

**Government  
and  
Politics  
in  
Mizoram  
1947-1986**



**R. N. PRASAD**

The Evolution of party politics in Mizoram is an interesting subject of study. This has been politically the most active zone and is still in the process of firmment. So the author, in the book 'Government and Politics in Mizoram' has highlighted the ethnological, cultural background and administrative set up of the Mizos, the growth of early politics resulting in the formation of the District Council for the Mizos and the Regional Council for the major tribes—Pawi, Lakher and Chakma to manage their local affairs by their own genius. This is perhaps the first effort to study the politics of South Mizoram. It further studies the Mizo National Front, violence, secessionism and counter insurgency measure and other political parties/groups, their impact on socio-economic development, electoral politics and voting behaviour. Besides the constitutional politics resulting in the formation of the union territory of Mizoram/state and government has also been discussed. Briefly an attempt to analyse the Mizo politics objectively has been made. Interplay of subjective interpretations as far as practicable in the present work been avoided. The study is largely based on interview, field work supplemented by primary and secondary sources of information.

*First published* : 1987

*Pages* : xx+364

**Price : Rs. 155.00**

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# Government and Politics in Mizoram

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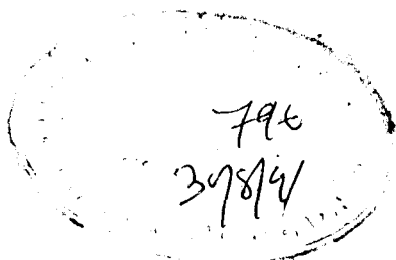
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NORTHERN BOOK CENTRE  
NEW DELHI



000796



ISBN 81-85119-23-6

*Dr S.K. Chaube, Professor and Director, Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, Darjeeling, West Bengal has acted as Research Consultant on behalf of Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi for the publication of this doctoral thesis and the suggestions made by him were incorporated in this book.*

*The publication has been financially supported by the ICSSR and the responsibility for the facts stated, opinions expressed or conclusions reached is entirely that of the author and that the I.C.S.S.R. accepts no responsibility for them.*

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Price : Rs 155.00

Published by Northern Book Centre, 4221/1, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002.

Printed at M/s Swatantra Bharat Press, 423, Gali Jainyan, Delhi-110006.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Land and Brief History of the People

The Union Territory of Mizoram under the Indian Union, situated on the North-eastern corner of India, was born on the 21st January 1972. It is bounded on the North by the Cachar District of Assam and the State of Manipur, on the East and South by Chin Hill (Burma), on the West by Bangladesh and the State of Tripura. Mizoram is geographically situated between 22.20' and 24.27' (N) and 92.20' and 94.29' (E) latitudes. The Tropic of Cancer runs through the territory.<sup>1</sup> The boundary with Burma extends 270 miles and with Bangladesh over 158 miles. Thus, it occupies an area of great strategic importance, having a total boundary length of 630 miles—with Bangladesh and Burma. The territory consisting of three districts of Aizawl 12,590 sq. km. (Lunglei 6,000 sq. km.) and Chhimtuipui (2,473 sq. km.) covers an area of 8,143 sq. miles or 21,087 sq. km. and has mostly a hilly steep-terrain. The average height of the hills and ranges is about 900 metres. The territory, in fact, runs lengthwise—length being twice the breadth. Mizoram has a population of 487,774, i.e. male 251,988 and Female 235,786 which is predominantly tribal and christians. The density of population being 23 per sq. km. is one of the lowest in India. However, the population growth rate has shown an upward trend. The majority of the total population lives in the rural areas and are still on the old pattern of agriculture while the urban population constitutes rarely 25.17. However, it is noteworthy that there is no landless peasant and there is no exploiting landlord in Mizoram.

## 2 *Government and Politics in Mizoram*

So far, no minerals of economic value except rocks and stones have been discovered in the territory, which are used for road metalling purposes. The exploitation of the mineral of economic value has been hindered by such factors, as poor transport-communications, lack of capital, non-availability of cheap power and lack of local talent.

Mizoram has a pleasant climate throughout the year. It is neither very hot in the summer nor very cold in the winter because tropic of cancer runs across the territory in the middle. The climate on the hill top is much better, healthier and pleasant than that in the valleys which are humid, hot, feverish and unhealthy.

Mizoram is a poor and under-developed territory. The main reason for under-development is the lack of good roads and developed system of communications. Thus the territory has no other communication with the rest of the country except the roads since pre and post-independent Mizoram. The rugged physiographic condition of the region compels the tribes to live in splendid isolation. The isolated condition of the Mizo tribes induced them to demand political independence in 1966. But the insurgency in 1966 infused a new sense of urgency into the road-building programme and a number of new roads have been taken up since 1966. Thus the roads have created an influence on the society, culture and economy of Mizoram.

Agriculture is the chief occupation of the Mizo people. But the Mizo way of cultivating land is very primitive and wasteful. It is also destructive of the forest wealth. The practice of what is called Jhuming a slash and burn method of cultivation is popularly known as shifting cultivation. A plot of land is cleared off all its vegetation, then the dry leaves and tree trunks are burnt. Over the ashes of these forests, seeds are sown. For the next year cultivation, they again move to the other sites of the hills cutting down the forests and burning them again. In this way, they shift their cultivation every year. In some cases, it may involve shifting of their villages. There are no permanent sites for cultivation and there is no permanent ownership of land. The land belongs to the community (Govt.).

But the major breakthrough in the development of Mizoram has been in the field of agriculture. The traditional pattern of Jhuming is gradually giving way to modern methods of production, permanent and terrance cultivation. Thus there has been progressive change in the attitude of the Mizo people towards the pattern of agriculture after the elevation of Mizo Hills to the status of union territory of Mizoram.

### *The People*

The history of the origin and coming of the Mizos to their present habitat is shrouded in mystery. No systematic research has been made so far. There is no authentic record about the mystery of the Mizo people before the 17th century. From whatever record is available, it is accepted that Mizos are of Mongoloid stock and are believed to have immigrated into their present habitat, possibly some time between 1400 and 1700 or 1800 A.D. from the upper Burma. But no scientific study as to how, when, why and from where the Mizos came to this isolated landlocked hilly terrain called Mizoram, has ever been conducted.

However, the Mizo historians such as K. Zawla and Rev. Liangkhaia, who wrote "Ancient history and culture of the Mizo people" and "History of Lushai" have pleaded that the Mizos were in the Chin Hills in Burma from 1400 A.D. to 1700 A.D. and their gradual movements of migration started between 1700 and 1730 or 1740 A.D. But in the absence of any written history more accurate dating cannot be accepted and more than thirty years are reasonable for migration, which could have been only in a series of movements.

On the whole, the Mizos migrated from Burma for mainly two reasons—pressure of the chins or the stronger clans of Burma and the pressure of over population, passing through the Chindwind valley and the Chin Hills and finally came to present Mizoram Tripura, Chittagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh, Manipur and North Cachar Hills (Assam). The areas inhabited by the Mizos are contiguous to one another, although they are, at present, under different administrative units. Thus they are Mizos not only in Mizoram but also in

the state of Manipur, Cachar District of Assam, Chittagong hill tracts and Chin Hills (Burma).

Further biological origin ascribes that the Lushai Clan is the descendant of Zahmuaks, as has already been stated by major Maccall in his book "Lushai crasyalies". There is also reference to biological origin that during the period of early migration, there were ten Sub-tribes in Burma. One of these tribes moved further West. This was the Lusai Tribe In Burmese Language 'Lu' means tribe and 'Sei' means Ten, which constitute the Mizos.

The word Lushai is used by the Burmese as well as corrupt word 'Lushai' by the British but the people themselves want to be known as Mizo because it is convenient to name the people and land after the name of Mizo chiefs, who were one of the families belonging to the Lusai Sub-tribes. Now the word Mizo embraces all the Lushai and akin tribes. It includes the whole people as a race. There is no dispute about the fact that the indigenous inhabitants of Mizoram belong to Mongoloid Stock <sup>2</sup>

The Tribes/Sub-tribes and Clans inhabiting Mizoram are Lushai, Ralte, Hmar, Paite, Pawi, Khawling, Kiangte, Chawngthu, Pachuau, Pautu, Hrashel, Tochwawng, Vanchhia Chhakchhuak Zawngte, Fanais, Renthlei, Lakher, Chakma, Pangs and Riang. The Chiefs Clans are Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah, Rivung, Rekhum and Saile. The North and the middle parts of Mizoram are inhabited by the Mizos. The Pawis are concentrated into the South-eastern part bordering Burma and occupying one thousand sq. miles, in the Chhimtuipui district.

The Pawis also came to this place from the East and the North of the Chin Hills (Burma). Similarly the Lakhers known as Maras, one of the tribes with their distinctive dialect, customs, culture and traditions, inhabit the South-eastern region of Mizoram. They also came to this area from the Haka Sub-division of the Chin Hills (Burma). The Chakmas live in the South-West in the western part of the territory and are the most backward tribes, socially, politically and economically. They profess a very debased Buddhism and speak a dialect of Bengali.

The Mizo people are, however, honest, simple, sincere and outspoken, sturdy, independent, enterprising and courageous. They are intelligent people, very friendly and very hospitable, though in olden days, there were constant wars and strifes among the different tribes and hence they were at daggers drawn with each other, yet, at present, they have established good relationships among themselves. The Mizos are no longer nomadic tribes but live in fixed dwelling houses. They have developed a healthy family life, bound together by realities of kinship form.

Not only that but the Mizos are also a close-knit homogeneous society with no class distinction from social, religious and economic point of view and no discrimination on grounds of sex. Social obligations were not taken lightly. Another Mizo code of conduct or ethics, which guides their thoughts and actions in war and peace, is called 'Tlawmngaihna'. To the meaning of this Mizo word Tlawmngaihna, every Mizo should be hospitable, kind, unselfish and helpful to others. It also stands for self sacrifice for the service of others. All voluntary services are rendered by the Mizo people under this useful custom of Tlawmngaihna, which is continuing till now in the Mizo society.

Mizo society is now at the cross road. Many changes in religious practices, social and economic life have taken place. As present, experience shows, the classless society among the Mizos in the past is now being replaced by the emergence of the classes (Neo-middle rich class) and class distinctions. Reason for classless society was that the Mizo society was traditional, whose structure was confined to limited production based on the Pre-Newtonian science and technology. The main occupation of the Mizo was a slash and burn method of cultivation and hunting. The land belonged to the community which is still in practice. There was no land-holding system among the Mizos. In these days, a man had to produce himself everything he liked. This factor naturally fostered individualism in them. There was also no impact of money-economy on a stagnant tribal society. So due to the reasons above, there was no institution of private property and which did not emerge at all till India became free. But 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 also an undisputed fact that the bad effects of a capitalistic money-economy are pronouncedly evident in different spheres of Mizoram today, which have helped the growth of the institution of private property in the Mizo society. There are two bad effects of a capitalistic money-economy and the institution of private property such as concentration of wealth at the top (a few sections of the society) and poverty at the bottom of social hierarchy (large segments of the society). This leads to the emergence of classes such as Neo-middle rich class and the poor. These class divisions are on constant increase in the present Mizo society, as these classes are already existing in other areas of the country. The gap between the rich and the poor was never big in the past. But the gulf between the rich or private propertied classes and the poor is, at present, widening due to impact of an enlarging money-economy and the total exemption of the Income Tax. The emerging Neo-middle rich class is exempted from paying Income-tax. This results in disequilibrium and inequality in the Mizo society. Thus the tribal economy has been exposed to the onslaught of the capitalist economy during the last three decades.

As per Tlawmngaihna, it is the obligation for every Mizo to be unselfish and helpful to others. A Mizo tries his best to be undefeated in the discharge of any social duty and demand. Today, the cumulative effects of an enlarging money-economy are visible in the decay of Tlawmngaihna, in the loosening of social bonds and in the practice of money lending at high rates of interest. Not only this but also with the impact of modern life and culture, there is a strong trend for the Mizo people to become more and more individualistic. The average Mizo is now more concerned about his individual advancement and welfare.

