doomed in Lushai. The traveling preachers complained that preaching was a burden. The Gospel was losing ground and no one wanted to listen to it. It is significant to note that this ribald sprit and the popularity of this song remained till the time of famine.³⁹

The lamentation of Llyod is understandable as people refused to listen to the Gospel. The *Puma Zai* was greatly endorsed by those chiefs who earned the reputation as persecutors of Christians in particular. This is one reason why the *Zai* was perceived by many as anti-Christian. Though the *Puma Zai* was not primarily anti-Christian in its content, it was a challenge to Christianity as it represented something of a cultural revival that was denounced by the new religion. The leaders of *Puma Zai* movement regarded that their movement was purely indigenous while Christianity was labelled foreign.⁴⁰ Thus, to some, it represented a reaction against the new religion. Some even go the extent of mocking the evangelists preaching in the streets in *Puma Zai* by dancing and singing:

Carry Book, imitating foreigners

Always proclaiming something, puma (Hminga 1987: 87).⁴¹

Some spread rumors that all who acclaimed *Puma Zai* would be 'exempted from offering sacrifices to demons, and that the dread

spirits would in the future be appeased if such votaries merely offered, when ill, a few hairs or feathers instead of the usual sacrifices of animals and birds’. It was confidently affirmed that the movement would silenced the Christian hymns forever and stamp out the new religion, as an easy means to attain healing and a lighter form of sacrifices was offered to the people to be freed from their spiritual bondage.⁴² C.L. Hminga felt that it was *‘definitely launched as a measure to stop people from becoming Christian.’* They were aware of the fact that Christian message of healing without necessary costly sacrifices, had attracted the people and thus offered the promise of cheaper token sacrifices of ‘a few hairs or feathers’ to counter-balance it. He also says maintains that the chiefs who were aware of the efficacy of the Christian hymns tried to silence them by popularizing the *Puma Zai*⁴³ but it is probable that to the general masses, it represented their yearning for their old system and practices which seems to be increasingly out of date with the launching of the new religion.

Many Christians found it difficult to keep aloof from their friends who were having a good time. The church, however, was strict and discipline was meted out to any member who even hummed the *zai* even unconsciously. A number of Christians withdrew and returned to their old life because of this movement⁴⁴ and at some point, Christianity seemed to be doomed in the hills of the ‘Lushai’.⁴⁵

Puma Zai ended with the bamboo famine in 1912. Short lived as it was, it provided occasions for the people to express their feelings without having to fear reprisal from the Government. The pent-up feeling of the people was released through songs

in tune that was familiar to them but that was beginning to wane because of the new faith. That is why, it received a loud applaud from the people in all the villages.

When the extreme opposition died down and the Mission work was gaining ground. The growth of the number of Christians in Mizoram was very remarkable especially after the repeated revival that began in 1906 and continued till Christianity pervaded the whole area.

Conclusion

The advent of the colonial power in the Northeast India was bound to make profound changes in the life of the people in the area which was augmented by the introduction of Christianity. Frederick S. Downs has rightly observed,

“[the] imposition and extension of British administration during the nineteenth and twentieth century in the hill areas of the North East created an unprecedented social trauma. Tribal societies are highly integrated. Distinctions cannot easily be made between religious, social, cultural and political elements in those societies. Anything that affects one aspect of the society will affect the whole. In a sense, tribal societies are like fragile eco-systems. They work very well provided they are not disturbed by alien intrusion.”⁴⁶

True enough, the price of proselytization was very high as it disturbed the organic nature of the society. It posed a serious challenge to the culture and tradition of the people when western civilization was spreading under the colonial rule. The sweeping power, both from political and cultural front, was too strong for the Mizos to resist and the people had to give in.

There can be many factors which could be attributed to the quick spread of Christianity in the hills. One common narrative is that the Mizos lacked principles and stable mind, and were easily persuaded to change their religion; the missionaries and even the early Christians would knock the door of the Mizo house and gently said, "Please convert yourselves to Christianity", and they became Christians, or they would give their name to the Christian roll and they became Christians. This is an over-simplification of the conversion process which overlooked the mental stress the early Christians and the prospective Christians faced at the early part of colonial rule. Becoming a Christian did not simply mean changing their religion, it also amounted to social ostracization and in some cases persecution and expulsion from the village. It took real courage to be on the side of Christianity during that time especially before the revival movement broke out. After the later revival movements, because of the fervent evangelization of the missionaries as well as the natives themselves, and also because of the solid back up from the colonial government, Christianity became popular. When the image of power, represented by the mission and colonial government, took the side of the new religion, it might have been more attractive.

The swiftness of the spread of Christianity could not simply be attributed only to the Mizos' lack of principles or the absence of well-established religion of their own as some have argued. It was more so because they found certain substantial elements in the new religion for which they were ready to even sacrifice their life and suffer persecution. To a large extent, it was a conscious decision and a commitment, at least in the early part of the advent of Christianity though

its nature might have been diluted when people were more mindful of its connection with power. The process and nature of their conversion to Christianity somehow reaffirms what history has proved about the Mizos that, even as a community, they are ready to go to any extent if they are convinced and committed to a cause.

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26. Saihnuna, S.L. *Reflections on the Centennial Church and the Mission Paradigm in Mizoram*, Published by Mrs. Nikungi, Lunglei, 2001, p. 51. C.L. Hminga mentions that Thankunga could have become the chief of the new Christian village if he was willing, but he preferred to be an evangelist and he later became one of the first pastors. Whatever has happened to the judgment is left to obscurity so far. C.L. Hminga, *op.cit.*
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MORALITY OF THE MIZO : THEN AND NOW

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MORALITY means the distinction between right and wrong. It implies as to what a person believes is right and good. The dictionary meaning of morality is “principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour”. It is also a cultural setting of what is considered right and morally correct to a certain community. Moral principle of a person is something that has to do with the guiding principles and values of a person or an individual. However, this morality is often largely shaped by the values and principles of the community to which he belonged. An individual is not morally endowed by the time he was born. His upbringing, his family values, his religious beliefs, the environment that he is born into and the community to which he belonged all comes to play important factors in shaping his morality. Therefore, moral values and ethics of a tribe or culture guide the principles and values of an individual to a large extent. These morals, however, differed from culture to culture or from society to society. What is considered morally right may not be not so to another

community. These moral principles also guided beliefs, practices, customs and traditions of a society to a considerable extent and vice versa. This paper will attempt to bring out some of the values which guided the morality of a Mizo considering the past and the contemporary Mizo society.

