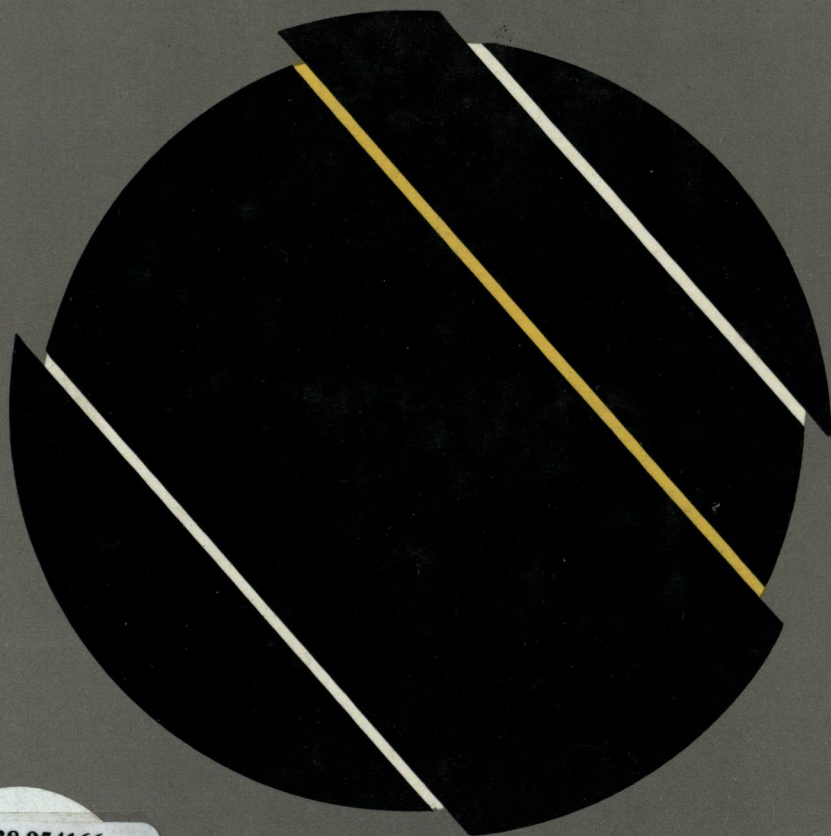


# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MIZORAM



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This book, *Economic Development of Mizoram* is a pioneering work on the analysis of the economic development process of the state of Mizoram. The period covered in the book is mainly from the First Five Year Plan onwards, when Mizoram (then Lushai Hills) was one of the districts of Assam, till date when it is now a full fledged state of the Indian Union. During this period, Mizoram from the administrative point of view, passed through three different stages; viz., District Council administration, Union territory and finally State. In evaluating the economic development during the said three periods, comparisons, where necessary, were made with the neighbouring North-eastern states and also with that of All India. The analysis in the book focuses on the special and peculiar problems of a land-locked hilly state, and other constraints and bottlenecks that hinder the process of economic development of Mizoram. After examining these and other relevant aspects of development, the author gives concluding observations and suggestions that would be of vital importance for the future plan and development of the economy of Mizoram. Supplemented by a multitude of tables in almost all chapters, this book will fill a long felt need, by all those connected with planning, development and research.

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Dr. Lianzela holds an M.A., Ph.D. degree in Economics. He did his post graduate study in Gauhati University (1973- 1975), and was awarded a Gold Medal. He was awarded Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1993 by the same University. He was college lecturer (Pachhunga University College) during 1976-1979 and joined the North Eastern Hill University, Mizoram campus, Aizawl to be the first lecturer in Economics in 1979. He took charge of the department for three years (1979-1982) and is presently Reader in the same department.

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# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MIZORAM**

**By  
Lianzela**



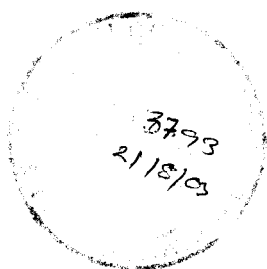
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# Chapter 1

## *Structure of Mizoram's Economy*

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- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Geographical location and area
- 1.3 Boundary
- 1.4 Physical features
- 1.5 Climatic condition and rainfall
- 1.6 Socio-Economic setting
- 1.7 Social and institutional factors
- 1.8 Social Institutions
- 1.9 Economic relationship
- 1.10 Economic significance of social-economic setting etc.
- 1.11 British administration
- 1.12 Special Problems.

### **1.1 Introduction**

Mizoram (or the Land of the Mizos) is a new name of the hilly area formerly known as Lushai Hills District. By an Act of Parliament called the Hushai Hills District. By an Act of Parliament called the Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act, 1954 (Act 18 of 1954) the name of the Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo District from 29th April 1954. Subsequently this district became a Union Territory, Mizoram by name on 21st January 1972 consequent upon the reorganisation of the State of Assam under the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 1971.

Again consequent upon the passing of the Constitution (53rd Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill (1986) by the Parliament on 7th August 1986, a statehood is conferred on Mizoram in February 1987 to become the 23rd state of the Indian Union. there are three districts in the state, viz Aizawl, Lunglei and Chhimituipui. Besides, there are three Autonomous District Councils as provided under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, viz the Chakma, the Lakher and the Pawi District Council, all within Chhimituipui District.

### **1.2 Geographical location and area**

The State of Mizoram lies between 21.95 N and 24.39 N latitude and 92.15 E and 93.40 E longitude. The Tropic of Cancer runs through the heart of Mizoram i.e. it passes just southern periphery of Aizawl town at 23.30 N latitude.

Mizoram has a geographical area of 21,087 Sq Km. the length of the state from north to south is about 277 Kms and the width from east to west is about 121 Kms.