But Mizoram being in a disadvantageous position is very backward in every aspect. In this territory, the fight against hunger, disease, ignorance and isolation is tremendous. This place was not known to the civilized world till recently. But an armed insurgency took place in Mizo hills on the 28th February, 1966, and brought this hills on the front page of the Newspapers and after that people in and outside Mizoram

have begun to know Mizoram. In this territory, the area is mountainous with small patches of plains in between ridges. Mizoram is a traditional society. In this place, there is no specialisation, no surplus production for sale, technology is stagnant. There is also not enough production for consumption. The people in the territory are not yet ambitious, nor enterprising, nor materialistic while money-economy is enlarging much. These remarks are often made by certain scholars, public administrators and politicians. There is no doubt about the fact that the territory is backward and not conducive for economic enterprise. The factors in the past and the prevailing obstacles in the present may be accounted for this. The entire economy of the territory has been tribal economy with its strong grip over the inhabitants due to its past political history. This area, long before it came under effective British administration and after some initial resistance movements and even afterwards, was excluded from the purview of the various Acts and regulations of the then Central and provincial Govts. No Legislative measures were taken to develop the socio-economic structure of the area. During the British rule, the administration of the area was mainly involved in the maintenance of law and order. Welfare and development activities were only marginal. Things have since happily changed for the better after independence and sustained efforts are being made by the Central and the local Governments for an over all economic development of the territory. But in a tribal area like Mizoram, the obstacles for economic development generally arise out of the prevailing physical, social and economic conditions. The physical conditions relate to the hilly terrain, dense forests and difficult communications and transportations.

Social obstacles are due to the people's initial apathy to any kind of innovation, lack of technical education and primitive method of production. The economic difficulties arise on account of the dearth of capital, lack of infrastructure facilities (absence of marketing centres), limited potentialities of the area and similar other factors. The territory is devoid of any major mineral resources. Hence, there is no potentiality for large scale or medium scale industry in the territory except a small scale and rural industries (agro-based

industries) which have to thrive only on the basis of internal demand for their products and the demand potential is not very high. To these obstacles and difficulties, the political conditions arising out of the subversive activities of the underground Mizos may also be added. Hence, the progress achieved has not been substantial. A planned effort is nevertheless being made to circumvent these bottlenecks and develop the area. However, the present Government of the territory is trying to encourage small scale and cottage industries. This will reduce the pressure on land, ensure a larger employment potential and lead to a balanced regional development.

### **Administration and Relation with Neighbouring Areas in Pre-British Period**

In the pre-British period, the Mizos had neither systematic political institution nor explicit judicial system while they were moving to the west and northward from Burma in order to settle down in the present habitat. They moved clanwise each having its own customs which were acting as legal sanctions. Customs had later become customary laws to decide their disputes and conflicts arising among them. But there was no such institution to interpret these customs and apply them for the decision of the disputes. Hence, apart from various circumstances such as protection of the villagers from the enemy's attack, guiding them in various walks of life and interpretation of their customs into customary laws compelled the Mizos to revive such an institution which could best meet all their requirements. As a result, the clan-wise chieftainship came into existence. In the beginning, each village had clanwise chief who was not hereditary at all. Such chieftainships emerged from the strongest and bravest clans. Thus, strength, force and bravery were the deciding factors in this regard. The leader used to lead his people in feuds/wars and quarrel with other tribes and other villages. Hence, they were in constant strife and wars. At that time, there was no permanent leadership to care for them (villagers). However, with the emergence of Zahmuaka and his six sturdy sons, permanent political leadership in terms of ruling clans gradually came into being.

Since then chieftainship was made hereditary and the council of elders selected by the chief of his choice to assist him was introduced. Thus, the position of the chief had become an unenviable one. He was the guardian of his people, leader and protector in times of attack by the enemy and above all giver of food in times of scarcity. In battle, he led his warriors. Fugitives in war took shelter in his house. Disputes of all types in family or between persons were taken to him for settlement. He used to settle such disputes as per prevalent customs. His decision in this matter was final and acceptable to all. In pre-British period, each village became an independent unit with a democratic village government of its own, resembling Miniature Republic in which an individual was as good as the other. The chief being strong and powerful, never used absolute powers in the administration of his village. He had, thus, many executive and judicial powers that he used to exercise with the advice of his elders. Since the post of the chief was hereditary without any honorarium, he used to receive three maunds of paddy from each household which was called Fathang. In the long run, Sailo clan among the Mizos emerged very powerful and stronger who ruled over many Mizo villages for many years and also offered more resistance to the British annexation of this territory. In addition, there were also many other ruling clans emerged among the Pawis and the Lakhers, inhabiting the southern part of Mizoram who also had a lot of administrative and judicial powers in the administration of their villages like the Lushai chiefs. But the organisation of the village administration of the Lakhers differed from the Mizos. In the Lakher society, the village community consisted of the chief, the patricians, the commoners, the village elders and the village officials. In Lakher society, chief families and patricians had certain privileges which were not enjoyed by the common people. But it is interesting to note that the Lakhers have no single royal clan like the Sailo. Each tribe has its own royal clan but within the village, the same principle of mutual help between chief and people prevailed. The Lakher chieftainship was also hereditary. It thus appears from the history of the British expedition to Mizoram and their subsequent administrative

control over the Mizos that the aim of the British rule, in the beginning, was to maintain peace, law and order in Mizoram. So the contribution of the British rule to changing the Mizos was only because of law, order and a modicum utility services all backed by a policy of upholding the social customs of the people. The village system of the government under the chiefs continued.

The history of Mizoram before the British annexation of the territory is rather obscure. In regard to the Mizo's relation with the neighbouring tribes and areas, it appears that they had no connection with the Ahoms who ruled Assam from the first quarter of the 13th century to the beginning of the second quarter of the 19th century, though the Ahoms had vast contact with hill area of Assam. They ~~had, however, close contact with the tribes, now living in the Chin Hills of Burma because it is the same place from where Mizos emigrated to the present territory. Apart from, they were linguistically, ethnologically and culturally akin to the tribes living in those areas. But on the whole, it appears from the early history of the Mizos that they had no peaceful and cordial relation with the neighbouring areas and tribes.~~ The reason for not having a good and normal relationship with the areas of Cachar, Sylhet, Tiperrah, Chittagong and Manipur was that they had constant strifes and conflicts among themselves, frequent inter-village, inter-tribal and inter-clan rivalries, wars and feuds and no settled life and means of livelihood. They were also migratory in character, moving here and there in search of suitable lands to settle down permanently and also to cultivate them to produce necessities for life. Food production was, however, also less. Hence, they had frequent raids and atrocities on the settled inhabitants of the bordering areas of Cachar, Tripura, Chittagong and Manipur who had settled means of livelihood. In addition, they had an objective of making many inroads into these areas in order to plunder, loot and collect human heads. Only because of these raids and atrocities committed on the people of the plain bordering areas by the Mizos, they were in contact with the kings of Tripura, Manipur and Cachar. But the contact or connection between the Mizos and the kings was not at all political and

administrative because the Mizos had never been subjects of these kings in the pre-British period. As history shows, they often created a law and order problem, by making frequent inroads into these territories of the rulers and thereby causing a lot of harm and damages to the inhabitants of the plain bordering areas. For instance, the Mizos, in the pre-British period, used to raid the plains of Cachar from time to time particularly when the kings of Cachar were weak and imbecile. Even after Cachar was annexed by the British, the Mizo raids continued. Some British Officers in their notings have opined that the Mizo tribesmen might have joined the Burmese raids on the Brahmaputra valley prior to the British rule. But these opinions, however, have never been confirmed by the Mizo elders. They have accepted the Mizo raids only confined to Cachar. Similarly, in 1847 the government attention was drawn to the Mizos. Col. McCulloch, the political agent in Manipur, drew attention to the increasing power of the Mizos, whose conflicts with other tribes living in Manipur had attracted his attention. According to Col. McCulloch, a series of attacks were carried out by them in which two or three hundred persons were captured or killed.<sup>3</sup> So he suggested that since the Mizos belong to hill Tiperrah, they should be checked from raiding the plains by the Rajah. But the Rajah of Tripura denied all knowledge of the raids and also denied that they were his subjects. Thus, it shows that the Mizos had never been under the administrative control of the Rajah of Tripura. Further, Pemberton reported that the Lushai country East of Tripura had once been under the control of the Tripura ruler. But Mackenzie held that Tripura's authority over the Lushai had never been settled or absolute. H N. Tuck in his book, 'The Chin Hills,' quotes Mr Mackenzie that "towards the end of 1871 when preparations were being made for the expedition against the Lushais, the Maharajah of Manipur sent for the chief of the Sooties to ascertain what assistance he could afford towards the expedition. The chief replied that he was unable to come to Manipur, as the Lushais were gathering in great force and he did not know whether their object was to attack his tribe or to set out in any other direction. He, however, sent a deputation to the Maharajah with friendly

assurances. The members of this deputation expressed a strong desire to be allowed to go forward and attack Vonolel's tribe of the Lushais. They received strict injunctions not to do so, but they do not appear to have heeded these injunctions for a few weeks after a report was received that they had actually engaged Vonolel's tribe, but without serious loss. On the other side only three of the Lushais were killed and one Sootie was wounded.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it established the fact that they had contact with these kings only because of their frequent raids. The kings were also not in a position to protect their subjects from the Mizo raids and inroads and, therefore, they had to seek for help from the British administration to send various expeditions to these hills in order to check the Mizo raids and atrocities often committed on the plain people.

While migrating to the northward, sometime in the early part of 1800, they were brought into hostile contact with the British administration existing in the borders of Cachar (Assam) and Sylhet (Bangladesh). In the south, when the Muslim king, Mir Kasim, ceded Chittagong to the East India Company in 1760, the trade was gradually opened with the adjacent jungle hill tracts to the west of south Lushai Hills and as a result a hostile contact with the Mizos was established which in later days also persisted.<sup>5</sup> In the north-east lies Manipur with which they used to barter Indian rubber, wax and ivory for salt. Imperial Gazette of India, Vol. 6, records "from the earliest times, Lushais have been notorious for their raid into British territory". The districts of Cachar, Sylhet, Tiperrah, Chittagong and Manipur had frequently suffered from these raids—several expeditions were sent to chastise the raiders and also to see them to be rooted out completely. There were 19 times raids, 107 persons were killed and 136 captives taken during a short period of 1837 to 1854. In 1860, 16 villages were raided, 185 killed and 150 taken as captives. A large number of raids took place at the end of July 1871 on the British plain villages of Cachar, Sylhet and Tiperrah.

Regarding the tribal raids and uprisings into the adjacent areas, late Dr Guba writes, "the underlying causes of these uprisings were the deep dissatisfaction created among the

tribal people against exploitation by their more advanced neighbours".<sup>6</sup> The word 'exploitation' is a related term which can be brought about by various means, more so by the uneducated, but unsophisticated, completely independent, yet highly restless, very sensitive and suspicious Lushais. Regarding the term exploitation of the Mizos by the advanced neighbours as used by Dr Guha, it may be mentioned that in the pre-British period, there was neither money-economy nor institution of private property existing in the society of the wandering Mizos. The fact is that exploitation of any type generally originates from money-economy and institution of private property. But since the Mizos did not have settled life and settled means of livelihood, the question of exploiting the Mizos by the advanced neighbours is not convincing and seems to be out of tune. None of the people dared come to Mizoram (then Lushai hills) for any purpose especially trade and business due to the raiding habits of the Mizos, because trade or business is also one of the sources of exploitation. The pre-British Mizoram was not a market-place at all to attract the advanced neighbours or traders.

