

**CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE AMONG THE  
MIZOS IN MIZORAM :  
A STUDY IN AIZAWL DISTRICT**

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# CHAPTER – I

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## The Problem:

The early Mizo society was a simple tribal society which had no known contact with her neighbouring civilizations until the eighteen century. The society was strictly patriarchal and partilineal with a well-defined culture of its own. However, as Wilbert E. Moore rightly observed, rapid change occurs frequently or constantly in any given society or culture.<sup>1</sup> The Mizo society was no exception. Considerable changes have been taking place in the society especially since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The British occupation of the land and peaceful social existence which followed, contact with outside world made possible by the two world wars, abolition of hereditary chieftainship and the introduction of democratic form of Government and of administration after India's independence, greater contact with outside world under the new Indian administration, political upheaval and grouping of villages in the land, new economy with greater occupational mobility, modern education, Christianity and modern communication technologies, and the growth of urban places have, in one way or another, affected the Mizo society.

Even though considerable studies have been done on the changing Mizo society, the institution of family remains a neglected topic of study. The nature and magnitude of change brought about on the family by general changes in the society or the affects of the family on the transforming society remain an unexplored field in the context of Mizo society. Studies that had been made on the institution of family like **B.B. Goswami** (1960, 1963, 1969) **Parry** (1928) and **Dev and Lahiri** (1982) are

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<sup>1</sup> Wilbert E. Moore, *Social Change* (Second Edition), (New Delhi, Prentice Hall of India, 1987), p. 2.

inadequate as the works had been done within the bounds of traditional ethnography.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this, these studies could not answer a number of sociological questions such as the impacts of the processes of modern innovative changes on the family. The present study, therefore, attempts to delineate the family structure so as to reveal the consequences of modern innovative changes on the family structure. In short it aims to answer almost all the possible sociological questions connected with this institution of rapidly changing Mizo society.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The problems which have been selected for investigation already presented may be reduced to the followings objectives. An attempt is made at delineating the innovative changes or modernization in the Mizo society, and the consequent impacts on family structure on the following areas:

1. Mate selection
2. Age at marriage
3. Size of the family or type of the family
4. Husband-wife relations
5. Children-parents relations
6. Economic functional role of the family members
7. Roles of family as an agency of socialisation and of social control
8. Bride-price
9. Divorce
10. Inheritance, and
11. Kinship groups and network.

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<sup>2</sup> Ethnographic data are understood as the expression of tradition, traditional ideas and traditional action without relating to change, if any, on it. Cf. Melford E. Spiro, *Kinship and Marriage in Burma* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), p. xi.

## Survey of Literature:

General works on the Mizos may be classified into three groups namely works of the British Officers, works of non-Mizo, those of scholars and administrators from another part of India, and works of the Mizo themselves. With the absence of specific literature on family in Mizo society, these works are of great value to the present study. Works left by the British officers included such as Lt. Colonel. J. Shakespeare, **Lusei Kuki Clan** (1912), N.E.Parry, **A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies** (1928), T.H. Lewin, **Wild Races of South Eastern India** (1870), William Shaw, **Notes on the Thadou Kukis** (1929), A.G. McCall, **The Lushai Chrysalis** (1949), and Carey and Tuck, **The Chin Hills** (1896) are very helpful especially in the study of the traditional customs and practices.

Works of the second type includes B.B. Goswami's papers such as **Kinship System of the Lushai** (1960), **Bride Price System in the Lushai Hills** (1960), **A Note on the Lushai Family** (1963), and **The Lushai Explanation of Ascriptive Alliance** (1969). Other works like Chitta Ranjan Nag, **The Mizo Society in Transition** (1993), Animesh Ray, **Mizoram: Dynamics of Change** (1982), E.J.Thomas, **Mizo Bamboo Hills Murmur Change** (1993), R.N. Prasad, **Government & Politics in Mizoram** (1987), and B.B.Goswami, **Mizo Unrest** (1979) are helpful in many ways in delineating the processes of change in the Mizo society.