Some Moral Values pertaining to the Mizo

A Mizo is supposed to be adherent to the principles of certain moral values some of which need a proper mention, the most important of which is "*Tlawmngaihna*" (chivalry) or a selfless attitude or action. It was this act which guided almost all the other values and ethics of the Mizo towards living a healthy community life. This is true in almost all the everyday life of the Mizo. The Mizo men, when going out for a group hunt, made sure that they adhered to this spirit of *tlawmngaihna* where they refused to be a nuisance to others and always sacrificed himself for the welfare of others. A hunting exhibition offers many opportunities for the exhibition of *tlawmngaihna*.¹ Likewise, this was also a practice among the womenfolk as well. Women try to be the one who labour most in times of village gatherings and try to maintain courtesy in serving hosts and other members of the family.² A Mizo wants to be *tlawmngai* not only because he wanted to be respected by other members of the society.. It was something to which he felt obliged and which he considered morally right. It was the Mizo morality which made him want to stick to the principle of "*tlawmngaihna*". Many other sayings or principles like, "*Maileng an um ngailo*" or "*pal hung sawn chu thihna*" which implies that one should not be a disturbance or a nuisance to his neighbor. This was also guided by the spirit of *tlawmngaihna*, a selfless spirit.

The highest honour of the Mizo man was in receiving the “*chawimawina nopui*” or *Tlawmngai Nopui*³ which was given to the most *tlawmngai* of all the men in the village. The award was given to the one who puts others before self, one who the villagers consider a shield in times of trouble. To be able to become the bearer of this *Nopui*, it is also necessary that one has to be courageous, observing to other moral principles considered by the Mizo in serving others. It was this moral value *tlawmngaihna* and the other values woven around this principle that the Mizo were able to live a harmonious and well-knitted friendly society.

Among numerous values which guided the Mizo moral, mention may be made of “respect for elders”. There is a very common saying, “ai a upa te chaw an bar khalh ngailo”.⁴ A Mizo had, for all time, held to this moral where an elder, no matter the condition or situation, is always given regard and respect by the younger one. If an elder asks a young boy to fetch a twig for the fire, the boy never refuses to do so even if he was scared to death. This was the level of respect shown towards the elders. This is true in the hunting parties, the festivals, the fishing parties and so on. The order of the elder to the young boys to fetch twigs or water was but very effective in preparing the younger ones to become courageous and brave, which is another esteemed moral or value which is considered by a Mizo.

Bravery or Courage is another value of a Mizo. A Mizo man is expected to be brave, brave because he should be able to protect the women and children in times of danger. The Mizo morality was set up in such a way that a male is considered

to be brave. The elders blessed him at birth “may he grow up to be brave”.

Therefore, a person who possesses *tlawmngaihna* must be obedient and respectful to the elders; courteous in dealing with the weak and the lowly; generous and hospitable to the poor, the needy and the strangers, self-denying and self-sacrificing in favour of others.

Integrity and honesty were two qualities that a Mizo always tried to abide to. There was complete trust of a man towards his neighbor.⁵ A Mizo is also expected to be resilient and tough.⁶ All these made possible very blissful to be a member of the Mizo community. Hard work and diligence was what was expected of a Mizo man. At the same time, a Mizo was never rendered hungry if misfortune befalls him; as he was covered and taken care of by his village fellow men and the chief in difficult times.⁷ It was therefore an embarrassment for a Mizo to be lazy. Every male member of the family did his best to be self-sufficient and harvest enough for his family subsistence.

Contemporary Mizo World

Some of the moral values mentioned above were the morals pertained by a Mizo more so in earlier days. Almost all the morals which guided the Mizo are still very much the values of a Mizo in the present day. However, one may feel that looking at the present Mizo society, these morals and principles, which the Mizo was so proud to adhere to, is not so much held in esteem as it was before. Numerous factors can be said to have been responsible for the level as to which these morals are now upheld.

Christianity

The first Chief Secretary of Mizoram, R.M. Agrawal wrote, "The new religion became the single and central factor in the making of a new Mizo Society."⁸ Mizo morality goes hand in hand with the Christian teachings. Loving a neighbor as oneself taught by Christ was the very morale which the Mizo had always abided to. They never wanted to be an obstacle towards a neighbor. Conversion of Mizo people into Christianity on a large scale was also partly possible because of the many similarities between the Mizo ethical values and morality with the Christian values. The Bible teaches one to be selfless which can be put into similar context with *tlawmngaihna*.

At the same time, the new belief brought about some changes in the mentality of the Mizo people as well, because it was Christianity which brought about many changes in the practical life of the Mizo. It brought about transformation not only in the mentality of the Mizo people but also Mizo culture. For example, the enthusiastic spirit of the Mizo men in trying to be the holder of *Chawimawina Nopui* was no longer relevant to the Mizo Christian. Education provided by the British missionaries also brought about division in the society, the educated and the uneducated. The mission schools provided employment in the church and also government services.⁹ To some of the earlier educated Christians, observance of Sundays became necessary. They were bound to miss many of the events wherein the practical forces of *tlawmngaihna* materialized like in some cases hunting, *Zawlbuk* and other festivities with liquor. With time, more proselytization and conversion into Christianity, Mizo became more inclined towards the teachings of the

Bible rather than observing traditional Mizo customs likely to go against Christianity. Not only social division but role of women was also altered as girls also took up to education. As rice beer (*zu*) was objected and resented by the Christian missionaries, it also slowly diminishing and its value was plunged. Giving up of drinking *zu* not only meant abstinence but a discontinuing of numerous religious and social rites because *zu* was always a part of those rites.¹⁰ Frederick Downs clearly sums it up when he said about the Mizos, "Becoming a Christian means adopting a new mode of life".¹¹ Therefore, "to become a church member in Lushai means a definite break with old traditions, customs and habits. Total abstinence is insisted on, old forms of worship must be abandoned. Sabbath must be kept and regular attendance at church must be recorded."¹² Similarly, acceptance of Christianity diminishes the relevance and extinguished practices which promoted social solidity like *fano daw*,¹³ *kawngpui siam*¹⁴ etc¹⁵ which in many ways stimulated Mizo values and morals in healthy community living.

It was with the Mizo that the process of proselytization was utmost successful in the whole of India. By the time the missionaries left, the entire population can be said to have converted into Christians. It is therefore a fact that, some of the values that go hand in hand with the traditional practices and customs came to be altered and modified with this transformation.

