



# Splendid North-East ! Tourism Perspective & Prospects



Sarat C. Joshi

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- Manipur and Tripura
- Mizoram and Nagaland.

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# **Splendid North-East!**

**Tourism Perspective and Prospects**

**Vol. IV  
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**Sarat C. Joshi**



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# Contents

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<i>Preface</i>	vii
----------------	-----

## MIZORAM

1. Mizoram: An Overview	3
2. The People	32
3. Mizoram: For Tourists	49
4. Major Tourist Places	65
5. Biodiversity and Wildlife and Ecotourism	76
6. Mizoram Tourism: At a Glance	100

### *Colour Plates*

## NAGALAND

1. Nagaland: Land and People	113
2. Nagaland for Tourists	139
3. Major Tourist Destination	151
4. Adventure Tourism	183
5. Biodiversity and Wildlife Tourism	187
6. Recapitulation	205

<i>Bibliography</i>	237
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<i>Index</i>	240
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# 1

## Mizoram: An Overview

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Mizoram the land of the Mizo people is one of the Seven Sister States in North Eastern India, sharing borders with the states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur and with the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Mizoram became the 23<sup>rd</sup> state of India on 20 February 1987. The capital of Mizoram is Aizawl.

The origin of the Mizos, like those of many other tribes in the northeastern India, is shrouded in mystery. The generally accepted view is that they were part of a great migration from China and later moved out to India to their present habitat. It is possible that the Mizos came from Sinlung or Chhinlungan located on the banks of the Yalung River in China and then settled in Mizoram.

It is pertinent to note that folklore has an interesting tale to offer. The Mizos, so goes the legend, emerged from under a large covering rock known as *Chhinlung*. Two people of the Ralte clan, known for their loquaciousness, started talking noisily while coming out of the region. They made a great noise which made their God, called Pathian of the Mizos, to throw up his hands in disgust and say "enough is enough". He felt too many people had already been allowed to step out and he closed the door with the

#### 4 *Splendid North East!—IV*

rock. History often varies from legends. But the story of the Mizos getting out into open world through a rock opening is now a part of the Mizo fable.

However, Chhinlung is taken by some as the Chinese city of Sinlung or Chinlingsang situated close on the Sino-Burmese border. The Mizos have songs and stories about the glory of the ancient Chhinlung civilization handed down from one generation to the other. According to K. S. Latourette, there were political upheavals in China in 210 B.C. when the dynastic rule was abolished and the whole empire was brought under one administrative system. Rebellions broke out and chaos reigned throughout the Chinese State. Then the Mizos left China as part of one of those waves of migration.

It seems probable that the Mizos moved from China to Burma and then to India under forces of certain circumstances. They first settled in the Shan State after having overcome the resistance put up by the indigenous people. The Shans had already been firmly settled in their State when Mizos came there from Chhinlung around 5th Century. The Shans did not welcome the new arrivals, but failed to throw the Mizos out. The Mizos had lived happily in the Shan state for about 300 years before they moved on the Kabaw Valley around the 8th Century.

Then they changed settlements several times, moving from the Shan State to Kabaw Valley to Khampat in Burma (Myanmar). It was in the Kabaw Valley that Mizos got the opportunity to have an unhindered interaction with the local Burmese. The two cultures met and the two tribes influenced each other in the spheres of clothing, customs, music and sports. According to some, the Mizos learnt the art of cultivation from the Burmese at Kabaw.

Many of their agricultural implements bore the prefix *Kawl*, which was the name given by the Mizos to the Burmese.

Khampat (now in Myanmar) was known to have been the next Mizo settlement. The area claimed by the Mizos as their earliest town, was encircled by an earthen rampart and divided into several parts. The residence of the ruler stood at the central block called *Nan Yar* (Palace Site). The construction of the town indicates the Mizos had already acquired considerable architecture skills. They are said to have planted a banyan tree at *Nan Yar* before they left Khampat as a sign that the town was made by them.

The Mizos, in the early 14th century, settled at Chin Hills on the Indo-Burmese border. They built villages and called them by their clan names such as *Seipui*, *Saihmun* and *Bochung*. The hills and difficult terrains of Chin Hills stood in the way of the building of another central township like Khampat. The villages were scattered so unsystematically that it was not always possible for the various Mizo clans to keep in touch with each other.

### **Mizo Hills**

The earliest Mizos who migrated to India were known as Kukis, the second batch of immigrants were called New Kukis. The Lushais were the last of the Mizo tribes migrate to the Lushai Hills. By the time they crossed the Tiau river bordering Myanmar, the descendants of Zahmuaka, who came to be known as the ruling Sailo clan, had proven their mettle as able and assertive chiefs. The traditional system of village administration, too, had been perfected. As the head of the village, the Chief or Lal allocated lands for cultivation, settled all disputes in the villages, fed and cared for the poor and offered shelter to anyone seeking refuge. The Mizo history in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is

marked by many instances of tribal raids and retaliatory expeditions.