### **1.3 Boundary**

One of the youngest states of the Indian Union, Mizoram, perching on the hills of North Eastern corner is flanked by Bangladesh on the west and Burma on the east and south. The state as inter border with Assam, Tripura and Manipur. The length of the international border and inter state border may be seen from the following table.

Table 1.1 : Length of International and Inter State Border of Mizoram  
(in Kms)

SI No	Border	Length (in Kms)
1	2	3
1.	INTERNATIONAL	
	(a) with Burma	404
	(b) with Bangladesh	306
	INTER STATE BORDER	
	(a) with Assam	123 (approx).
	(b) with Tripura	66 (approx).
	(c) with Manipur	95 (approx).

Source : Directorate of Land Revenue and Settlement, Government of Mizoram

As seen from the above table Mizoram has 710 Kms. international border. This signifies that the region has a high strategic importance in matters of war with the neighbouring countries.

#### 1.4 Physical features

Mizoram consists of ranges of hills running from north to south in parallel series, separated from one another by narrow valleys with only a very small portion lying in the plains. The hills are very steep, more steep on the western sides of the ranges, and the general height of these ranges is about 3,000 feet though here and there are peaks over 6,000 feet in height and the Blue Mountain (Phawngpui) in the South Mizo District rises to a height of 7,100 feet. In general, the hill ranges towards the east are higher than those towards the west and several summits in the Chin Hills are over 8,000 feet above the sea level. The hills of South Mizo District are generally smaller and more fragmented by small brooks compared with those of the northern sides and the top soil erosion is rapid resulting in less fertility than the northern hills.

There are a few small plains in the state situated in the midst of hills and narrow valleys. They have, as a rule, an elevation of about 4,500 feet and are covered with a thick layers of rich alluvial soi. They are surrounded by hills which slope gently towards the plains but are generally very steep, often precipitous on the outer side. The largest of these plains is Champhai which has a length of about 7 miles and at the widest part is nearly 3 miles across.

There are many rivers in the state, but only a few of them are large enough to be worth mentioning. The most important rivers are the Tlawng (Dhaleswari), the Tuirial (Sonai) and the Tuivawl which drain the northern portion of the country and eventually fall into the Barak. The Southern Hills are drained by the Chintuipui (Kolodynei) on the east with its tributaries the Mat, Tuichang, Tiau, Tuipui while the Karnaphuli at the mouth of which stands Chittagong with its tributaries form the western drainage system. The drainage systems of the state are usually complicated.

All the rivers in the district are fed by Monsoon rain only. They swell rapidly during the rain and recede shortly after the rain. In winter the volume of water in the rivers is very small and most of the rivers get almost dried up.

### 1.5 Climatic condition and rainfall

The climate is temperate. It is pleasant in summer and not very cold in winter. In summer the temperature varies between 20°C and 29°C, while in winter it varies between 11°C and 21°C. The entire territory is under the direct influence of the Monsoon. The valleys are feverish and unhealthy and during the rains the climate, even on the lower hills, is moist and enervating. In the higher ridges it is fairly cool and pleasant even at the hottest season of the year.

There is ample rainfall during summer. The following table indicates the average rainfall in inches at each of the eight according centres.

**Table 1.2 :** Average rainfall at the eight recording centres.

Sl No	Centre	rainfall in inches
1	2	3
1.	Aizawl	82.25 during 62 years
2.	Sairang	97.78 during 56 years
3.	Kolosinb	107.58 during 44 years
4.	Sialsuk	85.67 during 44 years
5.	Champhai	76.92 during 55 years
6.	Like	138.06 during 60 years
7.	Serkawn	130.27 during 18 years
8.	Demagiri	106.94 during 59 years

Source : Census of India 1961 Assam, District Census Handbook Mizo Hills P-3

From the above table we can see that Mizoram gets a substantial amount of rainfall each year. The average rainfall in the whole of Mizoram being 254 cm per annum. As against this, the normal rainfall in Assam is 94.1 inches ( 239.01 cm). The actual rainfall in 1952-1953 in Assam was 250.44 cm<sup>1</sup>. In Meghalaya, the average rainfall in the Western Meghalaya is 269 cm<sup>2</sup>. The rainfall in Cherrapunji is as high as 1200 cm and in Mawsynram it is 1392 cm (highest rainfall in the world)<sup>3</sup>.

Owing to the steepness of the hill-sides, and the narrowness of the valleys, the rivers rise after heavy rain with wonderful rapidity. In autumn (September and October) except for a few showers, heavy rains cease and the temperature is usually between 25.4°C and 18.7°C. In winter (i.e. November to February) the temperature is usually between 11.8°C and 24.7°C. There is little or no rain during winter.

The following table indicates the temperature, humidity and rainfall in Aizawl in 1960.

Table 1.3 : Temperature, humidity and rainfall in Aizawl, 1960.

Sl No	Months	Temperature in °C		Relative humidity		Rainfall in inches
		Max	Min	08.30 hrs	17.30 hrs	Total rainfall
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	January	21.4	11.8	57	52	0.00
2.	February	24.7	15.4	51	48	0.10
3.	March	25.2	16.0	57	44	1.00
4.	April	29.8	19.8	55	37	2.06
5.	May	28.5	19.5	79	64	15.25
6.	June	25.8	19.6	92	19	19.94
7.	July	23.9	19.3	92	19	10.61
8.	August	26.4	20.3	91	91	8.99
9.	September	25.3	19.7	89	90	9.31
10.	October	25.4	18.7	83	85	6.37
11.	November	23.2	15.2	75	70	3.44
12.	December	21.3	12.8	74	67	0.04

Source : Meteorological Department, Gauhati.