Other forces

Besides Christianity, there are also other forces and factors that come into play with the study of the moral alteration of the Mizo. Yet it cannot be denied the fact that these forces

are very much a result of the Christian influence as these changes in the Mizo society came with the acceptance of Christianity which transformed the entire Mizo way of life. The extension of the British rule accelerated the speed of social change in the Mizo Hills.¹⁶

Urbanisation

It can also be explained as modernization. In earlier days, Mizo villages were that of small, scattered villages surrounded by external dangers. The Mizo was a warring tribe; frequent inter-village wars were fought from time to time. It was this danger and emergency, the living condition in which the Mizos lived, which prompted the Mizo men the necessity to become brave. Villages were also situated in the middle of forests surrounded by wild animals of various kinds. Men, therefore, had to sleep together at *Zawlbuk*. He had to be brave and should be able to protect the village if attacked by these animals.

In the present context, the Mizo moral which was abided is still carried out more practically in the rural areas because of the social set up. In villages, life was much more similar to the olden Mizo society where agriculture was the basis of subsistence, where hunting and fishing, farming is still prevalent in the society. In the cities, however, life has become much more different. Individualism is something that came up to take over communitarianism. This was because of the newly acquired jobs, lifestyle of the city. One cannot be blamed or condemned if he could not go to dig the grave of his fellowmen because he had to be present at his work. It is not right to be judged as not *tlawmngai*. The very connotation of *tlawmngaihna* also had to be understood from the present context.

Disappearance of Zawlbuk

Another factor may be the diminishing importance and abolition of *Zawlbuk*. *Zawlbuk*¹⁷ was the place where many of the practices were exhibited and carried out. It was also a place where the elder men called the *val upas* encouraged and imbibed into the young minds the moral values and ethics of the Mizo. In the words of Chatterji, “*Zawlbuk* was the nerve centre of the Mizo society and it shaped the Mizo youths into responsible adult members of the society”.¹⁸ It was here that bravery, courage, discipline; respect towards elders and other morals pertaining to a Mizo were taught and practiced by the Mizo men. It also simultaneously served as a traveler’s inn.¹⁹ The dormitory also served as a shield of protection to the village. Besides these, it was here in *Zawlbuk* that actions and punishments²⁰ for ones who proved nuisance to the community or womenfolk were discoursed and carried out. Even though many of the social practices are still valued and relevant today, the level as to which young Mizo men were inspired by these values cannot be the same. It is bound to change. With the abolition of *Zawlbuk* on 1st January 1938,²¹ a large portion of the moral and value system also automatically decreased. Sangkima observes, “*Zawlbuk* was a powerful institution which exercised the greatest sway in establishing social norms and custom among the Mizo people”.²² In the present context, with so many crimes, theft, robbery, unkindness all around, the level of hospitality of an unknown person that a Mizo has shown to a fellow Mizo is no longer similar to the earlier days. In earlier days, it was regarded morally right for any family to be hospitable towards a stranger and one could eat and spend the night at any random house or village. A traveler or a host now can no longer spend a night randomly at other person’s house while

traveling. He now has to sleep at a hotel or a rest house where he has to pay for the night. Here, it can be right to say that the level of hospitality a Mizo shows to another unknown fellow being has diminished. At the same time, it is also to be remembered that time has changed where it is now no longer safe to let a stranger into an unknown house. Hotels and rest houses are now replacing the earlier *Zawlbuk* where a traveler could spend the night. Again, although I have said that it is impossible for these practices of letting a stranger into one's house because of safety issues, it cannot be denied that this very fact proved that the level of trust and morality has definitely declined. Earlier times were the times when a stranger could trust a stranger which is no longer possible in the contemporary world.

The diminishing role of a man in taking responsibility of a family also may have been attributed to the disappearance of *Zawlbuk*. Even though teachings in church have many similarities with things they taught in the *Zawlbuk*, practical practice is not easy as that of *Zawlbuk*. It is sad to see the present Mizo society where many men or boys of age no longer feel embarrassed to live and eat out a the woman in the family or rather other man in the family. Morality of the aforesaid men had degraded. Therefore, development, modernity, female education, ideas like equality and women empowerment also have led to a change in the role of genders which brings about change in the value system of men as well as women, some positive as well as negative.

It therefore comes to connect that it is materialism that plays another major factor in the diminishing morality of the Mizo. Above, it is mentioned that trust can no longer be placed

upon a stranger especially in terms of material wealth. The present Mizo society differs a lot from the earlier Mizo society because in a large extent, social position and status is now measured in terms of money.

Materialism

Materialism is perhaps the most significant factor which brought about alteration of the Mizo morality. Egalitarian society was what constituted the Mizo society.²³ The Mizo society can be best described as a classless society, where very little distinction was seen between members of the community. The very set-up of the Mizo society was for this purpose. One could not amass and accumulate wealth to a large extent. The Mizo believed in the existence of *Pialral*; which was sought by all men in the society. The so called *pialral* was a heavenly abode for the dead, where eternal happiness of leisure would be obtainable for the dead. This *pialral* could be achieved by men who were *thangchhuah*. It was becoming *thangchhuah* that the Mizo always strived for. The position of *thangchhuah* was so revered among the Mizo that according to James Dokhuma, nothing and no one in the present Mizo social position can exemplify this position.²⁴ There were two kinds of *thangchhuah*- *in lam thangchhuah* and *ram lam thangchhuah*. But how did a man become a *thangchhuah*? Is it by accumulating wealth for himself or his family? No. It could attain that position by being brave, strong, valor and by his willingness to serve and sacrifice for the people around him. *Ram lam thangchhuah* requires one to be brave, brave enough to protect his villagers in times of danger. That was how his efficiency could be proved, by killing a prescribed number of animals. *In lam thangchhuah* required men of wealth to share his wealth with

the entire community by feeding the entire village for a number of days with prescribed number of animals and distributing his belongings to the villagers. The rich men in the village therefore, wanting to become a *thangchhuah* are not greedy to amass wealth for themselves but rather, feed the community because he wanted to become *thangchhuah*, with which he will earn the most respectful position in the society. The main objective of the Mizo elders, in perfecting the concept of *thangchhuah*, was the set-up of the Mizo society to be an egalitarian society with very little social distinctions. Respect was also earned through bravery and it was not measured in terms of wealth. It is seen that status was accorded on the basis of physical strength, bravery, serving others and so on. Thomas has rightly remarked, “It was the praiseworthy service rendered to the community that entitled the individual to a prestigious position in a hierarchy rather than their hereditary, social, political or economic status”.²⁵

Materialism, in the context of today’s Mizo world, had earned a very big factor of respect in the society. A wealthy man, irrespective of how he earned the money, earns respect in the society. As long as a man is able to contribute to society, associations and the church, society respects him, even when he is doubtful. Mentality and morality of the Mizo had changed considerably in course of time, when honour and respect is now measured in terms of material possessions.