Studies done by the Mizo themselves which have been found helpful for the present work are C. Nunthara, **Mizoram: Society and Polity** (1996) and his earlier

work, **Impact of the Introduction of Grouping of Villages in Mizoram** (1989), Challiana, **Pi Pu Nun** (1980), K.Zawla, **Pi Pu te leh an thlahte chanchin** (1979), Selet Thanga, **Pi Pu Lenlai** (1984), James Dokhuma, **Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung** (1992), B.Lalthangliana, **Hmasang Zonun** (1992), V.L.Siama, **Mizo History** (1953), Dr.Sangkima, **Mizos: Society and Social Change** (1992), Thanga, **Hmanlai Mizo Awmdan** (1992), and the publication of the Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram such as **Mizo Inneih Dan** (1994), **Mizo Woman Today** (1994), **Status of Mizo Women in Traditional Mizo Society** (1975), **Zawlbuk as a Social Institution** (1975), and **Mizo Chief and His Administration** (1975) are reliable sources of information. Besides of these works, a number of works relating to the people of Mizoram have been consulted and referred to, and are mentioned in footnotes and in the list of the selected bibliography.

Works which have been focussed on family in some studies of tribal groups in India such as the **Khasis** (P.K. Dasgupta, 1966, B.B. Goswami, 1969), the **Garo** (Burling, 1963, B. Mukherjee, 1958), the **Bhil** (R.Ahuja, 1966, J.K. Doshi, 1969) are also found helpful. The findings of these studies which have been freely used as one of the guidances in the present work may be noted out as they were presented by Leela Dube.<sup>3</sup>

1. Nuclear household is the most common form of domestic group which has cultural approval.

<sup>3</sup> Leela Dube, *Sociology of Kinship* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1974), pp. 70-71.

2. Formation of separate hearths for sons as they get married or as they come to have one or two children is a common cultural norm.
3. In patrilineal tribes, at any point of time, there may be some “supplemented nuclear family units” with a widowed parent of the husband or his younger brothers and sisters as residents.
4. In such tribes nuclear households of father and sons, and of male siblings usually have closer contact.
5. Where the youngest, or the only son, or at least one of the sons is expected to live with the parents, we have a certain proportion of joint family units at any time.
6. In many tribal communities, lineage and clan operate as unilineal descent groups more effectively than what is generally found in the caste society. The present work, therefore, also attempts at bridging the gap in our knowledge about the family in tribal society in the context of Mizo society. The objectives of the study already presented are expected to be sufficient to accomplish the task.

### **Definition of Major Concept:**

The major concepts used in this study, namely **family** and **modernization** are not easy to define even though considerable attempts at their definitions have been available. It is opined by the present investigator that any attempt at the universally acceptable definitions are bound to fail because of the fluidity of their characters or natures in time and space. It is further made complicated by the fact that these social phenomena could be understood, and viewed, both objectively and subjectively. As

such, they are culture - bound, having no rigid uniformity in type, character or nature. For instance, what has been considered as modernization in the Mizo society may not be considered as such by or in the western societies where the level of modernity reached its highest peak that man had ever seen of. Therefore, the two concepts are understood to be explainable only in the context of the society in question.

The present study, therefore, concentrates more on the practical realities of the phenomena in the society giving less emphasis on their theoretical definitions. The process of modernization is, therefore, comprehensible only after understanding the stage from which the society have undergone the processes of innovative change. Similarly, understanding of the institution of family can not be independent of the practical reality in the society.

The importance of theoretical frameworks is, on the other hand, beyond negligible while performing the fieldwork. Theoretical frameworks are very useful in guiding the whole process of investigation. In fact, without their theoretical frameworks, field research will turn into haphazard collection of facts, not usable for systematic analysis. The major concepts used in this study are therefore, understood and defined as follows:

### **The Family:**

To the average Mizos, the term family can refer to the followings:

1. A group of people living under one roof, the members of which are consisting of a married couple and their children, or a widow or a widower with the children, or brothers or sisters of the same parents, or married couple or single parent with married or unmarried sons and daughters.
2. A group consisting of parents and their married or unmarried children and grandchildren who are either temporarily or permanently living in different places or different houses.
3. The Mizo term for family - *chhungkua* - also refers to all the members of the same descent group. It may also refer to all those who are closely related by blood and affinity. It may even refer to all the members of the same clan.<sup>4</sup>