From the table one can see that Mizoram enjoys a pleasant climate which is neither very hot nor very cold. The region has a moderate humidity too.

### **1.6 Socio Economic Setting**

The economic development of a country depends to a large extent, on the human factor. Non-human factors like natural resources and capital stock are no doubt important but the human factor is of primary importance in economic development. It is the human factor, in the form of entrepreneur and labour that helps in turning the material resources of the country into useful goods and services. The usefulness of the human factor depends on the prevailing socio-economic setting, socio-setting, socio-religious institutions, cultural and social values which together shape the outlooks, attitudes, habits and other qualities of the people. Lewis says "Development is a state of mind. People have to develop themselves before they can change their physical environment....Habits of thought and conduct are the most stubborn obstacles to development"<sup>4</sup>.

In other words it can be said that social order can promote economic growth, provided the social conditions like effort with reward promote economies of large scale, foster entrepreneurship spirit of enquiry and give freedom to people to seize economic opportunities.

#### *(a) Simplicity of life*

Traditional Mizo man leads a simple life with minimum requirement. One distinguishing feature of a Mizo in the past was that a man used to wear his hair long exactly in the same way as a woman. Long hair was admired, and a man or woman possessing exceptional long hair was considered beautiful and admired in ballads. The Mizo people are honest, simple, sincere, outspoken, sturdy and courageous. They are friendly and very hospitable. They are also a close-knit homogenous society with no class distinction from social, religious and economic point of view and no discrimination on grounds of sex. They love singing and they sing at all times, in times of joy and also in times of sorrow.

The Mizo primitive society was a close ethnic group knitted by blood relationship or the same kinship, they were bound to have a deep sense of feeling for others who were also their kith and kin. This may account for the reason why Mizo beggars are not found

even this day. This means that no Mizo would like to see their fellow Mizo begging but would try to help him in all possible ways so as not to let him beg on the one hand and even the needy persons would not like to shame himself or herself or the Mizo community by begging others even in dire need on the other<sup>5</sup>.

Since the society is free from dowry system parents do not need to bother much about financial problem at the time of marriage. In other words financial impact of marriage in Mizoram is not much as compared to other parts of India where dowry system exists. As much marriage does not have much impact on development money.

As the villages are familiar with the art of spinning and weaving their clothes, attention towards better development of this art can promote development in the region. In fact the 'Puan' and shawls, woven by Mizo women are beautifully designed as if they are all for exhibition purposes. But considering the marketability of this indigenous handloom products one limitation is the high cost of production. As the labour cost is very high in the state, perhaps highest in the country, the price of those finished products have but to be high thus limiting their chance of getting good market elsewhere in the country.

## **1.7 Social and Institutional Factors**

### *(a) Social and cultural relations*

Social relationships of the Mizos were practically free from barriers and restrictions of the Caste system. Distinctions, even if there exist, are functional and not social, A man of meanest occupation and position may share plate with any other.

In social life Mizos enjoy freedom. Free mixing of boys and girls is permitted. In the villages there is, to some extent, division of labour between man and woman. But nowadays the women are coming forward for various jobs.

The Mizos follow the patrilocal pattern of family. The male, head of the family controls the social economic and religious affairs, yet, the woman has a place of honour in the family.

The patrilocal pattern of family, where the male member (the youngest son in case of Mizo system) has inheritance right, development prospect is expected to be better than the matrilineal system. Given the matrilineal system of inheritance, the male

members of the family who do not generally have any right to property, nurse a feeling of frustration<sup>6</sup>. It is the enterprising nature of man that lies at the root of diversification and development of an economy. Thus the ultimogeniture succession rule is seen to have stood as an obstacle to sustain enterprise by men in Meghalaya. If the inheritance system had not been based on unigeniture principle, commercialization of agriculture and the consequent monetization would have had wider effects on the economy<sup>7</sup>. In the light of the above discussion we can safely say that the patrilocal system in Mizoram provides a good ground for economic development.

In Mizo society, under a system called 'Hnatlang' (social work) every villager has to contribute labour for community work. In the past, Mizos were often known as head-hunters, a feat supposed to form part of the qualifications for admission to Paradise or as a way to God. If this was correct a great deal of their apparent cruelties to innocent tea planters could be explained and understood. Nowadays, the social life of the Mizos is generally harmonious and peaceful.

#### (b) *Ceremonies*

The Mizos like many other hill people and those living amid hard environments can have no sense of happiness unless buoyed up by the confidence that they have taken all steps possible to propitiate the spirits of good and of evil. Ceremonies are performed at birth and at death, in illness, associations with the hunt, calamity, crops, unnatural deaths in the forests or, in the case of woman, at child birth. Also when at war, and in fact in connection with every possible phase of life. It is this constant association of every situation in life with the presence of the supernatural that made Mizos so orderly, so religious.

Rich men, inspired by the desire for security in the after life and for the admiration of their own little world, as well as to gain social privileges, such as the right to have a window in their houses opposite the hearth, to wear a treasured specially striped, cloth of fame, and a turban, used to perform expensive ceremonies like Khuangchawi. This ceremony consists of five or six phases and it often used to take several years for all the phases to be completed, due to the prodigious expense involved in the provision of cattle and Zu. This ceremony is no longer attempted nowadays due to the arrival of Christianity and the more parsimonious attitude of more modern Mizos.

Considering from the point of view of saving and investment, ceremonies performed by Mizos in the past appeared to be a mere wastage. Wealth so accumulated had been spent for unproductive purpose (for community feasts etc). Had the money been invested for developmental purposes, developmental activities could be undertaken for the benefit of the people. So one may say that ceremonies performed by the people in Mizoram in the past to some extent hinders economic development of the person concerned as well as the society as a whole.