Famine

Famine, drought or other difficult times and challenges can also play dynamics in driving a person to lose his dignity. Going a little backwards, Prof Sajal Nag is of the view that

one major factor of change in the change of communitarian philosophy was the famine and the destitute situation driven by that force. He wrote, "A calamity like famine crushed the humanitarian spirit by affecting every single person of the community".²⁶ According to his study on the *Mautam* Famine in Mizoram, it was famine which disrupted community living and decayed the mentality and morality of the Mizo. It was the helpless position of hunger faced by the Mizo which rendered him impossible to stick to the various moral principles of the Mizo. He believed that it was this helpless situation which drove the Mizo chiefs to submit to the then aliens who they considered their enemies before hunger strikes them. The Mizo chiefs, who had been brave, courageous and proud enough to resist the alien rulers were no longer in a position to hold their dignity but had to surrender because they needed help. The British administrators and the missionaries were fast to take advantage of the disadvantaged position and won the hearts of the Mizo through their humanitarian and philanthropic works. This was the reason behind the profound success in proselytizing the entire community as they were able to present themselves as saviors during their most distressed period. The entire relationship was bound to change in due course of time and also affected the value system of a Mizo to an immense degree.

There may also be many other factors of change. These may be politics, external influence, globalization, assimilation etc. Prof J.V. Hluna argues that political consciousness and new parties taken up by the Mizo created political elites.²⁷ The factionalism created by these new found political interests also seemed to have played a role in demoralizing some of

the Mizo as hypocrisy and cunningness were sometimes essential characters of modern day politics.

Revival

Having mentioned few factors that may have descended the morality of the Mizo, a question arises as what can be done to revive the mental order of the Mizo? Re-establishment of *Zawlbuk* is impractical; going for a group hunt to exhibit *tlawmngaihna* is out of the question. Should one be satisfied with the present level of the moral standards of the Mizo today?

Morality of the Mizo like honesty, selflessness, self-reliance- all the right things are still very much present in the Mizo mindset. Reality is different in today's world; because of the influences of capitalism, beliefs, and practices and so on. There are still many opportunities where Mizo value system like *tlawmngaihna* or social service can be rendered and exhibited. However, morality has to come from deep within. The change in the value system and belief is what will change the person and the society. Mizo morality can still be revived, because it never died. It, however, has to start from elementary level, individual, family, society, church, schools, NGOS -all are responsible for revival of the Mizo morality towards a better future.

A suggestion or two may be cited – Mizo morality could be revived if one chooses to practically live according to the Christian morals. Another way is measurement of a person's integrity and respect in terms of his value system. Let concentration of wealth not be the scale of measurement of honour in the society. Mizo society needs to go back to the

system where respect, honour and position in the society would be earned by his spirit of sacrifice, support, a hand he lends for others, not necessarily in terms of the material he owns. People also need to be brave enough to disregard and degrade the corrupt officers, politicians, who, in fact, are a real nuisance and problem to the society. As long as these people are highly regarded by the Mizo society, the Mizo people are deemed to moving towards a dark future where the morality of the Mizo would not only fall apart but it is alarming that a time will come when the Mizo would be fully demoralized.

Having said all these, it cannot, however, be concluded moral values like 'tlawmngaihna' is no longer relevant or present in the present Mizo society. Some writers like Rev. Saiaithanga and Rev. C.L. Hminga are of the view that *tlawmngaihna* very much persists in the present Mizo society but in a more refined manner which now goes in line with the Christian teachings.²⁸ It is because of the changes and the transformation brought about by the changing times that make it impossible to practice certain values and morals of the Mizo, and is no longer applicable in the present context. It can also be said that some of the practices are still somewhat similar to that of what was practiced in the earlier Mizo society, but is now presented in a modified version befitting more to the present world and context. It is, but, true that many elements of the morality which the Mizo adhered to in earlier times have certainly diminished to a considerable extent. There can be no mutual trust between strangers anymore, the spirit of *sem sem dam dam, ei bil thi thi*²⁹ is relevant now only to very little aspects of community living. Health, education, livelihood, economy, dress etc. have

developed and improved. It may be true that people have now become more polished or sophisticated. Yet, there is no denying the fact that the basic concepts of morality of the Mizo deeply embedded in the Mizo mindset and the life which once guided his conduct in community-living certainly need a revival.

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DIVORCE IN CONTEMPORARY MIZO SOCIETY

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GENDER refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles.¹

– Kamla Bhasin

SOCIOLOGISTS define gender stereotypes as– generalizations about gender attributes, difference, roles and responsibilities of men. This indicates that gender is socially constructed and rooted in the cultures. Gender norms are standards and expectations to which men and women generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time. It is an idea about how men and women should be and act. Internalized early in life, gender norms can establish a life cycle of gender socialization and stereotyping. So how far does these gender norms affect marriage and more so divorce in the society? This paper is an attempt to look at divorce along these lines and to look at the possible explanations as to why divorce takes place in the Mizo society.

In a study of how work, gender norms and money shaped the risk of divorce in the United States, Alexandra Killewald in a recently published study noted how work patterns and norms did matter although she deduced that the results depended on when the couples were married. For couples married before 1975, marriages were more stable when the wife did more of the housework, suggesting that a more traditional division of labour was expected for these couples.²

For the couples married in 1975 or later, however, whether the wife was employed full time or not and how the couple divided housework weren't significant predictors of the risk of divorce, she maintains. What did matter was whether the husband was employed full time. For an otherwise typical couple, the risk of divorce in the next year was 2.5% when the husband was employed full time, compared to 3.3% when he was not. What has endured rather is the norm of male breadwinning, while wives can balance paid and unpaid work in a variety of ways without threatening marital stability, anything other than full time employment for husbands is associated with increased risk of divorce.³ While this is just one trend of divorce which was prevalent in the United States of America, the conditions necessary to terminate marriage may vary from culture to culture.