Answers given by the respondents when they were asked about their family can greatly vary as the term for family - *chhungkua* is ambiguous. For the purpose of present study, therefore, certain theoretical boundaries have to be imposed on the concept of family for the sake of avoiding ambiguity. Thus, the term family or *chhungkua* is arbitrarily determined by the presence or absence of common hearth or common purse. The presence of common hearth or common purse is taken to imply the existence of family whereas the absence of such variables is taken to imply the non-existence of family.

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<sup>4</sup> A clan consists of several lineages in which common descent is assumed but cannot necessarily be demonstrated. See also Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth, Penguins, 1967), pp. 49ff.

At the same time, it may be noted that there is a tendency on the part of the people to accept other relatives or lodgers, who are living permanently or temporarily with them as the true members of their family, and such relatives or lodgers are frequently to be seen in the Mizo families. Therefore, a Mizo family may include members who have no blood or conjugal relations with other members of the household.

The structure of family is mainly based on the husband - wife relationship, procreation and common residence. It is also related to economic system.<sup>5</sup> As the family structure is closely related to the larger social system within which it functions, it both reflects and influences the larger social system.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the reciprocal influences between the institution of family and the larger social system is expected to be found and delineated in this study.

Social Structure: a pattern of social relations. These relations are based on certain values and norms  
Family: a social institution. Norms guide the interaction

**Modernization:**

The term modernization is most frequently used, however, its precise meaning remains so unclear that many have questioned its value.<sup>7</sup> Generally, modernization is used in the social sciences to designate the process through which a traditional society transformed into a society characterized by machine technology, rational and secular attitudes and highly differentiated social structures. Earlier, modernization was

<sup>5</sup> S.M. Dubey and Dinesh Sharma, *Sociology* (New Delhi, NCERT, 1995), p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Alex Inkeles (ed.), *Readings on Modern Sociology* (Englewood Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> Rajendra Pandey, *Sociology of Development* (Delhi, Mittal Publishers, 1985), p. 158.

equated with industrialization. Yet it is much more than industrialization.<sup>8</sup> The process of modernization is also commonly approached in terms of economic growth or development. This has a high but not absolute validity.<sup>9</sup> If it is not to be equated with industrialization or economic growth, it is also important to avoid identifying it with the development of democratic institutions. Then what does it mean?

One way of approaching the concept, which the present study follows for the purpose of the present analysis, is by discerning its core processes.<sup>10</sup> These core processes, however inadequate it seems to be, may briefly be discussed under the following headings:

1. ***The intellectual sphere*** : In the intellectual sphere, modernization exhibits itself in the new conception that it is possible to seek rational explanation of physical and social phenomena. This refers to the view that there is an order in the world, and that definite relationships exist among things. Occurrences are caused, and they just do not happen and it is quite possible to unveil the causes. It follows that such occurrences are subjected to modification, control or regulation by human reason. The methodology which came to be called the scientific method

<sup>8</sup> David Sills, *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 10 (New York, Mcmillan, 1972), p. 386.

<sup>9</sup> Wilbert E. Moore, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> The discussion is based on A.R. Desai, *State and Society: Essays in Dissent* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1975), pp. 21-5.

is, therefore, the product of this attitudinal change. Modernization is, in fact, viewed as a process of attitudinal change.<sup>11</sup>

2. Modernization as a complex process of *system transformation* manifests itself in certain socio-demographic features termed as social *mobilization* and *structural change*. Social mobilization refers to the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken, and people become available for the new patterns of socialization and behaviour. Social structural change is taken to mean the differentiation and specialization with respect to individual activities and institutional structures. Therefore, separation of roles such as between occupational roles and political roles or religious roles, are intensified. It implies also that the determination of roles and status by ascription is replaced by achievement.
3. **Political sphere:** In the political sphere, modernization implies:
  - i) The legitimacy of the sovereign authority of the state is derived, not from supernatural sanction, but from secular sanctions inhering in the people and based on accountability to the people.
  - ii) The continual diffusion of political power to wider groups of society - ultimately to all adult citizens, namely the universal adult franchise.
  - iii) Unlike the rulers of traditional societies, the rulers of modern societies, whatever may be their nature accept the relevance of their subject as object, beneficiaries and legitimizers of policy.