(c) *Animism*

Before the occupation of their land by the British the Lushais were wholly animists. Perhaps one method of classifying some of the implications of the cult of animism is by quoting Mr Risley in the Imperial Gazetteer of India (1907-1909) which summarises the idea of animism current at that time as follows :— “It conceives of man passing through life surrounded by a ghostly company of powers, elements, tendencies, mostly impersonal in their character, shapeless phantasms of which no image can be made and no definite idea can be formed, some of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own ; one presides over cholera, another over small pox, another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, others again are associated with rivers, whirlpools, water-falls, or strange pools hidden in the depths of the hills. All of them require to be diligently propitiated perpetually, so that Khuavange, the spirit of kindness and magnanimity, could bring comfort. It was the Ramhuais who brought illness or injuries to humanity and who punished the breakers of Oaths<sup>9</sup>.

The practice of animism and the doctrine that all events are predetermined by fate and therefore unalterable by man (fatalism) taxed the Mizos heavily for they had, in order to please evil spirits or correct past misdeeds, to sacrifice their domestic animals—pig, goat, hen etc. This can be a costly affair if it is done repeatedly. A man of meanest occupation, but compelled by his religious belief, has to make sacrifice repeatedly, could not be expected to contribute towards development of the region. Therefore, practice of animism, fatalism of the people, could be regarded as hindrance for economic development of the country.

In Mizo society, existence after death gave ground for much speculative thought. There was a paradise but its attainment was problematical, while arrival at the dead man's village itself was by

no means secure. But steps could be taken which would assist chances in the after world, though these were very partial to Lushai men, women's future being less secure. A man who performed the Khuangchawi ceremony or who had managed to seduce seven virgin girls, was considered as being likely to escape the pellets of Pawla who stood at the crossroads near the dead man's village and who was sure to hold up the more timid and unsuccessful. A baby who died during infancy was considered to have good chance of attaining paradise if the parents could press into its hands at death an egg which would naturally roll along the road and all the baby had to do was to follow the egg.

The Mizo society has gone through the inevitable wind of change. The process however, was very speedy and breath taking one. The Mizos are a strange mixture of the past and present. Nearly all of them have become Christians. After becoming Christians, animism and its evil effects found no place in their minds. But the Mizos still follow the old practise of paying a 'bride price' for their wives. The fowls are still received and given during marriage ceremonies.

With the spread of Christianity, belief in all multifarious spirit is and in the efficacy of appeasement was replaced by the new faith. The sacrifices, offerings etc yielded place to the church and prayers. The transformation is to complete by now that none of the old rituals is practised anywhere in Mizoram today.

(d) *Tlawmngaihna*

Tlawmngaihna is a word which has no exact equivalent in English. It really represents the Lushai's code or morals and good form. A person who possesses Tlawmngaihna must be courteous, considerate, unselfish, courageous and industrious, he must always be ready to help others even at considerable inconvenience to himself and must try to surpass others in doing his ordinary daily tasks efficiently<sup>10</sup>. In theory, Tlawmngaihna should enter into every branch of a Lushai's life. A man who practises the precepts of Tlawmngaihna is looked upto and respected.

Tlawmngaihna as stated above should enter every branch of Lushai's life and in general a good citizen was one who was foremost in meeting calls upon his time which were really necessary for the good of the village. According to Rev. Challiana, Tlawmngaihna is a unique possession, the pride and glory of the

Mizo people<sup>11</sup>. It comprises a wide spectrum of the social virtues such as charity, diligence, patience, bravery, loving kindness, faithfulness and honesty, unselfish sacrifice of one's service to the welfare of the community in all spheres of life. It has been the cultural distinctive treasure of the Mizo people which when practised in the true sense of the term, kept the community together in times of war and peace.

It is note-worthy that while a number of Mizo cultural practices have been annulled by the higher and noble teachings of Christianity, Tlawmngaihna remains intact and survives as the guiding principle of the post Christian Mizo society. In fact, Tlawmngaihna is always considered a part and parcel of the Mizo society as much as Christianity does.

Tlawmngaihna has considerable impact on development. In the name and for the sake of this practise off Tlawmngaihna, the poor were helped, houses for the homeless were constructed, the jhums of the widow or sick persons were cleared etc. In Tlawmngaihna there is no room for selfishness, one has to share his possession with his neighbour and fellow villagers. Had there been no practise of Tlawmngaihna in Mizoram, condition of the poor, sick and needy persons would have been much worse.

(e) *Voluntary Organisation*

Of all the voluntary organisations (Associations), Young Mizo Association (Y.M.A) played the most significant role in the life of the Mizo people. The Association was first called Young Lushai Association (Y.L.A) and was initiated by Rev. David Edward from 15.6.1935. Later from 1947, the organisation come to be known as Young Mizo Association. It is a non political, non official, socio-cultural organisation. In every village there is normally a branch of Y.M.A. The Association took up various cultural, social and developmental activities in the state like construction of village paths to water points, construction of school buildings, running of Adult Literacy Centres, humanitarian work like building of houses for the poor and disabled, preservation of village forests, tree plantation and preservation of cultural practices etc. The Association, in various ways help the government in its developmental activities. They acted, as an agency through which public education in respect of health, sense of ownership of public property, prevention of crime etc, is imparted to the people.

Other voluntary organisations like Mizo Women's Organisation (M.H.I.P), Mizo Elders Association (Mizo Upa Pawl) and Young Men Christian Association (Y.M.C.A) and Young Women Christian Association (Y.W.M.C.A), Christian Youth Fellowship (K.T.P) etc. in their respective field performed various developmental work for Mizo society. They also perform advisory roles as functional extension of the village administration.