Divorce is the formal dissolution of a legally constituted marriage. The conditions necessary to terminate marriage may vary from culture to culture. In the Mizo society, marriage and divorce is mainly governed by the Mizo Customary Law combined with the "Church Laws" and the Mizo customary Law of Divorce is still prevailing in the present society. In the Mizo Customary law, Divorce can be

initiated by both party. There are different ways for divorce. *Mak* is a form of divorce where the husband expels his wife from his household. If such a case happens, the wife can take back all her personal belongings and her dowry. *Sumchhuah* is a form of divorce where the woman divorces her husband. In case of *Sumchhuah*, the wife and those who receive a portion of her bride price would have to return the bride price in full.⁴ *Sumlaitan* is a form of divorce, initiated by both parties based on mutual agreement. In this type of divorce, usually the husband pays the full bride price out of which the wife's family has to return back half of the price and the wife can take back all her Thuum.⁵

Divorce due to *Zangzaw* or impotence is when the woman divorced her husband because of infertility or impotence.⁶ *Atna* is a form of divorce where a man can divorce his wife due to mental illness. However, before the final divorce takes place, the husband must perform sacrifices for a year for his wife. And if, after this the wife is still found to be mentally infirmed, the husbands can send her back to her natal family.⁷ Mizo Customary Law allows a widow to remarry, an act which is seen by many as Mizo Women's freedom. Women were considered free in matters of marriage, sex and divorce, only few restrictions were imposed on them.

Adultery is considered a serious crime. If a woman is adulterous, she would be driven out of her home by her husband, and would have to repay her whole bride price to her husband. Mizo society considers it natural for a marriageable widow to remarry. In case of death, if the husband dies, the wife's family can take her back within three months that is called *inkaichhuak*. However, if the wife

remains in the home she can occupy her husband's place/position. She would be entitled to get her daughter's bride price and even *pusum* which is a bride price payable to the maternal uncle of the bride. But, if she had any sexual relation with any other man it would be considered as adultery and she can be driven out of her home by either her children or deceased husband's family. However, if her children want her to stay she can remain but would not be entitled to *khumpui* (master bed) or the privileges that are mentioned earlier. Therefore, there is a significant control on female sexuality. According to Mizo Customary laws, women do not have inheritance rights, and they also cannot claim maintenance after divorce.

The traditional Mizo law permits men to have a concubine. Therefore, men were never considered committing adultery even if he had sexual relationship outside marriage. The Mizo customary Law, 2006 is silent on the issue of adultery with regards to men.

So, in a patriarchal society like the Mizo, law regarding divorce is very unfavourable for women and they are not entitled to any property of their father/husband even in divorce. The absence of divorce Law makes the position of women more lamentable. When divorce takes place, women suffer their worst setback as they are sometimes left homeless. Women have no legal protection and the Mizo law does not give maintenance. The Churches in Mizoram did play an important role in society and family matters such as marriage and divorce. For instance, The Presbyterian Church, the largest denomination in Mizoram, has their own rules and regulations with regards to marriage and divorce listed in a

book titled *Nupa Chungchang Dan* or Laws relating to Marriage (2006). The Church pointed out several grounds for divorce though it never recommended divorce of couples. Yet, incidentally, in the recent years, a stable increase in the prevalence of divorce has been observed in Mizoram. According to the latest census (2011) out of all the states, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Nagaland accomplished the highest number of divorced or separated from North-East as a percentage of every married population in the country. Mizoram have the highest divorce rate of 6.34 percent. Following is the list of divorce rates in India:

| <i>Sl.No.</i> | <i>Name of States</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Mizoram | 6.34% |
| 2 | Meghalaya | 4.11% |
| 3 | Sikkim | 2.16% |
| 4 | Nagaland | 2.04% |
| 5 | Kerala | 1.59% |
| 6 | Manipur | 1.32% |
| 7 | Tripura | 1.31% |
| 8 | Tamil Nadu | 1.22% |
| 9 | Andhra Pradesh | 1.12% |
| 10 | Arunachal Pradesh | 1.02% |
| 11 | Maharastra | 1.06% |
| 12 | Gujarat | 1.08% |
| 13 | West Bengal | 1.02% |
| 14 | Karnataka | 0.95% |
| 15 | Orissa | 0.88% |
| 16 | Assam | 0.86% |
| 17 | Madhya Pradesh | 0.85% |
| 18 | Punjab | 0.82% |
| 19 | Jammu & Kashmir | 0.69% |
| 20 | Chandigarh | 0.68% ⁸ |

The record of separated or divorced in India remained very low as compared with global trends.

In spite of the unfavourable condition of women in the society and in matters of divorce, Mizoram tops the list of divorce rates in India. Before a survey as to the possible reason/reasons for the high rate divorce in the Mizo Society, let us first take a look at why divorce takes place in the society. According to Robert Zoliana, in his article published in the *Zozam Times* (6th June 2010), he mentioned six majority causes of divorce among the Mizo couple which include finance and economic reasons, divorce due to children, boundless relationship, family interferences, lack of quality and unmet sexual satisfaction between the couples.⁹ In trying to empirically examine various factors responsible for the causes of divorce in Lawngtlai district, Ngurthangpuii and Dr.V Jaisee Geetha¹⁰ reported that the most commonly reported cause of divorce is infidelity followed by intoxicants. According to their findings men were more likely reported than women to initiate divorce, to give sexual problems, in compatibility and early marriage for the divorce. In contrast, women were more likely than man to report religion, health problems, growing apart, childlessness, financial problems, and problems with in-laws, intoxicants, and infidelity as a reason for divorce. While all these may be true as to why people get divorce, my purpose in this paper is to rather to highlight some practices and the general attitude towards divorce which might have contributed to the high rate of divorces in Mizoram.