The Mizos had the first contact with the British villages of Cachar, Sylhet, Tiperrah and the state of Manipur where the people were more docile, civilised and having settled means of livelihood and could easily be a prey of the Lushais. Secondly, the expansion of tea-garden in Cachar towards the foothills, leading to the encroachment on their hunting grounds and rubber tapping areas were said to have been felt by the Mizos. As Mackenzie in his book 'The North-East Frontier of Bengal' has mentioned, "the Mizos used to plunder Chengri valley (in Chittagong hill tracts adjacent to Rangamati) due to encroachment on their elephant hunting ground". Thus, it is true that most of the raids in Cachar were made on the tea-gardens no doubt, but it should also be noted that various other foreys were also made in other neighbouring frontiers where there were no tea-gardens. Despite frequent inroads into the neighbouring areas, trade was also carried out. The most prominent markets were at Sonaimukh, Tipaimukh and Changell on Cachar and Manipur borders. During the Thingtam famine of 1881-1882, the quantity of rice and

paddy imported from Cachar was about 18,000 maunds and 2,000 maunds, respectively. About 1,000 maunds of rubber and 42,500 bamboos were brought to Cachar from Mizoram (the Lushai hills) for sale. The estimated costs of exported and imported materials were Rs. 61,800 and Rs. 42,700. Rubber, bamboos, wax, ivory, etc. were mainly exported. Rice or paddy, salt and brasswares, etc., were imported. According to statistical account of Bengal (Chittagong hill tracts), Vol. 6 in 1874, the Lushais purchased a number of cattle from North Cachar on cash payment which they had obtained through the sale of rubbers. In 1874-75, as many as 287 passes were granted to 323 men to purchase and collect rubber from Lushai land. The total quantity collected was 4,930 maunds. With the opening of three markets at Tipaimukh, Sonaimukh and Narainchhora, after 1871-72 expedition, salt, iron, brass, etc. were sold to the Mizos amounting to Rs. 4,84,025.<sup>7</sup> Thus the 1871-72 expedition for the first time, helped push the money-economy to the Mizo areas.

Thus, the territory or any part thereof had never been subjugated or conquered by Mughal Emperors nor by any other king or Maharajah nor by any foreign government. However, the territory was not free from border trespass and frontier clashes/raids with the neighbouring people of the British villages and Burma which ultimately brought the British government to the scene in 1844. After an analysis of the history of the connection of the Mizos with the neighbouring area, it can be deduced that the relation or connection was mostly because of the raids and the inroads and not due to administrative and political factors. There was not sufficient rice or paddy grown in the territory for the survival of the Mizos. Food production was less; salt was hardly available in the areas. Hence, these necessaries had to be imported which gradually improved the trade relation or connection between the Mizos and the plain people of the British villages particularly Cachar, because there is fundamental principle that no one is self-sufficient. Hence, if society or nation is to survive, one must learn the habit of cooperative intercourse. This was the same case with the Mizos. At about that time, the Mizos first came

into contact with the people of the plains of the neighbouring districts of Cachar, Sylhet and Chittagong hill tracts. Later, they gradually developed their contacts with the people outside Mizoram by joining the Indian Labour Corps during the First World War and the Indian Army during the Second World War. On account of certain qualities of the Mizos like nobility, bravery, hospitality, a product of the indigenous society prevailing in the pre-British period, Major Mac Call, in his book 'Lushai Chrysalis' commented that "these qualities are common to the most cultured perceptions of human relationships. And it is sure that the Mizos were deeply influenced by varied contacts with predominantly stronger civilisations through the earlier ages. But, of course, written records in this regard are not yet available until and unless, anthropological and ethnographical research might promote the deduction of some of the major probabilities regarding these earlier contacts".<sup>8</sup>

### **British Expedition—Annexation, Administration and Constitutional Position, etc., up to 1947**

During the period of British colonialism, the mountainous land of Mizoram was neither commercially inspiring nor having mineral resources to attract the British to penetrate into these hills. Hence, they could not take over these hills for many years, until the lives and property of the British subjects, inhabiting the bordering areas could be endangered by the Mizos. When the British were fighting petty wars to eliminate local rajahs (kings/rulers), the Mizos in the hills, at the same time, were carrying on their struggle for existence. They had also wild struggle for the best lands for cultivation and sites for homes. As a result, they had frequent inter-clan clashes and inter-tribal wars/feuds with tribes like Kukis, Lakhers and Pawis. At that time, the production of food was very less. Salt was hardly available. Hence, they used to go to the British villages for hunting food and salt. Besides, they had an idea of establishing clan supremacy over the other clans/tribes. Thus, all these forces compelled the Mizos to make many inroads and forays into the British villages as well as to carry raids on the plain people of Cachar, Sylhet, Manipur and Chittagong which often enraged the British to

send many punitive expeditions to these hills in order to pacify the wandering tribes. Besides, the British had an objective to subdue the country held by the hill chiefs through these punitive expeditions. The process of subjugation of Mizoram may be said to have started more or less with the annexation of the province of Assam by the British. Assam passed under the British rule by the Treaty of Yandabo (24th February 1826). After entering into Assam, the Britishers, at first, allowed the different native rulers of the hill areas, including Manipur, to rule over their respective areas according to their wishes. But their gradual expansion was the cause of revolts among the different hill areas of Assam, including the Brahmaputra valley. Here we will describe some of the reactions against the expansion of the British rule among the different hill tribes of Assam including modern Mizoram and Nagaland.

There were frequent inroads and degradations which were retributed by various British punitive expeditions. The first recorded encounter of the Mizos with the British was in 1824. In September of the same year, some plain traders penetrated into the hills along Dhaleshwari river to collect bamboos and timber. But the Mizos ambushed and killed them. A magistrate from Sylhet was deputed to look into this and visit some villages along the Longai river. He discovered that the incident was an act of retaliation by the Mizos because a certain Zamindar of Pratabgarh circle of Sylhet district refused to present the usual gifts to the hill visitors, when they went to the plains. The second recorded incident was in 1844. Lalsuktla raided a Manipur colony, Kochabari near Pratabgarh in Sylhet district on the 16th April 1844, along with two hundred Mizos. He killed 29 persons and brought their heads with other 6 captives. Lalrina, who was a powerful chief, had died earlier in the year or in late 1843. Lalrina was Lalsuktla's father. This raid was organised by Lalsuktla to collect some human heads for sacrifice in his father's honour. Mr J.P. Wise, the Collector of Sylhet and Agent of Tripura state, suspected complicity of the Rajah of Tripura, and he ordered the Raja to secure by force or negotiation the surrender of the offenders to the government before 1st December 1844. In spite of the Raja, having done

so, an expedition led by Capt. Blackwood of Sylhet, light infantry called Blackwood's Expedition was despatched. Lalsuktla's village was gheraoed and Lalsuktla was taken captive, tried and sentenced to transportation for life while his cousin associate Bawtaia was acquitted for want of proof. Thus, this was for the first time that a Mizo was transported for life. Even then, this did not deter further forays into the British territory.

In 1847, the government paid attention to the Mizos. Col. McCulloch, the Political Agent in Manipur, drew attention to the increasing power of the Mizos and their conflict with other tribes living in Manipur. To him, they made a series of attacks and killed two or three hundred persons or captured. Col. McCulloch suggested that since Mizos belonged to hill Tiperrah, they should be restrained by the Raja from raiding the plains. The Raja of Tiperrah denied all knowledge of the raids and also denied that they were his subjects.<sup>9</sup>

In the same year, the Magistrate of Sylhet reported a series of massacres by the Kukis in the British territory, killing 150 persons and taking others as captives.<sup>10</sup> But here the Raja of Tripura asked the magistrate not to interfere, as the incident had taken place in his jurisdiction. The Sylhet authority insisted on the place of occurrence within the district and hence a detachment of troops was sent out to protect its neighbourhood. Regarding the southern limit of Cachar, there was confusion about the boundary between the British territory and the independent Tripura state and it was eventually determined by a professional surveyor that the place of the incident was outside the British territory.

There was also a report from the magistrate of Sylhet in regard to a further series of outrages within the British territory. At the same time, there were reports received from Cachar that the Mizos attacked or raided Kuki villages within ten miles of Cachar, killed 29 persons and took away 40 captives. On this occasion, the Government decided to take stern measures. The Raja of Tripura was asked to produce the guilty chiefs and their followers and to restore the captives, failing which, the Government would march into his territory. In 1850, Col. Lister, Commandant of the Sylhet Light Infantry and agent for the Khasi hills was made incharge

of the expedition to Mizoram. While he was preparing for the expedition, reports of fresh raids and massacres in Sylhet were received. Without sending entreaties to the Rajah of Tripura, Col. Lister's expedition started from Silchar on 4th January, 1850, taking ten days' march inside the hills and entered into a village on the 14th January. The village belonged to a chief called Ngura, son of Lallianvunga, chief of Hmuifang. The name of the village was setlang, having one thousand Lushais which was burnt by Col. Lister's troops on the 16th January, 1850. In his reports, Col. Lister observed, "The Lushais are under the government of six sirdars, of whom one is the acknowledged chief. They all have their separate cantonments with a number of dependent villages attached. The fighting men reside in these cantonments. In the dependent villages are located their ryotes who are merely used as coolies and for tilling the soil. They consist, in many instances, of the captives; they have been taken as mere children, having gradually reconciled to their captivity".<sup>11</sup> The fighting part of the population is composed, first of Lushais, who appear to be admixture of the Kukies, and Burmese, secondly, of a certain number of two Burmese, entertained for the purpose of warfare, and thirdly, of refugees and outlaws from Manipur and our frontier. He further adds that "the Lushais are getting bolder every year and extending their ravages further into the plains unless their independence as a powerful tribe is quickly broken, the frontier will never be free from their attacks. That they acknowledge no allegiance to the Raja of Tiperrah is certain".<sup>12</sup> Not only this but Col. Lister also observes that "the Lushais are a verile race possessing a clear-cut cultural pattern and capable of giving endless trouble at any time, anywhere, along the British India settlements bordering on Lushai, unless they are subjugated once and for all. It was forty years before the Colonel's advice was heeded".<sup>13</sup>

So "as a temporary measure, I venture to suggest the arming with muskets of a few hundred Kukies under an European officer. All condemned the muskets belonging to the Sylhet Light Infantry that should be handed over to the Superintendent of Cachar for distribution among the frontier

villages".<sup>14</sup> The Government did not accept all the recommendations of Col. Lister. However, his plan of raising a Kuki-levy was favourably received and steps were taken to raise a levy of 200 men, half of whom should be drawn from Kukis living within the British territory and the rest from Cachar and other tribes loyal to the Government. Col. Lister was also placed in charge of the affairs of Cachar and Sylhet districts and further asked to have negotiations with the leading Mizo chiefs with a view to establishing cordial and friendly relations with them. In response, some Mizo chiefs expressed their willingness to have peace and also sent envoys to Cachar. Such requests, however, were politely turned down and up to the beginning of 1862, Sylhet and Cachar were tolerably free from raids and disturbances. In spite of frequent contacts between the Mizos and British officers, the Mizos did not stop their raids on the plains.

On 22nd January, 1862, the Mizos ransacked three villages, namely, Ramdulal's bari, Rammohan's bari and Chandrapara, all under Rajnagar Police Station in Sylhet district. The episode is referred to as the "*Adampur Massacre*". A large number of persons were taken as captives or killed. As usual, the Rajah of Tripura was enjoined to stop these outrages as they occurred in the neighbourhood of his territory. Apart from pursuit by a police force up to a point, no other measures were taken to protect the British territory. Early in 1863, four women captives were taken from Chandrapara who escaped to Cachar and it was reported by them that the attack at Adampur was led by four chiefs namely Ngurchuailova, Suakpuilala, Rumvunga and Lalhuliana.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of sending a hostile expedition to deal with these raiders as recommended by the local authorities, the Government directed to open negotiations and to endeavour the return of the captives. Accordingly, Capt. Stewart, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, started negotiations. Taking advantage of food scarcity in the hills and by offering rice to them, he persuaded some of the chiefs to send their emissaries. It was then revealed that Ngurchuailova had married the sister of Suakpuilala and the Adampur raid was in commemoration of that occasion. To the envoys of Suakpuilala and Vanpuilala, chief of Sentlang, Capt. Stewart extended an offer of

friendship and a payment of Rs. 600 per year to each subject on the ground that they should pay an annual nominal rent to the Government and release all the captives. During the time, the boundary of Mizoram with the Cachar district, independent Tripura state and Chittagong hill tracts was not demarcated. The famous and powerful chief Rothangpuia's village was near to Chittagong hill tracts. In 1861, the villagers of Rothangpuia clashed with some villagers of British-India villages. As a result, Capt. Raban from Chittagong hill tracts invaded Rothangpuia's village, a famous chief of Thangluah, and his village was burnt. Since then, uneasy peace prevailed in this area till July 1866. But in 1866, the reports of fresh encounters between the British subjects and the Mizos were received. Not only this but the Mizos attacked some villages, south of Chandragona, headquarters of Chittagong hill tracts, and other villages nearer to Kaptai and its confluence with Karnaphuli in the rainy season, when travelling through the hills was most difficult.