## **1.8 Social Institution**

### **(a) Chieftainship**

The institution of cheiftainship was strongly embedded in the early history of the Mizo people. The position of the a chief was an unenviable one<sup>12</sup>. He was the guardian of his people, leader and defender in times of attack by the enemy and above all, giver of food in times of scarcity. In battle he would lead his men. Fugitives in war would seek refuge in his house.

Each village was ruled over by its own chief. Most of the chiefs belong to the Sailo clan, which had established itself as the ruling family before the British took over the hills. In the pre-British period, each village was independent and sovereign. The village chief was the sovereign head with power of life and death. All matters of internal village government were decided by the chief assisted by his council of elders called 'Upa'. Although all power is theoretically in the hands of the chief, practically speaking, he will never try a case without consulting his 'Upas' and as a rule three of four Upas try cases with the chief.

The land, which is the basic resource for economic activities is collectively owned by the community, and is distributed by the chief. The land distributed by the chief was supposedly need-based, and such outlook acted as a check on the excess of private property.

In the Lushai Hills the position of the chiefs continues unaltered even after the end of the British rule in 1947, till the enactment of the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act in 1954. Under this Act the rights and interests of all existing 259 chiefs in the area covered by the Mizo District Council excluding Pawi Lakher region were aquired by the Government of Assam and handed over to the Mizo District Council on 1st April 1958<sup>13</sup>.

*(b) Bawi (Slavery)*

Bawiship was one of the oldest institutions of the Mizo society which appears to have existed from time immemorial. The term Bawi had been described in the first dictionary rendering of the Lushai language as meaning 'slave' or 'retainer'.

A Bawi was an individual who was dependent upon a Lushai chief<sup>14</sup>. There were three main categories into which Bawis fell. The Lushai means for these were Inpui Chhung, Chemsen and Tukluh. Inpui Chhung bawi was applied to a person who in poverty, sickness, or distress, had sought, and received, protection at the hands of the chief. The Chemsen bawi was in a different position as may be indicated by the meaning of the term, 'Chem' being a knife, and 'sen' meaning red, or in short a murderer. Such a person would seek sanctuary with the chief, regardless of cost, in return for protection in the face of retribution if his plea failed. It is easy to visualise the scene as such an individual broke in one the easy security of the chief's entourage throwing himself down before the chief, his enraged pursuers chasing him, bent on immediate vengeance. Sanctuary, life, the abandonment of his freedom, perhaps that of his progeny, were all worth the game of the future in the face of a certain and probably deserved death. This kind of a Chemsen bawi was under no obligation to work for the chief but the measure of submission was great in that the chief acquired the right to the marriage price of his Chemsen bawi's daughters when they came of marriageable age. With the advent of the British administration conditions productive of this type of Bawi ceased to exist.

The last type of Bawi was Tukluh bawi meaning the bawi who promised to enter. This type covered the defeated in battle who, to save their skins, surrendered themselves and, perhaps, their ultimate families to the chief.

The chiefs want to have as many bawis as possible for they work work for them bringing prosperity to them. But a bawi can buy his freedom by paying one mithun or its equivalent in cash or goods. After a discussion in the House of Common, the British abolished the Bawi system in 1915. The abolition would, in a big way, pave the way for equality of the people and also for their development.

*(c) Zawlbuk*

The most useful institution and the centre of village of the Mizos is the Zawlbuk<sup>15</sup>. Every Lushai (Mizo) village possessed a Zawlbuk or bachelor's house. All the young men and boys are under discipline in the same way as in a Boarding house in a public school. The young men used it as a club and dormitory. Travellers can put up in it for the night and the chief uses it as a meeting place where he can make known his orders. In villages where there are Zawlbuk the people are more industrious, better disciplined and keener hunters. So, it may be said that Zawlbuk institution does not have adverse effect on development. It rather the way for better administration which is vital for the development of the society as a whole.

*Mc Call* traced the extinction of Zawlbuk to the antipathy of the Lushai Church leaders. As the Christian Mission did not take a positive attitude either to preserve the institution or to abolish it, the local church executives and the local school teachers took an active lead in abolishing Zawlbuk in the villages. The reason may perhaps be that, some of the practices in the Zawlbuk were not strictly in conformity with the Christian ideals. And this lead most of the Lushai religious leaders to condemn the Zawlbuk. It was the Lushai Mission employees who were the prime movers in abandoning the institution.

**1.9 Economic relationship**

The Mizos, in the past were not unaware of the great civilization that surrounded them. They purchased beads, ambers, brass gongs and iron implements from Burma. They bought guns and chemicals for gun powder from various sources. They bartered rubber for salt with traders from Cachar.

It is amazing that there is no landless peasant and there is no exploiting landlord in Mizoram. The land belonged to the community which is still in practice today. There was no proper land holding system among the Mizos. After Independence, with the expansion of developmental activities in Mizoram, the tribal economy is experiencing the impact of a fast enlarging money economy. It is an undisputed fact that the bad effects of a capitalistic money economy are pronouncedly evident in different spheres of Mizoram today, which helped the growth of the institution of private property in the Mizo society. The gap between

the rich and the poor was never big in the past. But the gulf between the rich and the poor is, at present, widening due to the impact of an enlarging money economy and the total exemption of the Income tax.

The village administration, after the abolition of chieftainship was carried on through a democratic institution known as the Village Council. Since the land is a communal property with no individual ownership, the task of allotment of land for cultivation purposes to the villagers is performed by these Councils. Recently, however, land is being allotted to the individuals in order to introduce terracing and settled farming and orchard plantation in certain valleys and pockets. But such ownership of land is very insignificant.