Mizo Hills were formally declared as part of British India by a proclamation in 1895. North and south hills were united into Lushai Hills district in 1898 with Aizawl as its headquarters. The process of the consolidation of the British administration in tribal dominated area in Assam started in 1919 when Lushai Hills, along with some of the other hill districts, was declared a "Backward Tract" under the 1919 Government of India Act. The tribal districts of Assam including Lushai Hills were declared "Excluded Area" in 1935. It was during the British regime that a political awakening among the Mizos in Lushai Hills started taking shape the first political party, the Mizo Common People's Union was formed on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1946.

The Party was later renamed the Mizo Union. As the day of Independence drew nearer, the Constituent Assembly of India set up an advisory committee to deal with matters relating to the minorities and the tribal members. A sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi was formed to advise the Constituent Assembly on the tribal affairs in the North East. The Mizo Union submitted a resolution of this Sub-committee demanding inclusion of all Mizo inhabited areas adjacent to Lushai Hills. However, a new party called the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) came up to demand that Lushai Hills join Burma after Independence.

### **Lushai Hills District**

Following the Bordoloi sub-committee's suggestion, a certain amount of autonomy was accepted by the government and enshrined in the Six Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council came into

being in 1952 followed by the formation of these bodies led to the abolition of chieftainship in the Mizo society. The autonomy however met the aspirations of the Mizos only partially. Representatives of the District Council and the Mizo Union pleaded with the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) in 1954 for integration of the Mizo-dominated areas of Tripura and Manipur with their District Council in Assam.

The tribal leaders in the northeast were laboriously unhappy with the SRC recommendations. They met in Aizawl in 1955 and formed a new political party, Eastern India Union (EITU) and raised their demand for a separate state comprising of all the hill districts of Assam. The Mizo Union split and the breakaway faction joined the EITU. By this time, the UMFO also joined the EITU and then understanding of the Hill problems by the Chuliha Ministry, the demand for a separate Hill state by EITU was kept in abeyance.

In 1959, Mizo Hills was devastated by a great famine known in Mizo history as 'Mautam Famine'. The cause of the famine was attributed to flowering of bamboos which resulted in boom in the rat population. After eating bamboos seeds, the rats turned towards crops and infested the huts and houses and became a plague to the villages. The havoc created by the rats was terrible and very little of the grain was harvested. For sustenance, many Mizos had to collect roots and leaves from the jungles.

Others searched for edible roots and leaves in the jungles. Still others moved to far away places, and a considerable number died of starvation. In this hour of darkness, many welfare organization tried their best to help starving villagers. Earlier in 1955, Mizo Cultural

Society was formed with Pu Laldenga as its secretary. In March 1960, the name of the Mizo Cultural Society was changed to 'Mautam Front'.

During the famine of 1959-1960, this society took lead in demanding relief and managed to attract the attention of all sections of the people. In September 1960, the Society adopted the name of Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF). The MNFF gained considerable popularity as a large number of Mizo Youth assisted in transporting rice and other essential commodities to interior villages.

In fact, the origin of the Mizos, like those of many other tribes in the northeastern India, is shrouded in mystery. The generally accepted view is that they are of Mongol descents and were part of a great wave of migration from China and later moved out to India to their present habitat. It is possible that the Mizos came from Sinlung or Chhinlungsan located on the banks of the Yalung River in China, first settled in the Shan State and moved on in the middle of the 16th century to Kabaw Valley, Khampat, Tahan and the Chin Hills. The earliest Mizos who migrated to India were known as Kukis. Mizo history in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century is marked by many instances of tribal raids and head hunting led by the village chieftains. The Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was formed in 1952 and it led to the abolition of chieftainship.

The autonomy however only partially met the aspirations of the Mizo people so representatives of the District Council and the Mizo Union pleaded with the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) in 1954 for integrating the Mizo-dominated areas of Tripura and Manipur with the District Council in Assam. The tribal leaders in the northeast were unhappy with the final SRC recommendations and met in Aizawl in

1955 to form a new political party, Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU). This group raised their demand for a separate state comprising of all the hill districts of Assam. The demand for a separate Hill state by EITU was kept in abeyance.

There was little development in the state and many people were in hardship including food shortages. The Mizo National Famine Front dropped the word 'famine' and a new political organization, the Mizo National Front (MNF) was born on 22 October 1961 under the leadership of Laldenga with the specified goal of achieving sovereign independence of Mizoram. Large scale insurgency broke out on 28 February 1966 at the government installations at Aizawl, Lunglei, Chawngte, Chhimluang and other places and the Government of India responded militarily. This was the first time that India had used its air force to quell a movement of any kind among its citizens."

In the afternoon of 4 March 1966, jet fighters attacked Aizawl. The next day, a more excessive bombing took place for several hours which left most houses in Dawrpui and Chhinga veng area in ashes," recollected 62-year-old Rothangpuia in Aizawl. with the Mizo National Front outlawed in 1967, the demand for statehood increased. The Mizo District Council delegation met prime minister Indira Gandhi in May 1971 and demanded full fledged statehood for Mizoram. The Indian government offered to convert the Mizo Hills into a Union Territory (U.T.) in July 1971. The Mizo leaders accepted on the condition that Statehood occurred sooner rather than later.