Besides, the Chittagong hill tracts, Sylhet and Cachar, the Mizos had extended their activities to the adjoining Manipur area where they attacked the Naga villages in Manipur, some villages in Sylhet and some villages in Tripura in 1868. Maniarkhal and Noarband, tea factories in Cachar were burnt and plundered by the Mizos. At the same time, a party consisting of Manipuris under Kanhai Singh, a refugee from Manipur, assembled near Cachar to attack Manipur. He was suspected to have some connections between his party and the Mizos. The members belonging to one group were reported to be seen with the other group in different movements. Suakpuilala and Vanpuilala were also suspected to be involved. Then the Government of India viewed these fresh incidents very seriously and decided to despatch an expedition into the hills. Accordingly, the columns of troops under the command of Brigadier-General Nuthall of the North-East Frontier and Major Stevenson were to be moved along the courses of the Dhaleswari and the Sonai rivers with the objectives of destroying Suakpuilala's village and Vanpuilala's village along these valleys. Apart from this a third column consisting of police force from Sylhet was to enter the hills to meet the Dhaleswari column in the interior. The fourth party

consisting of forces sent by the Raja of Manipur was cooperate and participate in the expedition. The columns were ready to move by the beginning of January 1869. But these columns started too late in the season and failed to inflict the punishment required on the offending villages and raiders. But the British expedition, however, succeeded in making some friendly contacts with a few Mizo chiefs. During the same period, the British administrators adopted a new policy towards the Mizos. They proclaimed to recognise the Mizo chiefs and left them free to administer their areas. The right of the Mizo chiefs to levy taxes on trade was also recognised. Thus, all these concessions were given to the Mizos to make them satisfied with their own empire as well as to desist from attacking other areas. No step was taken by the British administrators which was likely to risk a clash with any of the chiefs. Therefore, no demand was made for the satisfaction of the past offences of the chiefs including Suakpuilala. However, with great tact and persuasion, Suakpuilala was made to agree to the reasonable proposals for future relationships to ensure that peace on the border was maintained. Actually, the British administrators did not want to get involved in the tribal areas on the ground that they could not gain anything by advancing into the hill areas. And the cost of maintenance of tribal relations was considered to be very high. Despite, they wanted to treat some of the tribal areas of the eastern region as buffer zones, since most of the areas had international borders. This was a general policy which the British wanted the local administrators to follow. That is why, Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar district, with Major MacDonald led an expedition to Lushai hills in order to pacify and conciliate the Mizo tribes. His patience, perserverance, tact and enterprise had, of course, brought the Mizo tribes/chiefs to reasonable proposals and terms. Most of the proposals were acceptable to the Mizo chiefs. With a view to carry these proposals into practice, he submitted a number of proposals to the Government. One proposal, as suggested by the local officials, was to have an establishment of permanent officers in Mizoram to carry out administration smoothly, as it was already introduced in Khasi hills, Naga hills and Garo hills. But this view was

strongly objected by Edgar that to post officers among the Mizos was not desirable at the moment because such an arrangement might destroy whatever little confidence the Mizos might begin to have in the British Government. So Edgar suggested that an officer instead of visiting Mizoram yearly, should meet separately as many chiefs as possible, listen to their grievances with a view to create and establish greater understanding and confidence and give them presents particularly those who had behaved well. This proposal of Edgar was duly approved by the Government and in pursuance of this, it was further agreed that Edgar should himself revisit the Mizo land during the winter of 1870-71. Other approved measures were :—

- (1) The appointment of Political Agent in hill Tiperrah. One of the reasons for the recommendation was the general belief that disturbances on the frontier of that country had arisen from the attempts on the part of the hill chiefs to retaliate the wrongs done to them by the people subordinate to hill Tiperrah.
- (2) The construction of two paths—one from Monierkhal to Bongkong and the other from Dwarband to Rengte range.
- (3) To recognise the rights of the chiefs over their respective lands and their rights to levy toll on the plains people going for trade with their country.
- (4) To establish a number of villages along the frontier between the plains and Mizoram so that a well defined boundary between them and the British territory could be established.

In accordance with this policy decision, Edgar revisited Suakpuilala's village in January 1871 to work out the details of these agreements. But during the stay of Edgar in Suakpuilala's village, a series of attacks by the Mizos on the British frontiers—Cachar, Sylhet, Manipur and hill Tiperrah—were again reported. On 23rd January 1871, Cachari-punjee of Ainarkhal in Cachar was attacked and burnt by the Mizos. About 25 persons were killed and 37 taken prisoners. On the same day, a tea-garden at Alexandrapore in Cachar was attacked. The people at Alexandrapore were taken by surprise and they were unable to defend themselves. A

tea-planter Winchester was killed and his six years old daughter, Mary Winchester, was also captured and taken captive. A few hours later, another tea-garden at Katlichera was also attacked. After that Majors Bagshawe and Cooke, who were incharge of the garden, armed and defended themselves gallantly and eventually drove away the Mizos. On 27th January, 1871, Monierkhal tea-garden was attacked. The fight continued the whole day. Next day Daly, the District Superintendent of Police, arrived with some reinforcements and succeeded in driving away the Mizo. On the same day, the adjoining tea-gardens Nugdigram and Darmaikhal were also attacked. The reports from Sylhet, Tripura and Manipur borders were also disquieting. On 23rd January, Cacharibari village in Sylhet was entirely burnt by the Mizos. They killed 20 persons and took some women as captives. Other villages near Chargolla and Alinagar were attacked and burnt. In Tripura, a party of Mizo warriors burnt many villages and also killed a number of villagers. The attacks on Manipur were mostly confined to the hills surrounding the Imphal valley and they took place towards the end of February, 1871.

So in order to prevent the raiding activities of the Mizo raiders, the Government of India decided to send a strong force into hills. Before that, instructions were issued to the local officers as to how to deal with the situations and to collect as much information as possible. There were also directions about operations no doubt but it was stressed that pure retaliatory measures should be avoided and no innocent people were to be harassed and troubled. It was Government's wish to seek friendship, not conquest. Not only this but also the main intention of the Government was to impress upon the Mizos that we had a desire for mutual trade, friendly relations and also apprise them of our own immense resources. There were also conditions put by the Government prior to any negotiation with the Mizos to release all captives in their custody. As per these instructions two columns were organised in the cold season of 1871-72 and sent to the hills—one from Chittagong and the other from Cæchar. Apart from this the Rajas of Tripura and Manipur were asked to supply the troops and keep them as a

standby at the time of any attack on their borders. The Chittagong column was under the command of Gen. Brownlow and the Cachar column was under General Bouchier. Col. Lewin and Edgar were attached to the Chittagong and Cachar column respectively to assist the military operations from the civil side.

The Cachar column consisted of half a battery of artillery, a company of sappers, 500 men each from the 22nd Punjab Native Infantry, 42nd Assam Light Infantry and 44th Assam Light Infantry. Gen. Bouchier made his base on the Barak river at Tipaimukh the trijunction point between Cachar, Lushai and Manipur states. This column started for Mizoram on the 15th December, 1871 meeting many encounters enroute and reached Selam village, the stronghold of Pawibawia. Later this village was occupied. The column moved further and reached Champhai village which was controlled by Lalburha Sailo. But Lalburha's village was also taken over and burnt by the Cachar column. After that the column returned to Silchar on the 10th March, 1872.

Regarding the armed composition of the expedition, the Chittagong column also consisted of the same strength as that of the Cachar column. It had only Gurkha regiments. One of the main objectives of this column was to recover Mary Winchester taken as captive from Alexandrapore Tea Garden in 1871. General Brownlow, who was commanding this column, established his headquarters at Kasalong with an advanced base at Demagiri on the Karnaphuli River where all the troops assembled and marched into the Sailo dominated areas on the 19th December, 1871. This column was helped too much by Chief Rothangpuia who was the seasoned associate of Lewin. As the troops advanced further into the interior of the Hills, the Mizos returned into the jungles avoiding a fight with the troops. By the beginning of January, 1872, all the villages controlled by the Sailo chiefs, were subjugated. Mary Winchester was also recovered from Chief Bengkhuai. But in the recovery of Mary Winchester, Rothangpuia's help was very commendable. Thus the two expeditions were successful and peace on the frontiers of British India remained undisturbed for many years.<sup>16</sup>

The officers taking part in the expedition offered many recommendations in regard to the defence of the British territory, such as the construction of cross-country roads in Mizoram to the Government of India. But these suggestions were not accepted by the Government only because of too much expenditures involved.

Two civil officers — Lewin and Edgar — differed in their recommendations. To Lewin, the Government machinery should be established permanently and firmly in the Mizo country. Whereas Edgar advocated for the policy of loose control. In order to make this policy more effective, he suggested regular trade and constant personal communication with the Mizos by the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar and Chittagong Hill tracts. The Government of India, at last, adhered to the earlier system of exercising political influence without direct interference or control. In this connection, an extract of the communication from the then Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department to the then Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal No. 1883 P. dated Simla, the 4th September, 1872, is reproduced hereunder "Para 9: When the frontier line is once defined, the instructions already issued sufficiently provide for the duties of the civil officers beyond it. These are to leave the tribes as far as possible to manage their own affairs, to cultivate trade and friendly intercourse with them, to endeavour to establish personal influence over the chiefs and to maintain such vigilance along the time of defence as to deter the tribes from committing raids or to cut off the parties that may attempt them". In carrying on this policy his excellency in Council thinks, it will be best to maintain the existing marts described by Edgar—in paragraph 18 of his letter of 5th June. Opportunity might, however, be taken to run a road from Demagiri to Bepari Bazar, which will give two outlets to Lushai trade—one by water to Cachar and by land to Chittagong. The road should be mere trade route over which no attempt should be made to exercise any jurisdiction and which when constructed the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hills, shall endeavour to get the Lushai themselves to keep up."<sup>17</sup>

Thus it appears from the above that the Government of India wanted to have the demarcation of the boundary of the Mizo country from Chittagong, Cachar and Tripura frontiers so that permanent defensive posts could be established all along the borders. A survey was conducted and no objection was met from the Mizos during the survey of operations. Because the Deputy Commissioners of Cachar and Chittagong were able to establish friendly relationships with many of the leading chiefs. After that for many years, no troubles were created by the Mizos. As a result in 1888, it was thought that the Mizos had quietly settled down.