Agriculture, the main occupation of rural people in Mizoram, engaged more than 70% of the population. The system of cultivation in this area is an age-old primitive method of slash-and-burn, or shifting cultivation or jhum. According to the data available from the Department of Agriculture, the annual area under jhum has come down from 58 thousand hectares to 40 thousand hectares during the decade of 1974-1975 to 1984-1985. At present less than 40 thousand families cut jhum in the state<sup>16</sup>. Every year large area of land is burnt down for jhum purpose. The system is rather destructive.

The present state of economy is far from satisfactory. There is little sign of improvement in productivity in jhum. Physical labour ranked very low nowadays in the social estimation of the Mizo people. Hardly any Mizo would be seen among the porters. Even in the rural area, when people engaged themselves in shifting cultivation, the size of the jhum, in most cases was too small. In this type of jhum, one can hardly expect good harvest, because of the smallness of the jhum area.

Another evil in the economic sphere of Mizo people's life is their love for white collar jobs. Majority of the people above matriculation would look for job in government offices. Easy money during the Union Territory period spoiled the people. Spirit of entrepreneurship is very much lacking even when loan or subsidy is granted to start a project, in many cases, money is misused, or mismanaged and is used for buying foreign perishable goods or products for comforts.

Besides, smuggling in all sort of things, huge tape recorders, quilts, dresses, foot wears, bags, cosmetics, sport goods etc, are rampant in the state capital effectively killing an incentive for local production while at the same time damaging the national economy too. There is also a big demonstration effect which spoils the consumption habits of the elite class, while at the same time, in the interior villages there is abject poverty.

In regards to Trade and Commerce, the export of the state till today is insignificant. To name a few exports, mention may be made of ginger, chillies, squash etc. The whole state depends on imported, perishable and non perishable goods. The pity is that those goods produced in the state with a sizeable amount do not have storage facility or preservation facility, resulting in the huge damage of seasonal goods killing the incentive of the producer. Not only that, in the absence of protection of home industry, the indigenous products made by the small and cottage industries can not stand the competition from outside.

Another evil is that prices of almost all commodities (imported) and also local products are too high in the state. This may be due to high transport cost. Not only the prices are high, even the town bus fare is very high, perhaps highest in India. The wage rate in the labour market is also very high. Skilled carpenter gets Rs 100 or more per day and his helper gets Rs 40 to Rs 60 a day. Unskilled labour when engaged in a manual labour gets Rs 40 to Rs 50 per day. The cost of living in Mizoram and in particular in the town is very high. Labour as a whole is inadequate not because labour force is too small but because Mizos don't come forward in some profession. Till recently, as no Mizo boy wants to become hair cutter outsiders have to run hair cutting saloon in the town. The situation has slightly improved nowadays as some Mizos start doing the said business. But for construction work, for porters etc, the state has to depend much on the Outsiders.

#### **1.10 Economic significance of socio-economic setting, social relationship, social institutions and economic relationship**

Since the society in the past was more or less homogeneous one, with no caste system, no dowry, no land-less and homeless, no beggars on the street, one may say that is congenial for economic development. Even if it does not promote, at least, it does not hamper economic development in a big way. But in the whole life of the society, as well as individual, there is a great lacking for

entrepreneurship. Among the people there is a great love for white collar job. So, educated people, instead of starting their own enterprise or industry would generally look for jobs in government offices and this appears to be the psychological inclination of the common mass in the state.

Another quality that is very much lacking in the society is 'specialisation'. In general, Mizos are quite intelligent, capable of learning. Their ability is remarkable. But unfortunately, in most cases they cannot wait till they attain 'specialisation' in the field of study or in their work. Jack of all trade master of none is their lifestyle in general.

Again, another evil in the society is that majority of the people in Mizoram do not have saving habit. People love to spend money till they spend all what they have. In this type of society no rapid development can be expected. No investment is possible without saving and no development can take place without significant investment.

Their old religious practise of 'animism' in no way helps development rather it hampers because each family is expected to at least make some sacrifice (goat, pig, hen etc.) to please evil spirits. This can be costly affairs when done repeatedly. If those animals used to please evil spirit can be used for other purpose (for making money etc) it would be better for the person concerned and the society as a whole.

As regards to ceremonies also, in the past those rich people, who are the well-dos among the Mizo society, when they have enough riches or possession to perform 'Khuangchawi' etc would spend their whole money (or property) for community feast etc. This appears to be mere wastage of money, if it is judged from the point of view of economic development. But a rich Mizo man has to perform this because of the prestige it gives in life and after death.

Fortunately, the introduction and the spread of Christianity has removed those evils. Nowadays the church took up lots of development activities in the region. Opening school, running hospitals, old-age home, remand home and Rescue Centre for drug addict and alcoholic, giving employment to a number of people in the state, the church plays a significant role in Mizoram.

The institution of Zawlbuk and Chieftainship can be judge from two different angles. For the purpose of defence, justice and

administration the two institutions are playing significant role and their contribution is appreciable. Discipline etc is taught at Zawlbuk. Youths are more industrious in the village where they have Zawlbuk. Orders of the chief are easily carried out through the institution. But sometimes power can be misused and mob-rule can do lots of damage in the society. When there is mis-report (out of hatred) of some people's conduct, the judgement is harsh and damage caused to the victim can be serious.