<sup>11</sup> Helen E. Ullrich, *Competition and Modernisation in South India Village*, in Helen E. Ullrich (ed.), *Competition and Modernization in South Asia* (New Delhi, Abhinav Publication, 1975), p. 25.

4. **The Economic Sphere:** In the economic modernization, the following features could be identified.
- i) Substitution of inanimate power such as steam, electricity or atomic for human and animal power as the basic of production, distribution, transportation and communication, and the increasing replacement of tools by machine and technology.
  - ii) Separation of economic activities from the traditional setting, and the growth of secondary and tertiary occupations overshadowing the primary sector in quantitative and qualitative significance.
  - iii) The growing specialization of economic roles and units in production, consumption and marketing, and a high degree of self-sustaining growth in the economy.
  - iv) Industrialization, which is often assumed as the key characteristic of economic modernization.<sup>12</sup>
5. **The Cultural Sphere:** It is characterized by a growing differentiation of the major elements of cultural systems, the spread of literacy and secular education, a more complex intellectual and institutional system for the cultivation and advancement of specialized role based on intellectual disciplines.<sup>13</sup>
- It also refers to the emergence of a new cultural outlook characterized by an emphasis on progress and happiness and spontaneous expression of abilities and feelings, and on the development of individuality as a value, and on

<sup>12</sup> I.L. Horowitz, *Three World of Under Development: Theory and Practice of International Stratification* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> S.N. Eisenstadt, *Modernisation: Protest and Change* (1966), p. 4 as quoted in A.R. Desai, *op.cit.*, p.24.

efficiency. Cultural modernization also brings a new personality orientation, traits and characteristics, revealed in greater flexibility, wider spheres of interests, greater emphasis on the dignity of other human beings, and the emphasis on the present as the meaningful temporal dimension of existence. And the ability of society to develop an institutional structure capable of adjusting to continually changing problems and demands, the flexibility which is central to the issue and challenge, is also the means as well as the product of the process.

6. *The Ecological Sphere:* In the ecological field, modernization is characterized by an advanced degree of urbanization and greater horizontal mobility.

The term modernization is, therefore, taken to mean all these dimensions of changing processes. It is also referred to as modern innovative change in many places. The present understanding of the term as presented above, however, does not mean in any way denial or rejection of other possible views.

### Methodology and Data Collection

The universe of the present study is undivided Aizawl District of Mizoram which consisted of 361 villages including 18 urban areas with the total number of 84,192 household.<sup>14</sup> The total population of the District, according to 1991 Census is 4,78,465 persons. Sample villages in which actual field investigation has been conducted are selected using stratified random sampling technique in which the 361 places are divided into different strata on the basis of three variables: urban, location

<sup>14</sup> Statistical handbook, Mizoram, 1992, pp. 20-40.

along the National Highway, and interior villages which have no proper approach roads. With this technique, the followings are selected for the study.

1. Aizawl (Urban center) with a population of 1,55,240 persons and 28,274 households.
2. Kawnpui (Urban Place) with a population of 5,290 persons and 1,000 households.
3. Sihphir located along State Highway with a population of 5,060 with 756 households.
4. Thingsulthliah located along the National Highway having population of 3,692 with 543 households.
5. Lungmuat, an interior village having population of 415 persons with 74 households.
6. Nisapui, an interior village having population of 684 persons with 128 households.