But when the Burmese War (1885-86) broke out, the Government decided to take preventive measures to avoid any possible disturbances in Mizoram. Therefore, three British officers, Lieutenants Stewart, Baird and Shakespeare were deputed to survey the frontiers on the south during the winter. When Lt. Stewart was camping deep inside the hills, he was attacked and killed. Two corporals of his regiment were also killed by the attacking party—Hausata, Kokhola and Vantura were the members of the attacking party. The possibility of such an attack was passed to the survey party, by a friendly chief but little importance was attached to the message, nothing was done to reinforce the strength of escort. He received the news of Stewart's death, at Demagiri. Walker, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, tried to rush relief but was unsuccessful. Later Murray, the Superintendent of Police at Rangamati, proceeded to the spot and buried the dead bodies. The cause of this raid was a dispute between husband and wife. Hausata had married a daughter of Zahuta but he ill-treated her and she fled to her father for protection. Zahuta agreed to return her to her husband but for a price, the price in question being the heads of two persons who were not Kukis or Lushais. Hence an attack was made on Lt. Stewart and his party to obtain heads.<sup>18</sup> The mention of this reference is made by B.C. Allen in "Assam District Gazetteers". Apart from, in the same year, the Mizos attacked a village near Demagiri, and killed and carried off the bulk of the inhabitants. Later the armed party was sent to capture and burn the villages of Hausata and Zahuta who were responsible

for the murder of Lt. Stewart. The villages were burnt completely. The stockade post was built at Lunglei and garrisoned by the two hundred armed men. This demonstration of military activity had little effect on the Mizos. Despite that the Mizos did not stop their forays into the British territory. When the expedition was in the hills, Lianphunga, son of Suakpuilala, despatched a raiding party which destroyed the Chengri Valley on the Chittagong frontier killing many persons as well as taking many persons as captives. Prompt measures for reprisal were taken and troops were sent into the Hills in the winter of 1889-90 both from Silchar and Chittagong. General Tregear was in Command of the column operating from Chittagong. Col. Skinner was in command of the second column, operating from the course of the Dhaleswari river. Abandoning the river course, this column reached the place near about eighteen miles from Aizawl and joined hands with Daly's column operating from Silchar. These troops got the captives released. The offending villages burnt and offending chiefs punished but the British Government had at last come to final decision that here as elsewhere, the only effective method of protecting the frontier was the establishment of fortified posts in the hills. Col. Skinner selected Aizawl for the construction of a permanent post in the North Lushai hills. Work on the construction of this post started and when completed and rationed, the column went back to Silchar, leaving a garrison of 200 rifles of the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion, later to be named the first Assam Rifles. Stockade was also erected at Changsil in the North Lushai hills".<sup>19</sup> This was the foundation laid for the future township and district headquarters at Aizawl in 1890. Likewise the troops of General Tregear's expedition built a stockade in mid-March 1889 at Lunglei. This eventually became the important place for the future township and sub-divisional headquarters. In 1890, the policy of frequent visits to Mizoram with a view to establish friendly relations with the Mizos was abandoned and the area was finally annexed by the British. One unit of administration was established under the Chief Commissioner of the province of Assam by constituting separate district with headquarters in Aizawl. Capt. Browne was

appointed as the first Political Officer on 1st April, 1891. The South Lushai Hills was created as a separate district with headquarters at Lunglei under the Chittagong Division of Bengal and placed under the charge of Superintendent, Capt. J. Shakespeare. They were also instructed not to interfere much with the internal affairs of the tribes. Thus the Mizos at this time, appeared to be quietly settling down under the British rule. But suddenly without a word of warning, the Mizos rose in September 1890, attacked the two stockades and killed Capt. Browne who was marching along with the road with an escort of four sepoys. A force was immediately sent from Cachar and though Lt. Swinton, the Officer-in-Command, was killed, Aizawl and Changsil were, however, held successfully by Capt. Melville and Lt. Cole. Punitive measures were undertaken. McCabe, "who had established a great name, in the Naga Hills, for dealing with the rebellious hill tribes, was sent to this area within a short time. He restored the situation and enforced the surrender of the guilty and offending chiefs including Lian-phunga who were deported".<sup>20</sup> McCabe had succeeded Capt. Browne as the District Officer of the North Lushai Hills while in the South Lushai Hills. Capt. J. Shakespeare held charge of the District. In 1891 Political Officer, R.B. McCabe, introduced the first taxation of rupee one per house. But in March, 1892, trouble arose in the northern and eastern areas. McCabe proceeded to the village of a chief named Lalbura who refused to pay house taxes as well as to supply coolies free of charge to the troops stationed near his area. Not only this but McCabe while on tour with escort, was attacked by the Mizos near Lalbura's village. But reinforcements rushed from Cachar, Dacca or Calcutta and burnt and destroyed many villages of the powerful chiefs such as Lalhuauva, Vansanga and Lalbura in the South and Pawibawia, Kairuma and Dokhama in the North. As per British records, Kairuma was the chief who was subdued in the year 1895. By this time, the Mizos realised that any further struggle with the British administration was futile. They could not fight against superior forces. The British

method of retaliating by burning Mizo villages had also demoralised the Mizos to a great extent. In this way, the British had consolidated their power and administration in the Mizos areas. Since the peace and tranquillity of the district had been undisturbed. Thus the main objects of the expedition were punitive measures against the raiding tribes and recalcitrants, chief's defying the British administration, subjugation of neutral tribes and establishment of semi-permanent posts to ensure complete pacification and recognition of the British power. In order to accept the British authority and pay loyalty, all the chiefs, one by one, started accepting British domination power. A conference was held in Calcutta in 1893 in which it was proposed to amalgamate the North Lushai Hills of the Government of Assam and the South Lushai Hills of the Government of Bengal. But Alexander Mackenzie, then Chief Commissioner of Burma, opposed the unification of the Chin-Lushai Hills and on the other hand, persuaded the Government of India, not to have maximum administrative control over the Mizos. As a result, the Chin Hills regulation was enacted in 1896 which imposed restrictions on the movement of outsiders in these areas. It is still in force. But the British in 1898 decided to merge the North Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills into a district under the name of Lushai Hills district, a part of Assam under a Superintendent. The same year also marked the beginning of settled administration in the district.<sup>21</sup> Cole was the First Officer-in-Charge of the district. Aizawl was made the district headquarters and Lunglei subdivisional headquarters.

Later Major J. Shakespeare succeeded Cole and became the first Superintendent of the district as per proclamation No. 977 dated 1.4.1898. The Chief Commissioner of Assam by proclamation No. 978/P of 1.4.1898 published the rules for the administration of Lushai Hills which with periodical modification had been used for a long time. Thus along with consolidating the administration, putting down sporadic uprisings and punishing the recalcitrant chiefs, the British Government undertook road building projects, maintenance of telegraphic communications, demarcation of the

boundaries of the chief's lands and policy of non-interference in the internal affairs and administration of tribes. Thus during the early contacts, the British policy may be summarised as a policy of pacification except when provoked, in which retaliatory measures were adopted. The period from 1890 onwards clearly indicated a number of incidents leading to its annexation to this British territory. It is further stated that in 1930, the southern part of Mizoram inhabited by the Lakhers was also annexed to this district by the British. In 1931 and 1932 the Zawngling area previously under loose political control was included in the Lushai Hills by the Secretary of State, conveyed in the Government of India letter No. F-185/1/28 of 17.1.1930.

As Gait points out, it was not the desire to extend British rule into the interior but when a footing in the Hills had once been obtained, further territorial expansion became almost inevitable. The object was to protect the plain areas or low land from the raids, forays and incursions of the Mizos. But we cannot agree with this view. The protection of the plains people might have been one of the reasons but the expansion of the territory was the main motive behind this step. Despite this, the policy of the Government to the tribes of Mizoram had been a policy of conciliation and accommodation and not a policy of repression or devastation. But being cautious, the British rulers adopted an isolationist approach by which they wanted to keep the people of these mountainous areas (Mizoram) aloof from their plains brethren with a view to preventing the spread of the national freedom movement in the Lushai land. It does appear from the above discussion that the keynote of the British administrative policy in this sensitive region of our country should be discovered in their scheme of gradual infiltration and control by frequently taking recourse to punitive military expeditions in the name of punishing the *head-hunting tribes*, warring with each other. The real purpose of the British diplomatic endeavours was by no means confined to maintaining nothing beyond the semblance of law and order rather the fundamental element of their designs was to solve the riddle of how to live in power in this problem area of the country. Thus, side by side, with their policy of making frequent military punitive

expeditions, they resorted to their shrewd strategy of never clearly defining the rights of the subjects, just to sidetrack the delicate issue of the precise obligations of the administering power. In this way, the British rulers managed, somehow, to normalise their strained relations with the *head-hunting tribes*, after appeasing them with the gifts of their wise state-manship.

### *The Inner Line Regulations*

After annexing the Lushai hills, the British administrators thought necessary to protect plainmen from Mizos and Mizos from plainmen by certain laws. It was agreed that the Assam Frontier Regulation 11 of 1880 should be applied to the whole of Lushai hills. Both these protections were necessary. Secondly, they wanted more stringent control of commercial relations of the British subjects with the frontier tribes, inhabiting the eastern, northern and south-eastern borders of the Brahmaputra valley. So the Government felt necessary to take special powers and lay down special rules. Accordingly the Chin Hills Regulation was framed and introduced on the 13th August 1896. As per this regulation, no outsiders other than the natives of Lushai hills were allowed to enter the Lushai hills without Inner Line Pass issued by the Deputy Commissioner. One, who was violating this order, was liable to be punished. But this Chin Hills Regulations could not continue for a long time so far as its application to Lushai hills was concerned. Prior to this regulation there was already another Inner Line Regulation of 1873 framed by the Lt. Governor of West Bengal and approved by the Governor-General-in-Council to give effect to this policy under statute 32 and 33 Vict. Chap. 3 gave the Government of India a power of summary legislation for backward tracts. Such laws were known as regulations which differed from Acts passed by Legislature. This regulation gave power to the Lt. Governor to prescribe a line to be called "The Inner Line" in each of tribal areas beyond no plains people (British subjects) and certain classes of foreign residents could pass or enter into the tribal areas without holding a pass or licence issued by the Superintendent or the Deputy Commissioner. The Pass or Licence might be subject to such limitations as

might appear necessary. Rules were also laid down regarding trade, the possession of land beyond the line and other matters which gave the executive government effective control.

Under Notification by the Government of India, Foreign Department No. 2299P dated 20th August 1875, as modified under G.O. No. 1246 of 19th June 1878, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 2 of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation-1 of 1873, the Inner Line for Cachar district affecting the Northern Lushai hills was laid down. Similar Inner Line for Chittagong hill tracts, affecting the Southern Lushai Hills was laid down by the Government of Bengal on the 20th June 1879, as per Section 2 of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation-1 of 1873. The Inner Line for the Lushai Hills was separately issued vide Notification No. 9102 A.P. dated 28th August 1930 by the Governor-in-Council. Prohibition order to all persons (plains) passing through the Lushai hills district other than officers on Government duty without the permission of the Superintendent or the Deputy Commissioner was issued Vide Notification No. 9104 A.P. dated the 28th August 1930. Thus, regulation V of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation was extended to the Lushai Hills district under the Scheduled District Act 1874 (XIV of 1874). The Inner Line Prohibition of 1930 was superseded vide another Notification No. 2107 A.P. dated the 9th March 1933, by the Governor-in-Council and extended to the Lushai Hills district vide another Notification No. PLA. 393/70-Pt/I dated the 7th September, 1970, the Governor of Assam as per Section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 (V of 1873) superseding previous Notifications issued Inner Line Prohibition Order to all plains people entering into the Mizo district other than officers on Government duty. This Regulation is still in force even after the elevation of the Mizo district to the status of Union Territory of Mizoram on January 21, 1972. The present Government of Mizoram also enforces an Inner Line Regulation very strictly.

In regard to the Inner Line Regulation, there are two contradictory views offered by two groups of scholars. One favours the regulation while the other opposes its propriety.

In support of the regulation, one scholar is of the opinion

that the unrestricted intercourse which formerly existed between British subjects in Assam and the tribes living across the frontier frequently led to quarrels and serious disturbances. Hence power in order to prevent the recurrence of these difficulties was given to the local authorities by the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 to prohibit the British subjects from going beyond a certain line. According to another scholar, the Inner Line protected plainmen from the Mizos and the Mizos from plainmen's exploitation. Both these protections were necessary. There is also another writer who favours this British innovation to protect the tribesmen against the exploitation of the crafty businessmen from the plains. To him, the aim of this regulation was to ensure that no encroachments were made into the tribal areas and to enforce strict travel regulations into the tribal areas. It also aimed at protecting the rights, privileges, customs, traditions and way of life of the tribesmen. Before entering into the tribal areas, to take permit or pass should not, in any way, be taken as a political move on the part of the British to isolate the hills from the plains. Actually such a policy was the outcome of genuine and sincere thinking and the dire necessity. If such a treatment had not been given to the tribesmen, the consequences could have been serious. The tribes would have become extinct either because of poor economic conditions due to exploitation or the various deadly feuds that would have taken place against the plainmen and amongst themselves. Though the foreign scholars supported the introduction of Inner Line Regulation, yet it may be suggested that this Inner Line helped the growth of anti-Indian feeling in the long run among some hill tribes in Assam, as it cut off the link between the plains people of Assam and other parts of the country and the hill tribes. As a result of it, there grew a separatist tendency in the two sections of the people. Opposing the Inner Line Regulations, it may be stated that the British imperialists created a permanent impression on the mind regarding the division of the nation by discouraging mutual contacts between the two sections of the people. Thus no Indian can be proud of the Inner Line Regulation under which provision were made for the first time in history to isolate the hills from the plains of Assam.