Firstly, Divorce is easy among the Mizo. Mizo customary law allows a widow to remarry. Both men and women were

free in the matters of marriage, sex and divorce. Men can divorce women anytime they wish, once divorced, men are not responsible for the wife's maintenance. In fact, the children stay with the mother. Husband is free again to marry someone else. According to C. Sangzuala, Ex-Chairman of the committee on Mizo Customary Law, "Mizo society views marriage very lightly thus divorce is easy". He stated how in the Presbyterian synod, divorce is hardly granted. The church always seeks for solution, if a couple gets separated for three years, then only divorce is granted by the Church which is called 'Marriage Revocation'- even with the precaution, there are still divorces happening, we cannot really control the divorce rate by having an Act or being strict'.¹¹

If we look at the Mizo society, whenever divorce happens, even if the Mizo customary Law doesn't sanction it, the children usually stay with the mother. The women were thus burdened with the responsibility of looking after the children with no maintenance given by the husband for there is still no law/ Act enacted which give women the right to claim maintenance. After divorce the man are scot free of their responsibility and can marry again. The Mizo Divorce Ordinance Act 2008 which gave full authority to the court to settle property as they deem to be just has been annulled. The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of property Bill 2014 has been passed recently by the State Assembly. It was a historic victory for the women movement and a path breaking decision taken by the assembly for the uplifting the status of women in the state. The bill will provide clarity on Mizo marriage. The Mizos conduct marriages in the church according to Christian laws as well as at home

following the traditional rites. It is not clear which one is taken into account legally. Pastors or other church ministers who are authorised by the churches to solemnise marriage will be accepted as marriage officer, and the only difference with the traditional law is that it will now be a marriage accepted by the church and the court giving it a legal standing. The newly-wed couples will have to register with the concerned marriage registrar, within 30 days from the day of marriage.¹² The new bill would provide a guarantee that a man can only divorce his wife from now on, following their wedding in the churches, if it is granted by a court, and then his wife after the separation could now have a share over their acquired property along with her own personal property brought at the time of their wedding and so if and when it becomes an Act the bill will enhance the condition of women in the case of divorce as they are now entitled property rights under the bill. Until then, divorce would adversely affect women in Mizo society.

My standpoint is, what in a divorce if the children remained with the father and let the father take up the responsibility of looking after the children, then the importance of a mother would have been realized in children rearing and perhaps the fear of that responsibility of looking after the children might have salvage the divorce or at least prevent the husband from easily divorcing his wife.

Another issue which I feel accounts for many divorces in Mizo society is that a woman has the opportunities and the support of society to take care of her family by herself. Divorce does not carry the stigma that it does in other states. For instance, in states like Manipur, for tribes like the Paites,

Gangte, Kukis, etc. marriage is taken seriously and in the same vein divorce usually happened as the last resort to a troubled marriage. If divorce happens, as sanctioned by the customary Law, the father claims the custody of the children and looks after them. On the other hand, divorced women are looked down upon and remarriage of a divorced woman is uneasy. Divorced man or bachelors shirk from divorced woman. In such a society, even if it might mean trapping people in unhappy marriage, divorce rate are very low. In Mizo society, in spite of the disadvantageous position of a divorced woman, they can and do get married. Men are not so chauvinistic about details such as virginity. So marriage and divorce do take place easily. The high divorce rate is probably the result of people getting married too quickly, taking marriage lightly and having the ability to fix that wrong. Low divorce rate in India is more of a reflection of the stigma and the lack of options for a divorced women rather than a better ability to find a good long term partner.

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IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON MIZO SOCIETY

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Introduction

EDUCATION provides necessary knowledge and skills which enable an individual to operate ideally in the society and also contribute to its efficient functioning. Education is inspired by ideological postulates that derives from society; but its function does not end at transmitting cultural heritage and in promoting the ideals and values held by society. Given a purposive orientation, education can be a powerful instrument for reshaping and modernizing the society. Educational institutions do not exist in a vacuum. They are the integral and sensitive part of the society. No educational system can operate without being influenced by the norms and values of society.¹

Evaluation of Education in Mizo society

The Mizo folk-tale claims that a script was written in the form of scroll or parchment but it was devoured by a dog due to their negligence and carelessness. Thus, no written document or record could be found in the Mizo society. As

no written documents were available, all information has been passed on orally from father to son, from mother to daughter, from older to younger generations. Sometimes they used to make the picture of animal and human being by carving a rock as part of souvenir.

In the absence of written form of language, the formal education in the indigenous period did remain unknown to the Mizos. But that does not mean that they did not satisfy their literacy inclinations. In fact, their literature, although oral, found expression in their art of telling stories which are now preserved as the folk-stories of Mizo Society. These stories revealed the true picture of the peoples' feeling, power of imagination, thought etc. were treated as oral literature.²

Impact of education on the Mizo Society

The impact of education in the Mizo society can be discussed into two aspects, such as advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

Introduction of Alphabet

One of the most crucial impacts of education in the Mizo society was the introduction of Alphabet. As mentioned before, the Mizos in the olden days have no written form of language. The only system of information is oral education. However, the two Western Missionaries namely J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge came to Mizoram on 11 January 1894. Then the missionaries reduced the Mizo language into written form in the last part of March 1894. The ever first alphabet was thus drawn in Roman Script with a phonetic form of spelling

based on Hunarian system. The alphabet is as follows. A A W B C H D E F G H I J K L M N P R O S T T U V Z. This script is still used by the Mizos with eminently satisfactory.³

Opening of Formal School

Another important impact of education in Mizo society was the opening of formal school. The first school was opened in 1893 at Aizawl by the British Indians Government. But this school was meant for the children of Sepoy who were serving in Mizoram. The medium of instruction in the school was Hindi. The Military Police havildar was employed as teacher.⁴

However, the real foundation of formal education in the Mizo society was laid by the missionaries. The first school for the Mizos was opened on 1st April 1894 with two pupils. But this school was closed down when the missionaries left Mizoram at the end of 1897. Then the school was reopened on 15 February 1898 by Rev. DE. Jones who was Welsh Presbyterian Missionary.⁵

Hence each year more schools were opened and the upper primary school (Middle School) was also opened in 1906. As a reward for taking part in the Second World War, the first High School was opened on 23.2,1944 at Aizawl with 56 students. And the first College called "Aizawl College was opened on 15 August 1958. This College is now christened as Pachhunga University College. In 1979 the NEHU Campus was opened at Aizawl and the Central University was also started from 2001 at Aizawl.⁶

Upliftment of the Position of women

One of the remarkable impacts of education in the Mizo society was the upliftment of the position of women. In the traditional period the position of women was very low and they were looked down upon by the society. Even in the family a woman has no authority. For this there is a saying "*The wisdom of woman does not reach beyond the water point*". It is also a custom of the Mizo society not to take the words of women seriously, and saying "*Women's word is no word just as a crab meat is no meat*". The woman has no right to speak out any matter.