*You should give a table indicating how many households from each of the ten towns & villages are in the sample.*

Selection of sample villages on the basis of their location is, it is expected, to enable us to compare the situation in rural and urban. Besides these villages and towns, additional information have also been collected from other villages, namely - Durtlang, Selesih, Seling and Tlungvel with the help of questionnaire, case studies and interviews. Therefore, the present study is based on actual field research conducted at ten (10) different towns and villages. In a small locality where the total population does not exceed five hundred souls, respondent is selected by means of stratified random sampling technique in which different variables like educational qualification,

occupation, age, marital status and denominational position are taken into consideration. Though this method is time consuming and suitable only for a very small locality, better representativeness has been attained. In the selection of respondents from bigger villages and urban places, the simple random sampling technique in which fixed interval method is used has been utilized. In this method, house number in a particular street or locality is the main determining factor in the selection of sample respondents. The general background of the respondents collected through questionnaire may first be seen as follow:

household  
 Table No. 1.1. Age group of the family head (the father)

Sl. No.	Age Group	Number	Percentage
1	Up to 20	Nil	Nil
2	21-30	28	10.30
3	31-40	85	31.40
4	41-50	91	33.60
5	51-60	44	16.20
6	61-70	19	7.00
7	71-80	3	1.10
8	81 and above	1	0.40
	Total	271	100.00

family: an institution = not  
 It is abstract.  
 The dwelling unit is a household.

It can be seen that the age group of respondents ranges from 20 to 81 and above in which the age group of 31 to 50 occupies larger representativeness.

Educational qualification of the same respondents may be seen from Table No. 1.2.



**Table No. 1.2. : Educational qualifications of the father**

Sl. No.	Qualification	Number	Percentage
1	Under matriculation	131	48.30
2	Matriculate	63	23.20
3	Graduate	47	17.30
4	Post graduate	11	4.10
5	No response	19	7.10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Occupation of the same respondents may also be seen:

**Table No. 1.3: Occupation of the father**

Sl. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1	Government service	152	56.10
2	Cultivation	63	23.30
3	Business	23	8.50
4	Others	15	5.50
5	No response	18	6.60
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Similar information in respect of their partner - wife may also be seen with the following Tables:

**Table No. 1.4. Age group of the mother**

Sl. No.	Age Group	Number	Percentage
1	Up to 20	1	0.40
2	21-30	47	17.30
3	31-40	92	34.00
4	41-50	83	30.62
5	51-60	34	12.50
6	61-70	6	2.20
7	71-80	1	0.40
8	No response	7	2.58
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table No. 1.5: Educational qualification of the mothers

Sl. No.	Qualification	Number	Percentage
1	Under matriculation	170	62.73
2	Matriculate	38	14.00
3	Graduate	19	7.00
4	Post graduate	1	0.37
5	No response	43	15.90
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table No. 1.6: Occupation of the mothers

Sl. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1	Government service	38	14.02
2	Cultivation	24	8.80
3	Business	65	24.00
4	House wives	98	36.20
5	Others	3	1.11
6	No response	43	15.87
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*how many? give Table numbers when you refer to them*

From the above Tables, it may be roughly assumed that the educational level, age and degree of economic independence have been slightly lower in women in comparison with the position of their husbands. Their religious denominations may also be shown with the following table.

Table No. 1.7: Religious denominations of the respondents.

Sl. No.	Denomination	Father		Mother	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	Protestant Churches	231	85.20	228	84.13
2	Catholic	6	2.20	6	2.20
3	Pentecostal	22	8.10	20	7.40
4	Hindu	1	1.10	Nil	Nil
5	Others	3	1.10	2	0.74
6	No response	8	3.00	15	5.53
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It may be seen from the above table that inter-denominational marriage seems to be present. But the same figure may also suggest virtual absence of marriage between persons of different religious denomination. What can be ascertained from the above tables is that the present study draw information from all classes of the society though the representative from middle class couples occupy the majority.

The period of time <sup>ed</sup> covers by this study may also be shown by showing the year of these couples got married. This has a significance when comparing traditional practices and modern realities.