But even after the introduction of the Inner Line Regulations, there were frequent revolts and clashes of the Hill tribes in the regulated areas and consequently, the British rulers gave up the idea of complete subjugation of all the hill tribes of Assam. So finally in the Act of 1919, they defined these hills as *de facto* and *de jure* tribal areas. And thus, these Indian highlanders were interned in their respective hills about a hundred years. But it does not mean that the British rulers gave up the idea of expansion of their territory. On the other hand, they followed a more subtle but aggressive policy. The British rulers in these areas superimposed the capitalist civilisation on the tribal people, who began to feel the impact of the new material and mental needs. As a result, the demand for the goods and the ideas of the new world arose. Not only this but the religion and language of the rulers were imposed on the tribes and the foreign Christian missionaries were allowed to enter the remotest hill areas under the protection of guns and patronised by the rulers to win over the simple tribesmen by means of seeking their religious conversion. And works of road building, religion and education went apace in some hill areas but not in Mizoram except religion. And slowly in course of a few decades, a vocal middle class came up in each tribe which became the prop and support of the British rule. In pre-independence era, there were hardly any works of road building in Mizoram. No concrete steps were taken by the British rulers to develop even education in these areas. In this regard, it is further stated that due to frequent tribal revolts, the British Government resorted to the strict measure of frontier tract regulation in 1880 to lighten the rule of bureaucracy within its jurisdiction. The British Government thought that the inhabitants of the hill areas have not yet been fit to be governed under the laws of administration. This was another attempt at completing total isolationism.

To one writer as already mentioned in the foregoing pages, the Inner Line Regulation was introduced to protect the tribal people against the exploitation of the crafty businessmen and more advanced communities from the plain's neighbouring areas. There is no doubt in this regard. It is still in force in Mizoram and Nagaland with several restrictions

and accordingly plains people are barred from entering into these areas and also not permitted to carry out any trade without valid pass/trade licence. But let us now examine the bad and cumulative effects of fast enlarging money-economy due to the expansion of developmental activities in Mizoram. This enlarging money-economy has helped growth of classes/neo-middle rich class or class of rich contractors, businessmen and educated and the poor which are on the increase day by day in the present Mizo society just like classes already existing in other parts of the country. Earlier there was neither poverty nor middle class in the Mizo society. But it is now experienced that the tribal economy has been exposed to the onslaught of the capitalist economy during the last few decades despite the restrictive 'Inner Line Regulations'. The emerging classes of neo-middle rich (rich contractors, businessmen, bureaucrats and educated) from within the Mizo society are no less responsible for this phenomenon now than the crafty and pioneer businessmen or traders from the neighbouring plains. Thus, the Inner Line Regulations may not permit plains crafty businessmen, pioneer traders and rich contractors' entry to Mizoram to exploit the Mizos. But what's about the exploitation of the poor Mizos in majority by the emerging neo-middle rich class from within the Mizo society? It is thus obvious that these restrictive inner line regulations cannot stop the exploitation of the many poor Mizos by the neo-rich class so long as a differential distribution of property, prestige, income, education and authority within the Mizo society continue. Because those groups of people, who acquire more property and prestige come to wield more power than others and thereby help the beginning of exploitation of the poor by those classes/groups controlling the material means of production and the mode of production not only in terms of exchange but also in terms of allocation of the means of livelihood. So economic power is dialectically related to political power.<sup>22</sup> These phenomena are now very much visible in the Mizo society. The gulf between the rich and the poor will be widening day by day. So the justification given by the writer about the introduction of Inner Line Regulations by the British ruler and its continuity in the present era in

order to protect the exploitation of the tribes against the plains rich people and businessmen is not at all convincing. It is, on the other hand, true that the Inner Line Regulations carried out in the name of safeguarding the tribal people have rendered artificial barrier of geo-pyscho-isolation from the rest of India. This isolation has been responsible to a great extent for the economic backwardness of the district (Mizoram). Long neglect and continued isolation have made the Mizos suspicious of the outsiders and in this atmosphere of misgivings and scepticism, the Mizos want to be left alone to control their affairs themselves.

So with a view to integrating the area, there is a need in the modification of the Inner Line Regulation. On this issue, there are two opinions often advanced by eminent social anthropologists and public administrators. One opinion favours the policy of exclusion of outsiders from the tribal areas and the other favour the policy of assimilation. To one school, a vast army of skilled labour will be necessary for the rapid development of the region. The areas are not in a position to supply it. Hence, they suggest that the Inner Line Regulation should be abolished. There is no doubt some validity in this argument. But we should also realise the effect of this policy. The tribal people will sharply react against this policy. They will consider that such a policy is aimed at the destruction of their individuality and identity. And this is the main argument of the tribals in their agitation for separate statehood. Therefore, the Inner Line Regulation need not be abolished but modified or liberalised so that various national political parties and skilled personnel may function in these inner line regulated areas. But to safeguard the economic interests of tribal population, restrictions against the alien action in their land should be continued. Preference should continue to be given to the local people in trade, commerce and other economic activities. The Mikir hills district Council has followed a modified policy. It has passed an Act that all lands shall belong to the tribal community. No outsiders shall be permitted to acquire landed property in the area. Despite this protection has certainly helped the tribal people to protect and develop culture, customs and indigenous faith according to their

local genius. This protection continues till now. Accordingly, the non-Mizos even today are barred entry into Mizoram without special permission.

### **District Administrative Machinery and Various Changes Therein**

The history of administration in Mizoram, then Mizo Hills, really begins in the year 1891 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 Bengal. The political officer was the incharge 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. Prior to 1891, there was no regular administrative set up. A few posts and forts were established here and there to safeguard the interests of the British regime. The 1891 status also lasted for only seven years. But 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. Major J. Shakespeare was the first Superintendent of the Lushai hills. The last one was Satyendra Nath Barkatoki. He was the first Indian to be appointed as the Superintendent. Later the designation was changed and now the head of the district is called Deputy Commissioner. The Governor of Assam was responsible for the good government of the district, acting under his Excellency the Viceroy and the Governor-General in India. He was assisted by the Commissioner of the division, the Advisor to the Governor for Tribal Affairs, the Departmental Heads and the Superintendent of the district. The district executive administration was vested in the Superintendent, his assistants, Circle Interpreters and the Chiefs and headmen of villages. Ultimately, however, everything depended upon the personality of the Superintendent of the district.

For the purpose of administration, the district was divided into two subdivisions—Aizawl and Lunglei. Aizawl was in the charge of the Superintendent of the district with one Assistant Superintendent of Police as his immediate assistant.

Lunglei was under the charge of Assistant Superintendent of Subdivisional Officer. These subdivisions were further divided into 18 circles, twelve in the Aizawl and six in the Lunglei subdivisions, comprising a number of villages for easy control and internal administration. This system was the circle system and it provided for a staff of one circle Interpreter and Chaprasi for each circle. This staff had no executive powers in relation to the manner in which the chiefs ruled their villages and any executive duties they might perform, were in accordance with orders specifically issued by the Superintendent, Lushai hills, the Subdivisional Officer, Lunglei or the Assistants to the Superintendent acting on his behalf. He was thus channel of communication between the chiefs and the Superintendent. He was required to submit every fortnight a report on the state of the chiefs and the general conditions of affairs within his circle. These measures were approved by the Chief Commissioner of Assam in October 1901. It is further mentioned that the Chief Commissioner of Assam by Proclamation No. 972-P or 978-P dated 1.4.1898 published the rules for the administration of the Lushai hills which have been in use for a long time with periodical modification. One of the main principles of these rules was to carry out the internal administration of villages by the Mizo chiefs. The chieftainship was made hereditary subject to good behaviour, physical and mental normality, passing through the eldest son. In 1898 a system of land settlement was introduced on the basis of which, each chief was given a certain area of land to administer.

“In addition, the Superintendent was the real authority, having maximum powers even in the matter 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. He was the official head of all departments in the district. The chiefs in their turn had supreme powers in the village administration. Thus, the Superintendent and the chiefs used to rule over the people as dictators. As hardly any act or law was enforced, the opinion of the Superintendent became law. Every village was ruled by the village chief and the political system was such that no one could dare speak against their acti-

vities or criticise any acts of theirs. The dictatorial behaviour of the Superintendent can be seen from the fact that when some politically conscious men of Kulikawn a part of Aizawl town demanded representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly, and as but, they were promptly jailed. This status of the Superintendent continued till the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950 but there was a gradual change in the powers of the Superintendent in accordance with the gradual changes in the British India".<sup>23</sup>

The Superintendent being the official head of all departments in the district also used to exercise the powers of a Superintendent of Police and often passed standing orders for the guidance of the civil police. But such powers could not remain with the British Superintendent for a long time. For administrative convenience, a separate post of a Superintendent of Police was created by the Government of Assam and civil police powers exercised by the Superintendent of Lushai hills were curtailed and invested with the Superintendent of Police. This is still in force.

#### *Judicial Powers*

Regarding the judicial powers of the Superintendent, it can be further mentioned that section 6 of the Scheduled district Act 1874 (XIV of 1874) conferred powers on the Governor of Assam to prescribe the revised rules (Criminal and Civil Justice) to be administered in the Lushai hills (now Mizoram) by the Superintendent and his Assistants. This judicial system is still in force in Mizoram. Accordingly, the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner and his Assistants exercised criminal and civil justice with exception that criminal offences which fell within Lushai hills customary laws, are ordinarily disposed originally by the chiefs. In the criminal jurisdiction, the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner exercises the powers of passing the sentence of death, transportation or imprisonment up to the maximum amount prescribed for the offence. The death penalty or sentences for seven years and upwards require, however, the confirmation of the local Government (now by the High Court of Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram). He also examines or tries an appeal against any order passed by his assistants. He may reduce, enhance or cancel any

sentence passed or remand the case for retrial as he thinks fit. But an appeal may be made against any sentence passed by the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner to the High Court. The Superintendent is also empowered to try the cases of an appeal against the orders/decision passed by the Commandant of Assam Rifles having magisterial powers. He thus exercises the powers of the district civil and session judge. The criminal procedure court applies to Mizoram only in spirit and in so far as it is applicable to the circumstances of Mizoram. As regards civil justice, the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner and his Assistants carry out the administration of civil justice in Mizoram (then Lushai hills) taking special cognizance of well established Lushai customs. An appeal lies to the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner against any decision of any of his Assistants and to the High Court against a decision of the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner original or appellate, if the value of the suit be Rs. 500 or over or if the suit involves a question of tribal rights or customs or of right to possession of immovable property provided that the petition of an appeal should be accompanied by a copy of the decision. The administration of justice is always to be conducted in the most expeditious and most simple manner.

Analysing the judicial powers of the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner, in pre- and after Independence period, it appears that the Superintendent/Deputy Commissioner being an executive head is also the head of criminal and civil justice in accordance with the rules for administration of justice in Lushai hills, whereas no Deputy Commissioner or District Magistrate of the plains districts of the country exercises such judicial powers because there has been a separation of executive and judiciary in most of the states, following the Directive Principles of state policy enshrined in the Constitution of India. Therefore, the powers of deciding criminal and civil cases now vest in the District Judge or Judicial Officers. The Deputy Commissioner or District Magistrate only exercises general supervision over the criminal administration of his district. But the Superintendent of the Lushai hills, in the British times, was expected to maintain the authority of state and prevent the revolutionary activities and crimes in the hills. Thus, he was the most important pillar of British

imperialism and he had a combination of judicial and executive authority in him to discharge his functions well. The Superintendent was, before Independence, considered main instruments to check the freedom movements, Indian Nationalism, political consciousness among the tribes, punish freedom lovers and maintain peace at all costs. This status of the Superintendent continued till the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950 but there was a gradual change in the high powers of the Superintendent since Independence. With the introduction of the District Council (autonomous institution) in 1952, the post of high powered superintendent was abolished and the whole area was put under a Deputy Commissioner with much curtailed executive powers excluding judicial powers and the Chief Executive members of the District and Regional Councils. And consequently, the Deputy Commissioner is no longer the officer of the people but the servant of the people. He is to punish only criminal and violators of law. But he is no longer expected to check political consciousness, emerging day by day in accordance with the gradual changes in the socio-economic structure of the tribal society.