### **Mizoram As State**

Rajiv Gandhi's assumption of power following his mother's death signaled the beginning of a new era in

Indian politics. Laldenga met the prime minister on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1985. Some contentious issues which could not be resolved during previous talks were referred to him for his advice. With Pakistan having lost control of Bangladesh and no support from Pakistan, the Mizo National Front used the opportunity that had now presented itself. New Delhi felt that the Mizo problem had been dragging on for a long time, while the Mizo National Front was convinced that bidding farewell to arms to live as respectable Indian citizens was the only way of achieving peace and development. Statehood was a prerequisite to the implementation of the accord signed between the Mizo National Front and the Union Government on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1986. The document was signed by Pu Laldenga on behalf of the Mizo National Front, and the Union Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan on behalf of the government. Lalkhama, Chief Secretary of Mizoram, also signed the agreement. The formalization of the state of Mizoram took place on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987.

### **Location and Climate**

Mizoram has a mild climate, comfortable in summer 20°C to 29°C (68°F to 84°F) and never freezing during winter, with temperatures from 11°C to 21°C (52°F to 70°F). The region is influenced by monsoons, raining heavily from May to September with little rain in the dry (cold) season. The average state rainfall is 254 cm (100 in.), per annum. In the capital, Aizawl rainfall is about 208 centimetres (82 in.) and in Lunglei another major center about 350 centimetres (138 in.)

Mizoram is a land of rolling hills, valleys, rivers and lakes. As many as 21 major hills ranges or peaks of different heights run through the length and breadth of the state, with plains scattered here and there. The average height of the hills to the west of the state are about 1,000 metres

(3,281 feet). These gradually rise up to 1,300 metres (4,265 feet) to the east. Some areas, however, have higher ranges which go up to a height of over 2,000 metres (6,562 feet). Phawngpui Tlang also known as the *Blue Mountain*, situated in the south-eastern part of the state, is the highest peak in Mizoram at 2,210 metres (7,251 feet).

Notably, the biggest river in Mizoram is Chhimtuipui, also known as Kaladan. It originates in Chin State in Burma and passes through Saiha and Lawngtlai districts in the Southern tip of Mizoram, goes back to Burma's Rakhine state, and finally enters the Bay of Bengal at Akyab, which is a very popular port in Sittwe, Burma. The Indian government has invested millions of rupees to set up inland water ways along this river to trade with Burma. The project is known as the Kaladan Multipurpose project.

Although many more rivers and streams drain the hill ranges, the most important and useful rivers are the Tlawng, Tut, Tuirial and Tuivawl which flow through the northern territory and eventually join the Barak River in Cachar District. The Chhimtuipui which originates in Burma, is an important river in the south of Mizoram. It has four tributaries and the river is in patches. The western part is drained by Khawthlang tuipui and its tributaries. A number of important towns, including Chittagong in Bangladesh, are situated at the mouth of the river. Before Independence, access to other parts of the country was only possible through the river routes via Cachar in the north, and via Chittagong in the south. Entry through the latter was cut off when the subcontinent was partitioned and ceded to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1947.

The Palak lake, the biggest in Mizoram is situated in Saiha District which is part of southern Mizoram covering 30 hectares (74 acres). It is believed that the lake was

created as a result of an earthquake or a flood. The local people believe that a village which was submerged still remains intact deep under the waters. The Tamdil lake is a natural lake situated 85 km (53 mi) from Aizawl.

Legend has it that a huge mustard plant once stood in this place. When the plant was cut down, jets of water sprayed from the plant and created a pool of water, thus the lake was named pamdil which means of 'Lake of Mustard Plant'. Today the lake is an important tourist attraction and a holiday resort. The most significant lake in Mizo history Rih Dil is ironically located in Burma, a few kilometres from the India-Burma border. It was believed that the departed souls pass through this lake before making their way to Pialral or heaven.

The folded structure of the Mizoram ranges are at the junction of two moving tectonic plates. (Indian and Burmese Desi Kachar 1974) The folded hilly or mountainous North South belts, with perpendicular faults, comprise sediments of the Surma, Barail, Tipam groups and Aluvium in river beds consisting of deposits of argillaceous and arenaceous sandstones, shale, siltstones and mudstones and greywacke. The rock system is weak, unstable, weathered and prone to seismic and weather influence producing landslides. The soft, black to grey rock is used locally for building materials and for low trafficked road construction work. There are no useful minerals of economic significance apart from clays in the River Tlawng beds. Typical soils are sandy loam, clay loam that have been heavily leached due to the high slopes leaving it porous and lacking in minerals or humus.