**Table No. 1.8: Year of Marriage**

Sl. No.	Year	Number	Percentage
1	1931-1940	1	0.40
2	1941-1950	6	2.20
3	1951-1960	15	5.53
4	1961-1970	32	11.80
5	1971-1980	111	41.00
6	1981-1990	76	28.04
7	1991-1997	28	10.33
8	No response	2	0.73
	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Research Tools:**

Structured Questionnaire and unstructured interview are the main research tools for collection of primary data. Five cases are also studied. The questionnaire consisted of 65 questions, mostly closed ended. One thousand copies of the questionnaire is distributed. Questionnaire as the main research tool is a failure. Out of 1,000 copies distributed, only 271 or 27.1 percent are returned. Information collected

Response rate: 27.1 %

by means of unstructured interview are from thirty respondents whose name have been listed in the Appendix. The investigator also conducted informal talks with about hundred villagers. Such an informal interview is found very helpful as considerable data have been collected much to the surprise of the investigator. Information collected through these informal talks may be otherwise inaccessible but for informal talks. Besides, case studies have provided concrete information, and five cases are studied.

Much have also been learned through participation in the everyday life of the people. However, participatory observation is not without problem. As a member of the society, much have been taken for granted. There is also a tendency on the part of the investigator to draw what is best, what will show the picture of the society impressive. Hence, it is always difficult to retain an impartial, objective and skeptical mind.

From the universe of the study, the present work utilizes total of 306 formal respondents. Information collected through these respondents are supplemented by information collected through informal talks, participatory observation and secondary data. However, much care has been taken on the use of secondary data, especially those of information provided by books and articles.

What'd  
you  
mean

## **CHAPTER – VII**

### **CONCLUSION**

The Mizo society, which was formally a little known society, have undergone tremendous changes during the last hundred years, and the processes of modern innovative change are still an on going processes penetrating each and every corner of the life of the people transforming the traditional simple society into a differentiated, modern society.

The process of **saphunnization**, in the context of Aizawl District, is transforming the rules and customs of non-Lusei clans in the direction towards the rules, customs and practices of the Lusei clan. The process seems to unify the erstwhile divided sub-clans of the Mizo into the one and unified social system, which may be described as the Mizo social system.

The process of modern innovative change or modernization, on the other hand, is working to transform the society in other aspects. In the first instance, it brought about revolutionary change in attitude and mindset of the people. The traditional worldview is deeply based on superstition and its related irrational prepositions. Due to the initiatives taken by the Christian missionaries, modern education is successfully introduced in the land, which brings about new attitude and secular worldview which are rational, scientific and down to earth oriented. The economy, which was previously dominated by agriculture as subsistence economy, also experienced the emergence of secondary and tertiary sectors involving the societal emphasis on material wealth and cash based economy. As traditional society was intrinsically

connected with jhum cultivation, changing economy tremendously affected the whole social structure of modern society.

Changes experience in the political sphere have been causing long lasting effects on the society as a whole. The abolition of chieftainship, the introduction of modern democratic form of governance and its consequent party politics, armed rebellion and its resultant grouping of villages, and the emergence of peaceful social environment after the occupation of the land by the British have not only changed the life of the people but also transformed the society into a new structural set up within which social relations are becoming more and more individualistic and determines more and more by a new social value which emphasizes individualism and material wealth. Cultural transformation of the society is thus directed towards western cultural traits.

Social transformation seems to be more clearly felt in the urban areas which are rapidly emerging especially during the last twenty years. The external transformation of traditional society into modern society have been more easily detectable in urban places. Social relation becomes impersonal, distant and business-like though frequency of inter-personal contacts have been increased. Division of society into class structure have also been observable though not in a high degree. With the emergence of peaceful social order and more secure economy, traditional societal value of **tlawmngaihna**, which emphasizes individual's unselfish services to the whole village community have lost many of its relevances. *Traditional society*

which have been constantly endangered by famine, wars and raids which threatened the very continuity of group life produced societal value such as **tlawmngaihna** for the purpose of its own existence. As modern society transform itself towards new economic order under a peaceful social existence, the value of unselfish services to the whole community have been replaced by fierce competitions of individuals for achievements of personal goals. Therefore, individual achievement is emphasized which is not conducive for the spirit of traditional societal value such as **tlawmngaihna**.