Even after curtailment in the executive powers of the Deputy Commissioner in Mizoram, he is still more powerful combining executive and judicial powers in himself, compared to the Deputy Commissioner of the plains districts of Assam. So all the judicial powers conferred on him and his assistants according to the Rules for Administration of Justice in Mizoram, may lead to a violation of justice by encouraging partial, arbitrary and biased decisions in many criminal and civil cases. And such a combination of powers may also involve damage to both liberty and efficiency. To liberty, because, if the two are not separated, the Deputy Commissioner and his assistants as judges have to sit in judgement over their own conduct, which is obviously injurious to freedom, efficiency because these executive officers are not chosen for their capacity or training as judges. In Mizoram, a number of executive officers perform judicial functions—Deputy Commissioners, who are also District Magistrates, Subdivisional Officers, who are also Subdivisional Magistrates and many Assistants to Deputy Commissioners who are also

Sub-magistrates. The Deputy Commissioner tries very few cases but he exercises administrative control over the Sub-magistrates who try the bulk of the criminal and civil cases in the district. A Deputy Commissioner may also issue general circulars to all Magistrates under his control for their instruction or guidance in dealing with cases. A Magistrate who tries criminal or civil cases, should try the same in a purely judicial spirit without being influenced by anxiety regarding promotions or prospects. If the control is exercised by the Deputy Commissioner, who is responsible for the maintenance of peace, law and order of the district, there is the constant danger that the Subordinate Magistracy may be unconsciously guided by other things than purely judicial considerations. It must be remembered too that the promotion and prospects of Subordinate Magistrates depend partly on the recommendation of the Deputy Commissioner. Hence, it is likely that they may subordinate their own views to what they assume to be his (Deputy Commissioner) views.

So in order to make an impartial, efficient and healthy justice available to the masses of this territory, to check arbitrary decisions and to maintain the principles of checks and balances, there is an urgent need of transferring the control of the Subordinate Magistracy or judicial power to some authority independent of the District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner, either to the District and Sessions Judge or to some judicial officer appointed as his assistant for the purpose. So step to separate executive and judiciary at the district level in Mizoram will be very much progressive following the directive principles of State policy of the Indian Constitution in which it is already laid down that the State shall strive to separate executive and judiciary at the district level. Accordingly most of the States and Union Territories in India have enacted the requisite laws. Following this directive of the Indian Constitution, the Union Territory administration of Mizoram should also enact law to separate executive and judiciary at the district level, which will be certainly an achievement, so far as the implementation of one of the principles of the directive principles of State policy is concerned. A separation between the executive and the judiciary in Mizoram has become an imperative necessity

because the Deputy Commissioner is over burdened with regulatory and developmental functions, and law and order problems. Consequently he has not much time to devote to the trial of criminal and civil cases efficiently. Moreover, a quick and efficient disposal of the cases is not possible at all. But being relieved of this function, he may give much of his time to the developmental works going on currently and also contribute by way of his instructed and intelligent judgement and impart dynamic views for the reorientation or all round-development of the district. Thus an idea of separating the executive and the judiciary is a progressive step towards decentralisation of powers in the territory.

As regards administrative changes, it is mentioned that the province of Assam was created in 1874 to relieve the Lt. Governor of Bengal of his huge administrative responsibilities. The Lushai Hills district constituted on 1st April 1898 was a part of Assam. It was a 'Scheduled' district which meant that it was excluded from the general operation of laws enforced in the rest of India. And its administration was conducted according to the 'Scheduled' District Act 1874, under which, wide powers of Legislation through simple executive order were vested in the executive. In addition, some moderate constitutional reforms such as Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the Government of India Act of 1919 were initiated by the British rulers to obviate the forces of nationalism in the Hills Districts of Assam. For instance, Section 52-A of the Government of India Act of 1919 authorised the Governor-General in Council to declare any territory in the British India to be a "Backward Tract". As a result, the Lushai Hills District on January 3, 1921, was classified as a backward tract. The administration of the district in accordance with the provisions of the Government of India Act 1919 was carried out which in toto differed from the rest of the provinces. Accordingly, neither the Central Legislature nor the State Legislature had right over the District administration without the approval of the Governor-General in Council. Thus the District was kept aloof from the purview of the Legislatures. Further, the Governor was authorised to apply to the district laws passed by the Provincial Legislature with or without modifications and exceptions

as he thought fit. Thus the Ministers were not responsible for the administration of the backward tracts.

It is further added that with the growth of the freedom movement and political pressure of the Non-co-operation movements, there was an increasing anxiety on the part of the British administration to isolate the tribes from political contagion. These factors compelled Lord Irwin to announce the setting up of the Simon Commission on November 8, 1927, to examine the problems of further constitutional reforms. The Commission consisted of seven Englishmen. To the Congress leaders, the Commission without Indian representatives would not meet Indian's demands. So to them, the step taken was only to divert public opinion from the main issue of freedom movement. It was, therefore, decided to boycott the Commission. There was a Hartal all over the country on the very day, the Commission landed in India. Only a handful of reformists and favourites of the Government, who, in no way, represented the Indian people, co-operated with the Commission. Thus, when the Congress leaders were trying to mould public opinion against the Simon Commission, the British officers in India were also trying their best to create a rift in the minds of the Muslims and other backward communities. When the Commission visited Assam, the Nagas submitted a memorandum before the Simon Commission about their future status. But no Mizo leaders put forward any political demand in respect of the future administration of the Lushai Hills district on behalf of the Mizos. On the other hand, as regards the representation of the Lushai Hills district before the Simon Commission, it was represented by N.E. Parry, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. "He advocated the exclusion of the Lushai Hills from the general constitutional arrangements or reforms on the ground that in origin, the Lushais belonging to the Mongolian race and allied to the Kuki and Chin tribes were different from the Bengalis and Assamese and entirely untouched by Islam and Hinduism. They distrusted the plains people. He further added that from the educational point of view, the backward areas were certainly not fit for council rule. They were unstable and ready to follow any thing new. They had no understanding of abstract political ideas. Therefore, Parry

said that Lushai District was not ready for political advance and was not likely to become ready in the near future. There was no political minded class and no one was fit to sit in the Council. He asserted that the experiment of nominating a Hill men to the Council was a failure. He also further pointed out that industrially, the district had no future. There were no minerals. Distances were very great. Transport was very difficult. The rivers were not easy to navigate. The cost of constructing motorable roads was prohibitive.

To the question whether it was fair to deprive the Hills of the blessings of self-government, Parry's answer was that the hills were far ahead of the plains in the matter of self-government. Each village managed its own affairs. All disputes were settled by the Chiefs and the Council of Elders. A vast majority of the cases were not taken to the Courts of law established by the British. They were tried by Lushai customary law, by which the people have been governed. Parry, therefore, suggested the exclusion of the Lushai Hills from the scheme of reforms.<sup>24</sup>

As regards the recommendations of the Simon Commission on the backward tracts, the Commission recommended the division of the backward tracts of Assam into two categories—'excluded areas' and 'partially excluded areas'. The Commission also suggested that on financial and constitutional grounds, the responsibility for these tracts should be entrusted to the Central Government. The Lushai Hills was classified as a backward tract. So the Government of Assam and the Government of India, having agreed to the Commission's views and obtaining the views of local officers also recommended the total exclusion of the Lushai Hills. The Naga Hills and the North Cachar Hills and other three frontier tracts, to be administered by the Governor in his discretion. It was also suggested that these areas should be known in future not as "Backward tracts" but as "excluded areas". The tribals did not ask for self-determination but for security of land tenure, freedom in the pursuit of their traditional methods of livelihood and the reasonable exercise of their ancestral customs.

As regards the meaning of excluded and 'partially excluded areas, excluded areas were the tracts where there was no

possibility of having any advanced form of Government due to the backwardness of the areas. Such areas were beyond the pale of provisional and federal legislatures and their administration was vested exclusively in the Governor. In the case of partially excluded areas, discussion in the Legislative Assembly was not barred. A partially excluded area was administered by Ministers subject to the overriding authority of the Governor.

But in 1934, there was an agitation by a few persons under the inspiration of Rev. Nichols Ray for the inclusion of the Lushai Hills under reforms. A memorandum in order to represent the Lushai Hills in the Legislative Council was submitted. A representative public meeting was held to make out a case for the representation of Lushai Hills in the reformed Council. But those, who attended the meeting, could not understand the implications of the meeting. After some discussion, they realised that they had been deceived by a few sophisticated and interested Lushais outside the district, who had themselves been used as the cat's-paw by a certain ambitious member of the Legislative Council.

In this connection, the officiating Superintendent further contended that the entire administration would break down completely under the reformed constitution. The chiefs would fall. The disintegration of the village would take place. Factional strife would be endemic and finally there would be serious disunity leading to chaos due to the outstanding trait of the Lushai's individualism. This trait under the present administrative policy had been crushed to such an extent that it would rise again, in case a reformed constitution was introduced in the district. The Superintendent concluded by saying that the intelligensia of the district comprising three or four graduates of limited intelligence and knowledge would become M.L. As.<sup>25</sup> It, thus, appears from the above discussion that the officiating Superintendent was also in favour of the total exclusion of the Lushai Hills.

In the long run, the Government's decision on the recommendations of the Simon Commission were embodied, in the Government of India Act 1935. Provisions were made by an Order-in-Council on March 3, 1936, to declare the hill areas of Assam as the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills, and the North

Cachar Hills. The present Arunachal Pradesh was excluded totally, and the Mikir Hills, the Garo Hills and the Khasi Hills were declared as partially excluded areas within the framework of the Government of India Act, 1935. In drawing up the scheme of exclusion under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Secretary of State (for India) indicated that the areas to be placed in the category of 'excluded areas' must be based upon strict necessity and be as limited as possible in scope consistently with the needs of the tribal population. So in accordance with this act, the Lushai Hills was under the excluded areas, over which the provincial and federal Ministries or Legislatures had no jurisdiction and its administration was vested exclusively in the Governor. The expenditure incurred in these hill areas was also not voted by the provincial legislature. The partially 'excluded areas' were administered by the Provincial Government subject to the special powers of the Governor. These areas sent elected representatives to the provincial legislature. No federal or provincial legislation extended to these areas automatically.

But the administration of the Lushai Hills and other excluded areas was carried out by the Governor of Assam from April 1, 1937, to 1947. He was acting independently of the Government of Assam with a separate Secretariat and also assisted by a Secretary-designated as Secretary to the Governor. In 1937, the discretionary or special powers of the Governor were withdrawn, henceforth, he was to act on the advice of ministers. The administration of the excluded and partially excluded areas was entrusted to the Government of Assam.

Commenting on the provision of excluded and partially excluded areas as enshrined in the Government of India Acts, 1919 and 1935 and the mischievous designs of the British imperialists of keeping a few million inhabitants of the hill areas of Assam aloof from the general constitutional reforms; it may be pointed out that the British rulers wanted to keep these tribes in a state of semi-barbarism by not paying heed to the development of hill areas mainly such as communications, education (specially higher) and other basic amenities of civilisation so that they might not develop political consciousness and learn to struggle in an organised and systematic

manner against the innumerable wrongs to which they had been subjected to. Secondly, these areas were excluded from the normal control of Ministers responsible to the legislature, not on the ground that they were educationally and politically backward but with an idea of controlling the mineral, forest and other resources of these areas in the interest of foreign capital. In order to exploit these resources, they were suppressed for easier exploitation. Thirdly, the creation of the excluded and partially excluded areas under the said Acts was an attempt to divide the people of India into different groups with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment widened the gap between various ethnic and religious groups and was also responsible to obstruct the growth of uniform democratic institutions in the country. No measure of a self-government was introduced. Fourthly, these provisions retarded the economic and cultural advancement of the tribal people.