A number of oil and gas exploration activities have taken place due the geographical condition with which Mizoram has been formed, leading to the possibilities and high expectation that reserves would be confirmed. France,

Russia and Cyprus as well as several Indian companies have already signed a 12% oil and 10% gas royalty arrangement with proceeds going direct to Mizoram state on any production (April 2009)

The great majority of Mizoram's population is several ethnic tribes who are either culturally or linguistically linked. These ethnic groups are collectively known as Mizos (Mi= People, Zo= Hill). One should note that 'Mizo' is a generic term which denotes a particular group of hillmen who are closely linked culturally and linguistically. Moreover these group of people of hillmen share close physical similarities. There is an increasing unity among Mizo tribes who are spread throughout the northeastern states of India, Burma and Bangladesh. The Mizos are divided into numerous tribes, however, to name a particular tribe as the largest would be an unreliable task as no concrete census has ever been undertaken till date. In order to better understand the Mizos, a substantial knowledge and understanding of the various Mizo Tribes (Tibes who fall under the term Mizo) is a requirement. The Mizos include Hmar, Lushei, Paite, Lai, Mara etc. a few among others. These tribes are divided into numerous Clans within themselves, and these Clans are further divided into sub-clans, for example the Hmars are divided into Thiek, Lungtau, Darngawn, Khawbung, Zote etc. These Clans sometimes have slight linguistics differences. The Riang, a subtribe of Tripuri and the Chakma of Arakanese origin, are a non-Mizo tribe living in Mizoram. The Mizo people usually suffix their descriptive given names with their tribe.

## **Music**

Mizo traditional tunes are very soft and gentle, with locals claiming that they can be sung the whole night without the slightest fatigue. The guitar is a popular

instrument and Mizos enjoy country style music. Within the church at services drums, are commonly used known locally as “khuang”. They are made from wood and animal hide and are often beaten enough to instigate a trance like state with worshippers as they dance in a circular fashion. Mizos enjoy singing and even without musical instruments, they enthusiastically sing together, clapping hands or by using other rhythmic methods. Informal instruments are called Chhepchher. The early Mizos were close to nature and music is still an essential part of cultural life. Whilst gospel music remains an integral part of Mizo culture, Western influence is evident from the contemporary music scene as young people experiment with rock, metal, rap, pop and hip-hop types.

Mizoram's folk music is based around the drum and gong, though there is also a long history of flute-playing which is now defunct. The drums are made from a hollow tree trunk and the gongs, made of brass, are very similar to those found in Myanmar.

The origin of Mizo Music is a mystery. It is therefore, difficult to trace the origin, and to arrange the chronological sequences of the heritage of Mizo Music. However, we have seen some couplets are developed during the settlement of Thantlang in Burma estimated between 1300-1400 AD. As recorded by B.Lalthangliana, the folk songs developed during this period were dar hla (songs on gong); Bawh hla (War chants), Hla do (Chants of hunting); Nauawih hla (Cradle songs) A greater development of songs can be seen from the settlement of Lentlang in Burma, estimated between late 15th to 17th Century AD. The Mizo occupied the present Mizoram from late 17th century. The pre-colonial period, that is from 18th to 19th century A.D. was another important era in the history of Mizo folk literature. Prior to

the annexation by the British Government, the Mizo occupied the present Mizoram for two centuries. In comparison with the folk songs of Thantlang and Lentlang settlement, the songs of this period are more developed in its number, form and contents. The languages are more polished and the flows also better. Most of the songs of this period are named after the composers.

The Mizo's are fortunate enough in having traditional way of classification of their folk songs. A study of their folksongs on the basis of the indigenous system of classification shows that the Mizo's are having about one hundred different types of folksongs. But it can broadly be classified into ten as follows:

### ***Bawh Hla***

This is the chant or cry raised by the warriors when returning from successful raid. The warriors chant Bawh Hla to show his superiority over the enemy, and in order to let his people know that a successful raid has taken place. No other members of the warriors except the killer of the enemy can chant Bawh Hla.

### ***Hlado***

This is the chant or cry raised by the hunters when a successful hunting has taken place. Chanting Hlado can be done on the spot, or on the way home, or just before entering the village, or on the celebration. Any one who witnesses his success can chant Hlado at any time and place.

### ***Thiam Hla and Dawi Hla***

(Invocation & Incantation): These two verse forms are chanted by the Priests and the witch while performing ceremonies.

### ***Dar Hla***

These are named after musical instruments. These songs are not sung by human voice, it is meant for musical instruments. Dar hla means 'song for gong'. There are several songs named after the instruments; but Dar hla is the most popular and greatest in number. So it is commonly known as Dar hla. It has three musical notes.

### ***Puipun Hla***

These are songs named after merry and festive occasions. These songs are the most popular among the folksongs. People sung together with dancing at the time of merry and festive occasions.

### ***Lengzem Zai***

These are love songs. It has no distinctive form but it was named after the theme.

Some verse forms are named after the particular tribe such as Sailo zai, saivate zai etc.

A few songs are named after the village such as Lumtui zai, Dar lung zai etc.