However, with a view to improving the position of women, the missionary opened women's School in 1904 at Aizawl. In the beginning only three girls were enrolled in the School. These girls were ridiculed by the people, saying "Shameless girls, they would not find a suitor". The opening of the School for women, is thus a great achievement for the upliftment of the position of women and it paved the way for the emancipation of women in Mizo society.⁷

Introduction of Western Dresses

In the olden days, the Mizos were very simple in respect of dresses. As they have limited items of cloths, men usually wear loincloth and women used to wear simple skirt. All these items of cloth were made of cotton and the quality was not good. But with the opening of school, the authority introduced uniform and all the students were instructed to wear the uniform. In this way new western dresses have gradually influenced the Mizo society. At present no traditional dresses could be found among the boys and girls of the Mizos. This changing system of western dresses, on

the other hand, can be regarded as part of assimilation by the western culture.⁸

Introduction of White-Collar Job

Another impact of education in the Mizo Society was the introduction of white-collar job. Before the opening of formal education, no white-collar job holder could be found among the Mizos. Most of the people were agriculturists and they feed their mouth in doing daily manual labour. However, some of the Mizos men and women who have passed primary school have been appointed as teachers in the school. In 1903 there were 15 teachers among the Mizos out of which three were women and the rest were men. These teachers received small amount of money as part of honorarium. It can thus, be said that education is an important instrument for getting white-collar jobs in the Mizo society.⁹

Disadvantages

Various point of disadvantages on the impact of education in the Mizo society may be mention. However, few points are to be discussed.

Agency for Abolition of Identity

In the olden days, various Ethnic groups of the Mizo society has their own culture and identity. For instance, the Lusei used to knot their hair at the back of the head, the Paite used to knot their hair at the right side of the head, and the Maras and the Lais used to knot their hair in front of the forehead. In this way it is very easy to identify these groups of people from their physical appearance. However, as soon as the school was opened by the missionaries, those who

were enrolled in the school must shave their hair as the style of the missionaries. Those who do not obey the instruction may be expelled from the school. It can thus be said that education is the instrument for the abolition of own cultural identity.¹⁰

Education breeds aversion to manual work

Before the introduction of education, the Mizos were industrious. All men and women, except, old age persons, have been worked very hard in the paddy field. They harvest large amount of rice and maze etc. But with the introduction of education in the Mizo society, most of the young students were afraid of visiting the paddy field for manual labour. Their main hobby is adaptation of new fashion and roaming here and there in the day time. On the other hand, old age people worked very hard in the jhum every day for searching their daily food.

Causes for Abandonment of *Tlawmngaihna*

The Mizos were very popular and well known by their neighbouring tribes for their practices of moral code of conduct, i.e. *Tlawmngaihna*. The Superintendent of Mizoram in 1924-1932, NE Parry writes in his book *The Lakhers* "No use was made of the Zawlbuk or bachelor's house, nor of the custom of *Tlawmngaihna*, (untranslatable term, meaning the obligation on every one to be unselfish and to help others).¹¹ *Tlawmngaihna* means, respect of the elders, unselfishness, cooperation with other etc. But this custom of *Tlawmngaihna* is very much abandoned in Mizo society at present, especially among the educated people. By and large, the educated people rarely visited the house of dead

person in the night time and hardly dug the grave of dead person.¹²

Leading to Individualism

The society is a place where every individual should help each other. No one can live alone, and we need helps from the other people. We should also cooperate with one another in case of happiness and sorrows. But some educated persons are not cooperative and they did not open themselves for their neighbours. By making simple excuse they are always confined to their family. In this way, the educated people usually led a life of individualism.

Factor of Inter-marriage

Marriage is one of the corner stone of the society and is the principle of God. Various groups have their own customs and practices in relating to the marriage. Nowadays intermarriage is commonly practised among the educated people. Some people used to marry black while some are marrying white. It may be black or white, inter-marriage is one of the ways of losing own custom and culture. From sociological point of view, losing of own culture is the beginning way for losing of own nation.

Instrument of Corruption

Corruption is a global phenomenon. It is found almost in every society. The Mizo society is also no exception to this. Recently, a large number of cases have been registered in connection with corruption. Most of the officials who have been involved in the cases were educated persons. In this

way, it can be said that education in one of the instruments of corruption.¹³

Conclusion

As already mentioned, education is a very important and necessary instrument for bringing about progress and development in the Mizo society. It is also a powerful agency for socialization of the children as well as the instrument for shaping the character of an individual. It can be said that education is all round development of the society. However, it is necessary to be careful in the application of education in the society. The society on the other hand is characterised by various traditional norms, values as well as cultures. It is therefore necessary to preserve these traditional norms and values. In this way education and the society should go hand in hand and mutual cooperation should be maintained between them. Therefore, the Mizo society now needs to ensure revival and preservation of its traditional culture in such a measure that the wind of the west that is blowing across the socio-cultural spheres of the Mizo society may not blow away the traditional culture.

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SONGS OF LALTHERI (LALTHERI ZAI) AS REFLECTION OF LIBERATION FOR SOCIAL BONDAGE IN MIZO SOCIETY

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Introduction

MOST of the Mizo traditional songs were composed during the pre-colonial period. Majority of Mizo songs of during this period were named after the composers, for examples *Darmani zai* (Songs of Darmani), *Laltheri zai*, *Lianchhiari zai*, *Darlenglehi zai*, *Darpawngi zai*, *Aikhiangi zai* (Songs of Aikhiangi), *Saikuti zai* are among others.¹ Among the women composer, Laltheri played a vital role and she is the one who first broke the boundary of pre-colonial Mizo society. As such, an attempt will be made on how the song of Laltheri reflects pre-colonial Mizo society and how her song was reflection of liberation for social bondage in Mizo society. Laltheri was the only daughter of a brave and powerful Sailo chief named Lalsavunga. Laltheri was like her father and inherited her father's bravery. She has three brother and all of them were powerful chief in their respective village. When Lalsavunga died in 1842 at *Darlawng tlang* (Darlawng village), Laltheri and her brother were shifted to Saitual village. After

a few years, they shifted to neighbouring village called *Ruallung* Village and settled there.

Genesis of Laltheri's song

According to the unwritten law of pre-colonial Mizo society, a village chief daughter has to marry only a son of village chief and as such, marriage of chief son or daughter with commoner never happened in traditional Mizo society. But, Laltheri could not uphold the dignity of her father and unwritten law of Mizo society. When they shifted to Ruallung village, Laltheri and one commoner named Chalthanga fell in love. As a result, Laltheri has conceived a baby. When they heard the news about her relation with Chalthanga, Laltheri's brothers were very angry and upset. In order to avenge, they plan to kill Chalthanga. Therefore, they hired the local youth and through those youth, they killed Chalthanga. As soon as Laltheri heard the news of Chalthanga, she shut desperately on the bed and then she try to cry with from the innermost of her heart.