The general societal changes have affected family structure in many ways as already presented in the preceding chapters. Changes in family structure as a result of general social change in the society may briefly be discussed as follows:

1. In contrast to one opinion that preferential system of marriage is the rule among the Mizo,<sup>1</sup> the general pattern followed in the process of mate selection is, an had always been based on a system in which **Free Marriage Market** is the rule. Preferential system in mate selection had never been the rule though there is a general tendency to avoid marriage between members of the same descent group. Modern innovative change at the influence of western cultural value further strengthened the system of free-choice as **romantic love** is emphasized as a basis for marriage.
2. Age at marriage both for boys and girls seem to be increased tremendously. The estimated age at marriage for boys and girls in the traditional society is 22 years and 17 years respectively. At present, the average age at marriage

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<sup>1</sup> Jayanta Serkar, 'Marriage System in North East India' in B.B. Goswami, et al. (eds) *Marriage in India*, (Calcutta, 1988), pp. 48 & 53.

for boy is 26 years whereas it is 22 years for girls. Increase of age may be attributable to the general tendency on the part of the people to gain an University degree or at least a secure job before marriage. Increase at marriage seems to have consequence on the society as late marriage seems to imply better health condition for women and less children and better upbringing of children in the hands of more mature mothers.

3. Mizo marriage, which is always a civil contract, dissoluble at the will of both parties remain unchanged. The only change observed is a new religious meaning given to it by Christianity in which marriage is understood to be divine and sanctified. There is, therefore, a tendency to view marriage as divine and eternal.
4. Dominant form of family in the present Mizo society is neither nuclear nor extended though both of the two have always existed. A family consisting of a married couple with unmarried children without any other relatives or lodgers in the household can always be seen. On the other hand, a family consisting of married couple and their married and unmarried children with grand-children and great grandchildren is also existed. But the dominant form of family consisted not only the primary kins but also other relatives or lodgers. Therefore, the form of family system in modern Mizo society may be understood as a continuous cycle of three different forms. Family, at its initial stage, started as a nuclear family, becoming a larger but not extended family which usually consisted of mature children, married sons with their children and possibly other relatives or lodger and finally becoming an extended family in which married couple and their youngest son with grandchildren, sometime even with great-grandchildren, live together under a single roof. The intermediate stage may well be called extended though it does not fit the characteristics of extended family found in traditional Chinese society and India Society. Members of this intermediate stage-family are not ~~co-parceners~~ and that male members excepting the youngest son will break away from their father's house to start a new home.

5. Authority structure within the family is characterized by decisive role played by female members in the process of decision-making though the father of a house can be said to have wielded dictatorial power over the family. In fact, all the members of the family participates in the process of decision making especially in the matter relating to major events or decisions of the family. With the gradual disappearance of division of labour between man and woman within the family structure, woman is gaining more and more power. Her power increases if she is economically independent from her husband. The process of modernisation improves the position of woman by providing better opportunities to have an independent earning. At the same time, modernization can also deprive the position of woman in its initial stage which will be described later.
6. Traditional husband-wife relations which was characterized by avoidance and dispassionate interaction was disappearing. The relation becomes emotional, caring even in public and is based more on equal standings. This has been made possible by cultural modernization which emphasizes individual's freedom.
7. Children-parents relation in the traditional society was dominated by habitual absence of male-children from the home. Children and parent seldom talk to one another except at mealtime. What has been observed at present is the presence of intimate relations between children and parent as both the children and the parents spent more and more time together which is again made possible by the new socio-economic environment brought about by social transformation. Relation between mother and children seems to be more intimate and personal than relation of father with his children. It may be the consequence of economic modernization under which the father, the principal bread earner can not spent much time with his children. It is especially true among families where the children and the mother depend on the sole earnings of the father which makes the mother available always for her children.