A few song are named after modulation of the voice or sound such as Kawrnu zai, Zai nem, Vai zawi zai, Puma zai etc. For example, Kawrnu is a kind of Cicada whose voice is gentle and low. So the tune of new song resembling to the tune of Kawrnu is called Kawrnu zai.

A great number of Mizo folksongs are named after individual. Most of them are named after the original composer of the music as well as the verse tunes. But some of the songs are named after a beautiful women or the hero of the tribe. The first six have their own common name while the last four have no such common name.

## **Musical Instruments**

From time immemorial, the Mizo have been using different musical instruments. Even though we cannot date the origin, the “Mizo of Kabaw Valley during late 10th to 13th century AD had developed their music as nearly as they have done today”. The traditional Mizo musical instruments are very simple and crude in comparison to other Indian musical instruments and very out-dated to Modern Musical instruments. They can broadly be divided into three: Beating or Striking instruments; Wind instruments and String instruments.

Most of the Mizo musical instruments used at the time of festivals and dances are striking instruments such as different types of Khuang and Dar, Bengbung, Seki, Talhkhuang.

### ***Khuang: Khuang (Drum)***

It is Mizo indigeneous instrument which occupies a very significant place in Mizo social and religious life. Khuang is a must on all occasions. It is made of hollow tree, wrapped on both sides with animal skin. The Mizo gives different names according to its size and length. The big sized one is call Khuangpui (Big drum), the middle one is called Khuanglai; and the small sized, Khuangte (little drum). If it is longish, they called it Kawlkhuang. As far as the history of Mizo is concerned it is commonly concluded that the Mizo ancestors started using drum as far back as when they sung and composed song. Lianhmingthanga believes that the Mizo had received drum from Chinese civilization through cultural diffusion. The process of that cultural diffusion might have passed through the Burmese with whom the Mizo had a close cultural contact which took place from the middle of the 9th century AD until the

end of Pagan period at the close of 13th century AD5. Khuang is the only Mizo traditional musical instrument that is popularly used in the 20th and 21st century. In the olden days, Khuang has no role in the religious functions; but today the use of drum is a must in every church service.

### ***Dar (Gong)***

Another popular musical instruments are various sizes of brass-gongs viz-Darkhuang, Darbu and Darmang.

### ***Darkhuang***

Darkhuang is the biggest type. Darkhuang is very costly and is one of their most valuable possessions. In the olden times, it was sometimes used as a means of exchange; and sometimes the parent of a bride demanded Darkhuang for the price of their daughter. In one of the oldest folksongs we have the following lines: Chawngvungi her price so high I gave necklace hut they refused, I gave a gong and they refused They demanded our sacred gong, Chawngvungi, her price unsurpassed.

But this song (dor hla) is played with Darhu. Darkhuang is played on all occasions.

### ***Darbu***

Darbu is a set of three different sizes of brass-gongs, producing three musical notes. Darhu is usually played by three experts. Some experts played individually by tying the two gongs, one on each sides of his body with rope and hung one gong by his left hand, produce three distinct, rhythmic notes by simultaneous beating. Darbu is meaningfully used on certain occasions like Khuallam and other traditional group dances.

### ***Darmang***

Darmang is the smallest type of gong. It has no effect without other gongs or instruments, but it is used in the traditional dances to keep timing. All these gongs appear to be Burmese in origin, and therefore, it is tempting to conclude that Mizo got them from the Burmese while they were living in the Kabaw Valley during 9th to 13th century AD.

### ***Bengbung***

Benghung is another Mizo indigenous instrument which has some similarity with xylophone. It is a musical instrument consisting of a series of flat wooden bars, producing three musical notes. Bengbung is usually played by girls at their leisure.

### ***Seki***

Seki is the domesticated mithun's horn. The two hollow horns are beaten to lead or to keep timing for the other musical band like Darbu, etc. It was commonly used at the time of group dances are performed.

### ***Talhkhuang***

The process of making Talhkhuang is almost the same with that of Bengbung but Talhkhuang is much bigger than that of Bengbung. It is made of three wooden pieces which are curved out, the depth of the curves being made vary so that the sound produced when beaten are different in notes. It is played with a wooden hammer. The Mizo would never take Talhkhuang to their houses or anywhere else except to Lungdawn, the great platform at the entrance of the village. It has played when a chief or the village erected memorial stones.

### **Wind Instruments**

The Mizo have six varieties of Wind-instruments such as Rawchhem, Tumphit, Mautawtawrawl, Phenglawng, Buhchangkuang, Hnahtum.

*Rawchhem:* It is a kind of Scottish “Bagpiper” or Chinese “Snag”. Nine small Bamboo pipes or hollow reeds, Having different sizes and lengths are inserted to the dried gourd. One of the pipes serves as a mouth piece. Small portions of the pipes are struck out so that it can produce sound when the instrument is blown. The Musician blows in to the mouth piece, and by controlling the holes with his fingers, he can produced various musical notes.