But it was futile attempt and instead, she lost her breathes and she was about to die. Somehow, she recovered after several hours, she cried bitterly and later she fells down to the ground and she was in a coma. After that, she wakes up, screaming and weep aloud with great tears. Then, she went to the outside and tear off her clothes and necklace. Now she looked like an idiot and did not want to wear any clothes. She roams without wearing any clothes, cover her head with a rag and she slept on the street. When her mother asks her to wear clothes and eat food, Laltheri simply replied that my dear Chalthanga too neither drink and eat nor put clothes. Lives of Laltheri clearly reflect the innermost of her feelings

and suffering. Her suffering finally broke the hearts of her brothers. As a result, her brothers and mother were really repent on what they did on Chalthanga and the chief Vanhnuailiana, her brother promised that in future, such cruel incidents would not happen to our relatives. After several years, Laltheri again falls in love with a commoner named Dingmanga. Now that things have changed, her brother Vanhnuailiana became very happy for their marriage proposal. They organised grand celebration of the marriage and thus Laltheri was made of a village chief and became a good chief. All these things have vividly reflected in her poems and let us discuss how Laltheri reflects suffering and society of the age in her poem.

Laltheri's Song: A Closer Look

One dominant Mizo identity is that generally, the members of the tribe marry into their own group and marriage outside their tribe was not encouraged. Like other tribal culture of the world, the same happens to Mizo society and this is frequently reflected in the song of Laltheri. Generally, marriage in pre-colonial rule was a civil contract. Sometimes, girls were often forced to marry against their will for the sake of a good bride price. At the same time, marriage in Mizo society was solemnized as a bond of family tie that every parent is careful in selecting a partner for their children. Normally, the hero and heroine fall in love and ended up in marriage unless death falls in between. But it is always a marriage after fighting against hard times and never an easy marriage.² As such, the song of Laltheri reflects the status and change of tradition in Mizo society. In the first stanza of her song, when her mother asks to wear clothes and eat food, Laltheri simply replied that she will not do it because,

Chalthanga too neither drink nor put clothes. As such, she preferred to lay and roam with naked body and she does not want to wear clothes, because her beloved too not wear and lied in the grave.

This was reflected by the following lines:

*Ka nemte puan ka châwi lo vang ka nu,
Ka di thandang zâlna mah, chhimhlei tualdaihah.*
Mother, I will not wear my clothes on,
Even my beloved lied in the grave

It is apparent that her suffering and confession reached the zenith in the second stanza. Her mother was afraid that Laltheri might die if she did not take meal. So that, she was often request to take meal by her mother. But Laltheri simply replied her mother that she will not die because of not taking any meal. To her, it may be easier to die than not taking meal.

*Chhunrawl lovin ka fam lo vang, ka nu,
Suihlunglengin Sailo ngurpui fam lo awl nâ e.*
Mother, I will not die without having mid-day meal,
Even for daughter of Sailo chief, it is easier to die
with longing.

Now, Laltheri strongly attacked her mother and said to her that they were so stupid for killing her beloved. Not only that they hang up the head of her beloved near their house.

*Ka chun leh zua suihlung in mawl lua e,
Kan sum tualah Thangdang thlunglu hawihnten in tar e.*
Mother, you are so stupid,
You beheaded my beloved and hang up near our house.

Her desperate and longing continued. She wanted to open the grave of her beloved Chalthanga and once again she wanted to verify and see his face. In no time, her hopes remain faded.

Suihlung lenin piallei khar hawng ila,

A sakhmel leh a zungza tial engtin awm maw e.

Let us open his grave with utmost longing,

Will his body and fingers remain

A zungza tial engtin a awm lo ve,

A sakhmel sensiar khua fur tui ang a luang zo ta e.

His body and fingers were not remained;

His handsome body have run away like running water.

The present study also reflects the place of money in Mizo Society. The longing and love of money is inborn in every human being and it plays a vital role in every society. But, most of the Mizo writers in general show the evil effect of money that they often depicted money as the root of all evils and those who run towards money ultimately suffer. This love of money brought the change that caused a social distinction among the Mizo.

In addition, though there were no written rules of selection of partner for son or daughter of village chief, but there was a tradition that sons of village chief or a daughter have to marry daughter or son of village chief. In a pre-colonial society, for a daughter of village chief, they always look a son of chief so that she can continue and protect her chieftainship. In fact, the bride price or *Manpui* (main marriage price) of chief daughter was very high and for a commoner, it is impossible to match the price. Hence, the

commoners were unsuitable for a daughter of chief. One Mizo song clearly reflect this,

*An lal fanu Chhingi zathum an chhiar e,
Zathum man chu keini neih rual em ni le³*

Due to poor family background, Laltheri's parents did not allow to marry Chalthanga who was a son of a widow. As a result, he was killed by the brothers of Laltheri and undoubtedly, though there was no class distinction, this has indicated that there was the gulf between the rich and the poor.

Another aspect of Laltheri song which is reflected in her song is closeness to nature. Nature and natural phenomena occupy a great place in the tribal worldview and beliefs.⁴ A tribal regards element of nature as a live and consciousness. Similarly, what attracts Laltheri is nature and it is apparent that without reflecting the beauty of nature, she could not conclude her poem.

*Hmaran lenbuang a par, va tinrengin an tlan,
Chalthang rauthlaan run in hlam sawm a vel ngam lo ve,
A hrai te chawi awih lai nuam ve maw.*

Flowering of trees in the north was entertain by birds,
Spirit of her beloved afraid to approach their cottage,
The spirit of her beloved might wanted to lull his son.

The study also revealed that the position of women was not equal to that of the men. They usually occupied lower position in every aspect of life. Indeed, the position of women was very low. Except on limited account, women have no right to inherit property in her owns right. In spite of their low position, they were fully engaged with the household

duties. They do everything except building homes and cutting of jhum. Throughout the day, they confined themselves at jhum weeding grass and collecting vegetables etc for the family. At night time she has to entertain her suitors or *inleng* till late night. Apart from these, they looked after all the domesticated animals. These are clearly reflected by the poem of Laltheri and all her songs were emerged due to low status and problem faced by her. It is also clearly evident that, Laltheri strongly protested social practice and cruel judgement upon her beloved Chalthanga. Finally, her brother chief Vanhnuailiana feel regretted for their cruel action taken upon Chalthanga. As a result, he now allowed not only Laltheri to marry a commoner, but that also liberated ladies of his village.

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