8. A traditional family was an economic unit, producing all that it needs for its own consumption with the help of jhum cultivation. All the members took part in its economic activities. It was family labour in which the head of the family wielded economic authority. However, the family is no longer an economic unit in the sense that its members are becoming more and more dependent on the principle bread-earner of the family - the father. It is especially true in urban areas where housewives and their children depend on the earning of the father. Therefore, innovative change although opening up channels for independent earnings for women, deprives the position of woman as she is now economically dependent on her husband much more than what it was before.
9. The part played by the family in socializing the children is minimal and negligible in the context of traditional society. The process of socialization and the role played by the family at present is tremendous. Family becomes the centre of teaching and learning as parent and children are playing the role of a teacher and that of a student. Therefore, family is one important agency of socialization as well as social control. The spirit of competition intrinsically connected with modern society plays significant role in the enhance roles play by family in the process of socialization and social control.
10. Rule of succession and of inheritance strictly follow the rule of descent which is strictly based on the male line only. Traditionally female has no share in the family properties. However, depending on the amount of inheritable properties one possessed, there is a tendency practically observable in which female members are given certain portion of share in her father's family properties. Therefore, the rule of inheritance seems to be undergoing practical modification in favour of women.
11. Traditional kinship relations dominated by a strong mutual obligations between members of the same descent group seems to be disappearing. Kinship relation within the descent group is now dominated not by mutual obligations but by personal preference. Under the changing circumstances,

the mother's father's group is becoming important kinship group for the ego.

12. It is observed that marital dissolution, and divorce at that is socially approved solution to marital problems, and the rate of divorce is decreasing. As it was mentioned earlier, economic dependency of woman on her husband because of transforming economic activities of the society may be attributable to decrease in divorce rate. Economic independence of woman expected to be brought about by the full bloom of economic modernization may raise the rate of divorce.
13. Traditional bride-price has been retained though it lost traditional importance as security for marital bond. However, it still plays significant role for parents of the married couple as it is used for reaffirmation and creation of kinship relations. Its importance is also felt as it provides economic assistance to the parents of the bride at the time of marriage through distribution of portion of bride-price which brings valuable gifts in kind from those who received the bride-price. Traditional practice of **hmeichhe thum chhawm** or **thum** which confines to certain property indispensable for day to day living in the traditional society have also been retained with some innovations. Emergence of expensive **hmeichhe thum** among wealthy families which have been imitated by poorer section of the society have been observable.

It is, therefore, observed that while some of the major world trends in most of the world societies are observable, some trends observed are direct contrast to what have been considered as the characteristics of modern trends.<sup>2</sup> Some of the major world trends which have been found relevance in Mizo society may be briefly

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<sup>2</sup> Those major world trends may be seen on William J. Goode, *The Family* (Second Edition) (New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India, 1989), pp. 182-192.

discussed. While a decrease in the prevalence of the dowry or bride-price has been one of the major trends in other society, the practice of bride-price and dowry like **Hmeichhe thuam** in the context of Mizo society are not only retained but also gaining new importance and new emphasis. This has been made possible by economic assistance brought about by the bride-price from those who received portion of the bride-price which greatly relieved the burden of the bride's parents, and the function of the bride-price as reaffirmation of and creation of kinship ties with relatives and friends. **Hmeichhe thuam** on the other hand, implies the social status of the parents of the bride though there has been opposition to this practice.

While a movement towards medium or high divorce rate is predictable in highly industrialized societies, divorce rate in modern Mizo society have been lower than what it was in the known-past. As has been discussed before, this might have been the result of economic dependency of wives on the husbands which makes it difficult for married couple, especially the woman, to seek divorce. The paradox of economic modernization have been felt as the process in its initial stage, deprives the position of woman though it provides channels for independent earning for the woman in its process.

With the emphasis on freedom of choice and romantic love as a basis for marriage, couple with the weakening kinship ties, a decrease in kin marriage cannot be predicted though such marriage between close kins is usually avoided. This has been

supported by the loosening control by parents over children's courtship and mate choices.

General trends which have been observable in modern Mizo society which are identical to trends experienced in other societies are a decline in influence of corporate kin group, increasing age at marriage for women, an increase in women's rights, more sexual freedom and loosening control by parents over children's choices of mate. What has been noticeable in the present investigation is that factors which have been contributing for changes in family structure have been supported back and strengthening back by the changing family structure which all these factors helped to change.