*Tumphit:* Tumphit is made of three small Bamboos having different sizes and length. The types are tied and plated in a row with caves or strings. The upper ends are cut open at different length so that each tube has different notes. The players put the open tube against his lower lip and then blows down. This musical instrument was used during ritual ceremonies and particularly on the occasion of a ceremony called Rallulam and chawng festival, the use of this music was a must.

*Tawtawrawt:* This is a Bamboo trumpet. Different sizes of bamboo tubes are cut off. The smaller tube is inserted to the bigger tube and so on. Many bamboo tubes are joined one after another till the last tube happens to be the size of a forefinger from where the trumpet is to be blown. A dry empty gourd, the bottom part is cut off and joined with bigger end of the bamboo tubes. The whole length can be more than five feet.

*Phenglawng:* It is the Mizo flute made of bamboo. Originally, Phenglawng had only three holes producing

three different sounds. Flute is popular among the other Indians.

*Buhchangkuang*: This is another flute made of reed or a paddy stalk. This simple instrument was usually played by girls.

*Hnahtum*: The Mizo boys can skillfully turn leaves of many trees into simple but indigenous musical instruments. They can produce interesting sound by blowing deftly folded leaves. This is called Hnahtum.

The Mizo have only three kinds of stringed-Instruments such as Tingtang; Lemlawi and Tuiumdar:

### ***Tingtang***

This is Mizo guitar. Mizo tingtang is a kind of fiddle or violin having only one string. A piece of bamboo shaft is fixed in the gourd to carry the string made of Thangtung, the fibre of the Malay Sago palm. The hollow gourd is cut open and covered with a dry bladder of animal.

### ***Lemlawi***

Lemlawi is the family of Jew's harp but the shape and size are different. It is made of small pieces of bamboo. From the piece of bamboo, the craftsman took out a small portion with knife for its string. The sound it produces is controlled by the mouth.

### ***Tuium Dar***

This simple musical instrument is also made of bamboo having three strings producing three different notes. From the outer covering of the bamboo, three pieces of cane like strings are curved out. The strings are then raised up by inserting two pieces of bamboo. It is played like a guitar.

### **Artiste**

Popular female Artiste include Daduhi, Liandingpuii, Zoramchhani Spi & Mami Varte among the current generation and Vanhlupuii, Vanlalruati and C luri among the more senior artiste. Among the Male Artiste, the more popular one include Vanlalsailova, Michael M Sailo, Mama Chawngthu among the many other artiste.

### **Main Festivals**

It is significant to mention that young generation of Mizos are leaving traditional customs and adopting new ways of life which are greatly influenced by western culture. Christmas is probably the biggest festival and local communities contribute towards large feasts, typically organised by nearby churches, where many hundreds in a local community would eat together. Traditional Mizo social gatherings revolve around the agricultural calendar.

1. The *Mim Kut* festival is usually celebrated during the months of August and September, after the harvest of maize. *Mim Kut* is celebrated with great fanfare by (illegally) drinking rice-beer, singing, dancing, and feasting. Samples of the year's harvests are consecrated to the departed souls of the community.

2. *Chapchar Kut* is another festival celebrated during March after completion of their most arduous task of Jhum operation i.e., jungle-clearing (clearing of the remnants of burning). This is a spring festival celebrated with great fervour and gaiety.

3. Pawl means "Straw" hence pawl kut means a straw harvest festival. It is typically celebrated in December and is another important festival.

## Dances

**Cheraw:** The most colourful and distinctive dance of the Mizo is called *Cheraw*. Long bamboo staves are a feature of this dance and it is known to many as the Bamboo Dance. Originally, the dance was performed to wish a safe passage and victorious entry into the abode of the dead (*Pialral*) for the soul of a mother who had died in childbirth. To dance *Cheraw* takes great skill and alertness. On March 12, 2010 Mizoram also sets Guinness World Records with a 10-minute performance of its famous *Cheraw* “Bamboo Dance”, featuring 10,736 participants in 671 groups.

**Khuallam:** *Khuallam* was originally a dance performed by honoured guests while entering into the village arena where a community feast was held. To attain a position of distinction, a Mizo traditionally underwent a series of ceremonies and performed the dance before the guests. *Khuallam* is a group dance performed in colourful dress to the tune of gongs and drums.

**Chheih Lam:** *Chheih Lam* is the dance done over a round of rice-beer in the cool of the evening. The lyrics in triplets are usually spontaneous compositions, recounting their heroic deeds and escapades and also praising the honoured guests present in their midst.

## Life Style

The fabric of social life in the Mizo society has undergone tremendous change over the last few years. Previously the village and the clan formed units of Mizo society. The Mizo code of ethics or dharma focused on “*Tlawmngaihna*”, an untranslatable term meaning that it was the obligation of all members of society to be hospitable, kind, unselfish, and helpful to others. *Tlawmngaihna* to a Mizo stands for that compelling moral force which finds expression in self-sacrifice

for the service of others. The old belief, *Pathian*, is still used to mean God. Mizos often gather together to help in disaster management like landslides or famine.