In chieftainship also, there are some disadvantages. Since every family is to contribute 'Lal Buh Chhun' (certain amount of paddy to the chief) in kind or in cash at the time of harvest, it can be heavy and burdensome for the poorer section of the people. The paddy or money given is at the sole discretion of the chief, and may be used or not used for the welfare of the society. The dictator type of chief may do more harm than good in the society hampering the development of the village.

So far as slave institution is concerned, as they are not free people and in many cases, they are to work for their master or chief, the institution does not promote development as it appears. Rather its abolition brings equality and also gives incentive to work as every one can work for his or her own welfare.

Voluntary organisations like Y.M.A., M.H.I.P., Z.U.P., M.Z.P etc in the state are the real instrument for development. Within their respective jurisdiction, all of them rendered lots of welfare activities, in helping the poor on humanitarian ground, in constructing school building, health centres and in acting as a channel through which public education for various purposes is carried through.

### **1.1. British Administration**

The history of British administration in the Mizo Hills really began in the year 1890, when the territory was divided into two administrative wings, viz North Lushai Hills, a part of Assam and South Lushai Hills District, a part of Assam and South Lushai Hills District, a part of Bengal<sup>17</sup>. The Political Officer as the in charge of North Lushai Hills with administrative control and instructions not to interfere much with the internal affairs of the tribes. The South Lushai Hills District was under the charge of a Superintendent.

The British, in 1898, decided to merge the two areas into a District, a part of Assam under a Superintendent. The same year also marked the beginning of settled administration in the District.

Thus, before the India Independence, Mizo Hills was administered by the Superintendent as a representative of the Viceroy of India with the village chiefs. He was directed by the Government not to interfere in the internal affairs of the people and the administration of the internal affairs of the people was entirely left to the chiefs and their elders (Upas), who used to rule the District in accordance with the customary laws of the land.

The first task of the British in the Lushai Hills was to provide security to the people. By establishing law and order, Parry says, the British gave three immediate benefits to the tribals. First the people could sleep at night without sentries and without fear of raid, secondly they could travel wherever they liked without hindrance and without fear of ambush and thirdly, they could have beer-parties without posting sentries and without the fear at the back of their minds that they might be raided and cut up while intoxicated. British rule 'removed fear, implanted a sense of security and enabled the people to make most of their simple pleasure'<sup>18</sup>.

On the goals of administration in the Lushai Hills one of the very first noted view was that of T.H. Lewin when he said, "Let us not govern these hills for ourselves, but administer the country for the well being and happiness of the people dwelling there in"<sup>19</sup>. The British policy in the Lushai Hills approximated the policy of leaving the tribals alone. The main idea was that the Lushai by themselves would gradually adopt the categories of modern Life. It was also presumed that the Christian missionaries with their intense activities throughout the district would bring in the modernising influence on the Lushai society. The official policy of the government and the policy of the missionaries together had the same effect of detribalisation. The Lushai quickly gave up their own dress and the men started wearing shirts and trousers and the women skirts and blouses. The old customs were being given up.

The Superintendent was the real authority, having maximum power even in the matters of taxation and administration of justice. In brief, one can say that the Superintendent combined in his person the offices of Governor, Chief Minister and Judge of the Judicial courts. The dictatorial status of the Superintendent continued till the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950.

(a) *Excluded areas*

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Hill Areas of Assam were divided into two categories 'excluded areas' and

partially excluded areas. The Lushai Hills was under the Excluded Areas, over which the provincial ministry had no jurisdiction. The expenditure incurred in these hill areas was also not voted by the provincial legislature because there was no representative from the Lushai Hills. The British, as per the 1935 constitution, did not like to give local self government to the Mizos and declared Lushai Hills as Excluded Areas. They wanted to keep the areas away from the popular rule.

(b) *Innerline*

The British adopted the policy of Inner line. By enforcement of the Inner line and the Chin Hills Regulation of the hill tribes of Assam, the people of the Lushai Hills were kept out of touch with the people of the Plains. People of the Plains could get admittance into the Hills passing through rigorous scrutiny which preceded the issue of a Pass. Intercourse between different groups of people (with rest of the country) was thus prevented. This in a way helped preventing exploitation of the hill tribes by some unscrupulous people of the plains, mostly traders and money lenders. But on the other hand, it also caused isolation of the tribes, and almost an unbridgeable gap (cultural gap etc) with the rest of the country hampering development in various aspects. This Inner line continues even today and the Chin Hills Regulation also is in force in the state of Mizoram. The continuance had been allowed by the Government mainly to prevent economic exploitation and the loss of ethnic and cultural identity of the tribes.

(c) *British policy effects*

The British rule had, in the main, three effects in the Lushai Hills. First as the Lushai were kept out of touch with the main currents of political development with the rest of India, the level of their political culture remained far below the all India level. Secondly, the Christian missionaries got exclusive chance to change the Lushai society as they liked and they brought in western mode of living and foreign spectrum of values which ill suited the Lushai society. Thirdly, the money-economy raised an aspiration in the people for economic development and as the government did not provide any economic inputs, it generated frustration in the people. The British, thus, left the Lushai as a restless people, uprooted from their traditional moorings and striving for social, economic and political equilibrium<sup>20</sup>.

## 1.2 Special problems of Mizoram

The geographical location, topographic and demographic characteristics, famine, insurgency, grouping of villages, prevalence of shifting cultivation etc hampered economic development in the region.

### (a) *Communication and high price*

In Mizoram all other means of transport like railways and rope ways etc are absent. The only means of communication available is road transport for which Silchar is like a funnel for putting anything in Mizoram. This results in a very high transport cost in the region. This again affects the price level, making prices of almost all commodities much higher than the neighbouring states. For example in case of bedding time of cloth, the prices at Aizawl are found to be 43.3 per cent higher than Silchar prices. For the pant piece and shirt piece prices at Aizawl are higher by 23.1 per cent and 20 per cent respectively than at Silchar<sup>21</sup>. Town Bus fare also is exorbitantly high in Aizawl town. If one boards a town bus, initial fare is Rs 1. From the starting point to the first bus stop till the third stop this one rupee is the fare. But at the fourth stand, passenger has to render another one rupee and so on.