Mizos are a close-knit society with no class distinction and no sexual discrimination. 90% of them are cultivators and the village functions as a large family. Birth, marriage, and death in the village are important occasions and the whole village would typically become involved. In time of death, the whole local community, as well as all family members of the deceased, mourn together, in the residence of the deceased. This particular process of mourning together lasts anywhere from a few weeks to over 3 months. There are a few community establishments in urban centres that frequently arrange various social events including such varieties as: "Mizoram Supermodel Competition", the first one organized by the now defunct 'Frontiers Club', musical concerts, comedy shows, reality tv shows such as Mizo Idol, discussion groups, "Mr Mizoram" (body building show) and scientific or technological conferences but generally the region is lacking in Western style social meeting establishments.

Much of the social life often revolves around church activities. An active church life is perhaps one of the reasons why Mizos are such a tight-knit community.

### **Media & Communication**

As elsewhere in this age of information technology, Mizoram's media is also growing quickly. Internet access is average, and private television cable channels are popular - the big players in the cable market being ACE Net, LPS (Laldailova Pachuau & Sons) & Zonet from Aizawl and smaller operators are JB cable Networks, LDF Cable, Eldo Zenith Links from Lunglei. Other major media players are

the press, All India Radio, Doordarshan and local cable TV operators. A Broadband internet is also available.

### **Languages**

Mizo is the official language but English is widely used in Mizoram being important for education, administration, formalities and governance. The Mizo community is an amalgam of several indigenous tribes who have unique identities and distinctive dialects. The Duhlian dialect, also known as the Lusei was the first language of Mizoram and it continues to evolve. The Lusei language is mixed with other dialects like the Mara, Lai and Hmar. Christian missionaries developed the Mizo script. Writing is a combination of the Roman script and Hunterian transliteration methodology with prominent traces of a phonetics based spelling system. Mizo is an official language of India. 8th schedule of the Indian constitution.

### **Religion**

The majority (90.5%) of Mizos are Christian. in various denominations, predominantly Presbyterian and the church forms an important part of Mizo culture. Migrated Hindus form a small minority (3.6%) and there are also around 8.3% Buddhists according to the 2001 census, mostly made up from Chakma settlers of Arakan origin. Muslims make up about 1.1%.

In fact, major Christian denominations are Presbyterian. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church was established by a Welsh Missionary named Rev. D.E. Jones and is one of the constituted bodies of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of India, which has its headquarters at Shillong in Meghalaya (India). The administration of the Presbyterian Church is highly centralized. The Synod, with its headquarters at Aizawl, is the highest decision

making body of the church with considerable influence. The financial operation, personnel (including selection of missionaries), administration, management and operation of the church are directly or indirectly controlled by the Synod Headquarters. Other Christian churches include the Baptist Church of Mizoram, United Pentecostal Church, the Salvation Army, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kohhran Thianghlim, Roman Catholic, Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church(LIKBK), and the Evangelical Church of Maraland and ICI (Independent Church of India) which is later known as EFCI. There are also a few number of Mizos who practice Judaism.

### **Education**

Until 1894, when the missionaries introduced elementary education, Mizos were illiterate without any written language. The first primary school was set up in 1898 at Aizawl. In 1901 it was thought that literacy was only 0.9% but by 2005 census had reached 89%. Today Mizoram is second only to Kerala for literacy in India at 95%. There are several educational establishments under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, including universities, colleges and other institutions. Within Mizoram University, there are 29 undergraduate colleges including 2 professional institutions affiliated with the university. The total enrollment in these institutions is approximately 5200 students.

The College of Veterinary Sciences & Animal Husbandry, Selesih, Aizawl, Mizoram is the premier institute of Veterinary Medicine catering the needs of north-eastern states of India.

### **Administration**

After the 1986 signing of the Historic Memorandum of Settlement between the Government of India and the Mizo

National Front, Mizoram was granted Statehood on 20 February 1987 (as per the Statehood Act of 1986). Mizoram became the 23<sup>rd</sup> State of the Indian Union.

As in other Indian states, the ceremonial head of the state government is a governor appointed by the Union Government. The appointment is largely ceremonial. The Chief Minister, who holds executive power in the state, is the elected head. The governor appoints the cabinet ministers on the advice of the Chief Minister.

Mizoram has a unicameral legislature like most other Indian states. The Lais, Maras and Chakmas have separate autonomous District Councils. The present Chief Minister of Mizoram is Pu Lalthanhawla

The Mizoram State Legislative Assembly has 40 seats and the Village Councils are the grassroots of democracy and leadership in Mizoram.

Mizoram is divided into 8 districts:

- Aizawl
- Lunglei
- Kolasib
- Mamit
- Serchhip
- Saiha
- Champhai
- Lawngtlai

There are three Autonomous District Councils (ADC) for ethnic tribes in Mizoram, namely Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) for ethnic Chakmas in South-western Mizoram bordering Bangladesh, Mara Autonomous

District Council (MADC) for Mara people in the Southernmost corner and Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) for Lai people in South-eastern part of the state.

### **Economy**

Mizoram lags behind economically within India with little development due to the geographical lack of markets and raw materials. Cottage industry and other small-scale industries play an important role in the economy. Forest products are being encouraged (see bamboo below) and the 9th Five Year Plan (1997–2002) gives priority to “agro-based industries.” Around 70% of the population is engaged in agriculture.

### ***Bamboo Industry***

There are at least 20 identifiable species of bamboo indigenous to Mizoram. Some 30% of the state is covered with wild bamboo forests, many of which are largely unexploited. Mizoram harvests 40% of India’s 80 million-ton annual bamboo crop. The current state administration wishes to increase revenue streams from bamboo and aside from uses as a substitute for timber, there is research underway to utilize bamboo more widely such as using bamboo chippings for paper mills, bamboo charcoal for fuel, fertiliser and the manufacture of pressed wall panels.

Mizoram has always suffered from famine known locally as ‘Mautam’ or ‘Thingtam’ every few decades. The problem is caused by the synchronous flowering of bamboo species which naturally flower and then die at regular intervals. When bamboo has flowered it produces many seeds and fruit causing rodent feeding frenzies. The Mautam / Thingtam always leads to dramatic increases in local rat populations as well as producing swarms of insects, which then spread to the human food storage areas after the natural harvest

is expired - destroying stocks and food crops. Historically it led to death by starvation (102 in 1859) and even today presents much hardship to many rural communities whose very survival depends on a successful harvest.

The famines are called after the name of the bamboo that flowers. *Melocana baccifera* is called “Mautak” in mizo and the famine that is caused by its flowering is named “Mautam”. When *Bambusa Tulda* flowers, called “Rawthing” in mizo, the consequent famine is known as “Thingtam”. The first Thingtam famine in 1739 was followed by a Mautam in 1769. A Mautam famine occurs 30 years after a Thingtam famine and the latter occurs 18 years after a Mautam. This gives a cycle of around 48 years. There was a Mautam famine in 2006- 2007 and so a Thingtam is expected in 2025. The next more severe Mautam famine is expected in 2055.

It was in October 2005 that the initial heavy flowering of the bamboo was first noticed at Chawngtlai bamboo forest in the southern district of Champhai. It then spread rapidly in 2006 - 2007 throughout the state. After the Mautam, desperate to control the rising rat population, the state government announced a reward of one rupee for every rat-tail taken. During 2006 alone more than 221,636 rats were killed.

The famines have played their part in Mizoram’s history. The famine in 1958 led to the formation of the Mizo National Famine Front which lobbied for and set up relief to villagers by mobilising the youth to distribute rice and provisions. The MNFF later changed its name to the MNF and operated as a political unit to fight for the rights of Mizo people. Under the then Chief Minister Laldenga together with his supporters including the ex Chief Minister Zoramthanga,

the group fought a bitter separatist struggle for twenty years against the Indian Army for self rule.

### ***Agriculture***

The agro-climatic conditions of Mizoram having both temperate and semi tropical climates with tropic and temperate zones, is conducive to a wide variety of crops. Mizoram has well-distributed rainfall of 1900 mm to 3000 mm (75 to 118 inches) spread over eight to ten months in the year and agriculture is the mainstay of the Mizos. More than 70% of the total population is engaged in some form of agriculture. The age-old practice of *Jhum* cultivation is conducted by most people living in rural areas.

Recently, Godrej Agrovet Limited has entered into a new venture wherein Oil Palm and *Jatropha* cultivation, for biofuels is being promoted. A low calorie sugar substitute, *Stevia rebaudiana*, known as 'sweetleaf', has also recently been grown to improve economical agricultural diversity.

### ***Food Processing***

Attempts to add value in food processing are ongoing and MIFCO have canned local bamboo shoots and also the tasty edible spadix of *Alocasia fornicata*, known as Baibing

The total production of fruits, vegetables, and spices increase yearly but attempts to wean local farmers away from shifting cultivation known locally as *Jhum* cultivation have been met with mixed success.

### ***Handicrafts***

It is pertinent to note that Mizo women use handloom to make clothing and cloth handicrafts. The local products are even fused with other materials to give them a fashionable and stylish designs. Mizos are fond of colourful hand woven wrap-around skirt called *puan chei*, and a matching beautiful

top called *Kawr chei*. A multi-colour Mizo traditional bag called *Khiang kawi*, which is creatively knitted out of bright colored wools, is a welcome possession. A typical Mizo blanket known as *Pawnpui* is also used.

In fact, Basket weaving is also common. Baskets known as *Em*, are used and *Thlangra* - a plate for cleaning rice etc. are made from bamboos. In fact, a typical Mizo house is crafted out of bamboos, dry grasses, mud and wood. A traditional Mizo village has been reconstructed at Reiek - a few kilometres away from Aizawl. Though modern houses made with bricks, concrete and tin sheets are now the norm.