Besides communication problem with the rest of the country, there is a problem of communication within the state itself. Roads connecting interior villages are either blocked by land slide during the Monsoon season or washed away by rain posing problems to the people.

### (b) *Demographic problems*

In 1981 Census, Mizoram has a population of 4,93,757 persons which comprised only 0.07 per cent of the total Indian population. This means that among every 10,000 population of India, the people of Mizoram contributed only 7 persons.

The classification of the population of Mizoram by five years age group showed that the age group of 0-4 years constituted the largest percentage with 14.32 of the total Mizoram population. There are 13.69% in the age group of 60 years and above etc. To sum up among every 100 population of Mizoram 14 are children aged below 4 years, 14 are 5 to 9 years and as much as 55 persons aged between 15 and 59 years, classified as active population. While

there are 12 persons aged between 10 and 14 years, there are only 5 aged persons above sixty among the 100.

One interesting aspect of this attribute is that of dependency ratio. It is defined as the number of dependent children in the age group of 0-14 years and dependent aged person in the age group of 60 years and above per 100 active population in the age group of 15-59 years. This literally means those who are either too young or too old to work, but has only to depend on the earning of a fellow family members. In Mizoram, we found this number at 79.49 which is yet lower than the Indian figure of 85.40<sup>22</sup>. This indicates that every 100 active population worked for another 80 dependents. If the index is high a region in general cannot expect economic prosperity. In Mizoram, as stated earlier, the dependent ration is very high.

The median of age in Mizoram is 19.57 in 1981. This is slightly lower than the National figure of 20.60. The median age implies that if it is high, there are more of elderly people and vice versa. In the case of Mizoram as the median age is around 20, the dominance of younger population is vivid.

The aging index reflects a combination of two effects, mortality and fertility differentials. This is calculated and defined as the aged persons in the age group of 60 years and above for every 100 dependent children in the age group of 0-14 years. This index number for Mizoram in this respect is 11.68 as compared to the Indian average figure of 16.41.

(c) *Topographical disadvantage*

Topographically also Mizoram is at a disadvantaged position. Barring few patches of flat land along the valleys and the areas bordering the plains of Cachar and Bangladesh, the topography of Mizoram is composed of steep hills and deep gorges. The hills are steep and are separated by rivers which flow either to the north or south creating deep gorges between the hills ranges.

(d) *Famine*

Natural calamities too have added to the plight of the Mizos. Every fifty years or so, the bamboos in the areas start flowering. These bamboo fruit are much relished by rats. The fruit act as a fertility pill for the female rats. Thus, the rats eat away all the crops. The rat menace increases to such an extent that it requires a

tremendous efforts to destroy them. These famines (Mautam) have been occurring from time to time adding to the misery of the Mizos. The last one in the late fifties reduced some of the interior people of the region to abject poverty.

(e) *Insurgency*

Closely connected with the famine problem was the insurgency in 1966. To deal with the problem of famines in 1961, the National Famine Front, which changed its name to Mizo National Front (MNF) was established. With the objective of attaining independence and sovereignty for the Mizo Hills, motivated by the political aspirations and compelled by awareness of the existing economic and political backwardness, the M.N.F. founded by Shri Laldenga gained unprecedented popularity. The M.N.F. took up arms on 28th February 1966 in an attempt to achieve its goals. To deal with the upheaval, Mizoram was declared a disturbed area. Insurgency had disrupted the normal administrative system very much, hampering development in various ways. Even after the signing of the peace accord, huge amount was to be spent for reconstruction and rehabilitation work.

(e) *Grouping of Village*

To deal with the insurgency in Mizoram, the Security Forces were inducted in the district. With a view to facilitate the operation of the security forces and to provide protection and better extension services to the villagers, villages of Mizoram were brought together and grouped in convenient places connected by motorable roads. This activity on the part of the administrative authority very much added to the plight of the poor villagers. Problems like shifting of houses, property, constructing of new houses etc were faced by the people. Moreover, water scarcity problem also became more acute in the grouped villages. All these adversely affected the economic development of the region. But fortunately, the two decade-old insurgency came to end on 30th June 1986 when the Peace Accord was signed.

(f) *Primitive method of cultivation*

Another problem in Mizoram is associated with the primitive method of cultivation known as shifting cultivation or jhum cultivation. Large areas of forest are burnt down each year for shifting cultivation. Due to primitive methods coupled with absence of scientific methods in cultivation, yield cannot be large. Huge

wastage and destruction of land and forest which led to a rapid decline in yield has worsened the fate of the people in Mizoram.

(g) *Resource Constraint*

Resource constraint, minerals in particular is also experienced in the state. Minerals of high economic value are absent in the region. This, coupled with rapid growth rate of the population, and increase of job seekers even among the educated people creates a big problem nowadays. The number of educated job seekers registered, has gone up from 6,512 to 8,682 during 1985-1987<sup>23</sup>. Also large scale migrants from the neighbouring states for various reasons, including Chakmas from Bangladesh, is a big threat to the people of Mizoram.

On the side of resource mobilisation the picture is very dismal. The total revenue of the state is below Rs 2.5 crore which may be increased further to a limited extent by tapping from forestry, plantation and hydroelectric resources. At present the state is heavily dependent on grants provided by the Centre.

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