So in view of the above facts, and as per the 1935 constitution, the British rulers did not want to give local self-government to the Mizos and declared Lushai Hills as excluded areas. They wanted to keep the areas from the popular rule or from the mainstream of the Indian struggle for independence. Excluded from the Government of India Reforms Act, 1919, and the Act of 1935, the Mizo people remained under the personal rule of the British officers and local hereditary chiefs. Any semblance of political activity was suppressed by the district authorities with firm hands. In early 1920s a group of people at Aizawl attempted to form an organisation and ask for inclusion of Mizo Hills under 1919 Reforms Act. These leaders immediately landed up in the jails as criminals. Likewise in 1933 and on the 10th February 1934, some people in the Lushai Hills submitted petition to the Government for the inclusion of Lushai Hills in the reformed Legislative Council but the same was rejected by the British rulers on the ground that the conditions in the Lushai Hills were not conducive to the inclusion of the district in the Legislative Council and also on the ground that it was a frontier district. Foreign Christian missionaries patronised by the British rulers with a view to winning over the simple Mizos by means of seeking their religious

conversion also wanted to keep the Lushai Hills (Mizoram) from other parts of India. So it was in the interest of both the parties to create anti-Indian feelings. British rulers neither could try to integrate the Mizo people with the rest of India politically, administratively and emotionally nor developed them economically. Although the British rulers were in the Hills for many years, they failed to develop a native base for the administration. The Deputy Commissioners of the district until the transfer of power were all British. The subordinate officers were also held by persons from the plains, in later days a few hillmen mostly serving in the capacity of interpreters. Thus their interest in the region remained more anthropological than administrative, more academic than integrative till the end of their rule. Despite their bad intention and imperialist design, the British rulers established law and order and also introduced money-economy in the remote areas and as will be seen, the creation of vested interests.

### **Tribal Political System—Political, Executive and Judicial Authority of the Mizo Chief and Village Administration**

#### *Origin and Organisation of Chieftainship*

In the beginning, the right to rule over the Mizos was enjoyed by those who had the power and ability to command a large number of people and to repel any attack by other chiefs or enemies. The chieftainship, thus, originated in the physical and intellectual power of any person. In other words, one, who had the ability to organise a force, became a chief. Such a person became the guardian and defender of his people. It, thus, appears from the above interpretations that the institution of chieftainship emerged out of the collective needs of group life which characterise tribal living. But there is no definite record when and how in the past, this institution took concrete shape. But it can be reasonably asserted that this happened at quite an early stage of evolution in their group life.

In this connection, it is pointed out that the institution of chieftainship may be traced to the biological origin.

Zahmuaka being brave and strong was the first chief during migration period who had six sturdy sons namely Zadeng, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangura, Rivunga and Rokhuma whose all clan names relate to names of persons and the chiefs clan among the Luseis are thus called Zadeng, Palian, Thangluaha, Rivung and Rokhuma. In the case of Thangura's sons, the clan was named after one of Thangura's son called Sailova, from whom the Sailos of today trace their descent. In the long run, the Sailos became the most powerful chiefs and they ruled practically over the entire Mizoram at the time of the advent of the British.<sup>26</sup> Really when the British rulers encountered them, they were, rather, surprised to see large number of indigenous institutions for the administration of local or village affairs running independently of one another by the autocratic chief of immense local standing. The institution of chieftainship was, thus, autocratic. As regards the meaning of autocratic, it is a system, in which the ruler exercises all authority and people have no right of participation in the Government. There is a complete concentration of powers in the hands of a few. An autocratic ruler controls and regulates all aspects of human life. In Mizoram there was also a complete concentration of powers in the hands of village chiefs and their council of elders, who used to control and regulate all aspects of the village life in accordance with the customary laws of the land and their whims and discretion. The chiefs had council elders to assist and advise them in the discharge of their duties. The elders were men of their individual choice, nominated without considering the option of the villagers. The council of elders had the right to select suitable land for cultivation and not to pay taxes. Thus, the chief in the villages had wide powers in the village administration. He also executed the orders and directions of the Superintendent. The chiefs were utilized by the British rulers as their agents for holding and administering Mizoram. Thus, the Superintendent and the chiefs ruled over the people autocratically.<sup>27</sup> Beside Upas (Council of Elder-), some officials were appointed by the chief to carry out the village administration smoothly and efficiently for the welfare of the villagers.

Each chief had Tlangau, a village crier whose main duty was to proclaim chief's order often in the night, regarding the works to be done the next day by the villagers. For his services, he received a basket of paddy from each household every year.

The second important man was Thirdeng (Village Blacksmith). His main task was to make and repair tools and implements for agriculture, house construction and other work connected with daily life of the villagers. Thus his help in an economy sustained on agriculture even though in a crude form was really great. He too got paid like the village crier. Besides paddy, he was entitled to a small share of any animal killed or trapped in the village.

The third man was the village priest known as Puithiam, who was well versed in the practice of Mizo religion. Paddy was given to him for his services. But with the introduction of Christianity, the position of the village priest (Puithiam) has substantially deteriorated.

The fourth man was the village writer known as Khawchhiar who used to play an important role in the chief's system of village administration. He was also an important link between the chief and the Superintendent and between the chief on the one hand and the villagers on the other hand. Apart from keeping the record of all the tried cases by the chief, he used to maintain vital statistics, register, village house list, roster of people in the villages to be called for cooli's work and a list of all guns in the village. For all these works, he was only exempted from cooli work and house tax. Thus the chief, with the help of these officers and the council of elders, used to run the village administration. The British rulers also thought it fit and experienced to continue the indigenous system of village administration through the chiefs. So they increased the number of chiefs taking them from other clan and allotting them vacant lands for the establishment of their villages. These chiefs were called Hnamchawm chiefs. In addition, there were many Pawi and Lakher chiefs in the Lunglei Subdivision, a part of the southern Lushai Hills, who were never influenced by the Sailo chiefs. There also existed a few Fanai chiefs, who

established customs of their own. They did not follow the Sailo chiefs.

Regarding the office of the Chief, they were, in the beginning, appointed by the Superintendent for the good government of the people. But such appointments were not intended to be hereditary. As per Government direction, no chieftainship was to be divided without permission of the Governor. In 1937 the Superintendent was directed by the Government not to create new chiefs. On the other hand, he had an instruction to abolish the existing chieftainship and amalgamate smaller chieftainships because the Government realised that chieftainship was a burden on the commoners. Besides, the process of fragmentation continued to erode not only the material possession of the chief but also viability of his position as chief. The Government also did not like to interfere with discretion of the Superintendent, since he was the man on the spot with full knowledge of situation. Besides the chief, there were non-hereditary headmen. The chief and the village headman were given instructions to observe in the administration of the village under the control. But the British rulers sought to introduce a system of settled rule. Hence a beginning was made in 1891-92 to collect some sort of land revenue or tribute either in cash or in kind. Land settlement was introduced in 1898 by which the demarcation of land to each chief was made, within which he and his people could 'jhum' according to their convenience. The chieftainship was later made hereditary because it guaranteed political stability and loyalty of the chief to the Government.

### *Succession*

As regards succession, the eldest son of each chief was made heir to the chiefship by changing the prevailing custom of division of the deceased chief's domain among his sons. Regarding the succession, the following instructions were passed by the Governor of Assam, conveyed under the Government of Assam letter No. 1505-GS dated 18th August 1937.

If the eldest son was a minor, the Superintendent could appoint his mother and the customary council as guardians

provided the widow observed such customary rules which she must observe by the Lushai customs or the Superintendent might appoint for life the nearest male heir who should ordinarily be the eldest surviving brother of the deceased chief or the eldest legitimate son of such brother.

The nearest male heir who became the chief on account of the youth of the legitimate heir held the chieftainship for life and then it returned to the original time.

From the above, it is obvious that when a minor became a major, he was not entitled to chieftainship. The motive behind this customary rule is not clear. Normally the chieftainship should be held until the minor became a major. This rule was not observed in Mizoram (the Mizo hills).

If the eldest legitimate son of the deceased chief suffered, in the opinion of the Superintendent, from permanent mental or physical disability or imbecile as to make him incapable of holding a chieftainship, the office passed on to the nearest male heir but it should be returned to the original line after the death of that heir provided there was a male heir in the line, capable of holding the office.

If the chief died without legitimate sons, but illegitimate sons, the succession was decided on the merits of the case. But the claims of the illegitimate sons must be settled before the claims of others. If the eldest son settled in an independent village and died without a son, the property and chieftainship of the village reverted to his father.

A chief could also approach the Superintendent to disinherit his son, who was normally entitled to chieftainship when such a request was made, the Superintendent must call for Panchayat of fellow chiefs of the same clan. The Panchayat consisted of five members of whom two were nominated by the chief, two by the son of the chief, who was threatened with disinheritance and one by the Superintendent. The Panchayat must submit its recommendation to the Superintendent, who in turn, must make his recommendation, on the basis of the report of the Panchayat to the Commissioner of the Division, whose decision was final.<sup>28</sup> From this, it is clear that the chief had no right to disinherit his legitimate son from chieftainship. The son had a voice wherever there was a dispute in respect of inheritance of

chieftainship. The other sons thus became commoners due to the changed method of succession. Although chieftainship was hereditary, the Government of Assam acting through the Deputy Commissioner had power to dismiss a chief and appoint a substitute. This power was, however, rarely exercised. Further Mizo society does not tolerate or accept succession by daughters. As a rule, the eldest legitimate son of the chief succeeded to his father village. But in case the chief had no legitimate son, the eldest son of the concubine had the right to succeed and failing that even the eldest or most competent of his bastard sons could be accepted as the appropriate one to succeed.

### *Powers and Functions*

As regards the executive and judicial powers, privilege and status of the Mizo chief, he, being an autocratic and agent of the British Superintendent, had wide powers and considerable privilege in holding and administering the Lushai Hills district. In addition, he was also real-centre of authority in the village administration. The Government did not interfere in the internal affairs of a village or in the internal administration of the chief except in the cases of murder and very serious matters. The Government often upheld the authority of the chief. The political system was such that none could dare speak against his activities or criticise any act of his. Though in theory, his role was autocratic, in actual fact, a great deal of mutual trust existed between the chief and the people due to the fact that the people could and often did migrate from one village to another, if they lost trust in their chief. This meant that an unpopular and autocratic chief lost of his followers/villages through migration, thereby becoming less powerful in war and also losing his share of the tribute levied from the villages. So the chief's position in the village administration was to some extent that of a benevolent ruler. All the time, he could not afford to be autocratic or indifferent to the opinions of the council of elders and the real goal of the villagers.

### *Executive Powers*

Apart from the powers of appointing a number of village officials such as council of elders, village crier, blacksmith, village priest, village writer and Ramhuals (expert Jhum cultivators) the chief had tremendous executive powers in the village administration. The chief with his cabinet and other village officials used to rule the people of the district in accordance with the customary laws. These village officials had different functions/duties entrusted by the chief who carried out individually for the uplift of the socio-economic standard of the rural masses. The functions have already been mentioned in the foregoing pages. This council of elders discussed all matters connected with village, decided all disputes between people of the village, assisted and advised him in the discharge of his duties. He thus, presided over the meeting of the council. He, often, tried to influence the consent or opinions of the council of elders in his favour. He, sometimes, got his decisions accepted by them because most of the elders were men of his individual choice. Even then, such an effective control depended very much on the personal character, calibre and influence of the chief. As a strong chief, who ruled mainly according to customary laws, he could do anything he liked without losing his followers, but a weak chief who showed a little tyrannical rule, soon found himself a chief without any subjects. Because the villagers left him and took shelter under a different chief in another village, the chief had also the power to dismiss the elders, no doubt, but he could never show his whims and fancies in the exercise of his prerogative. As he enjoyed considerable powers in the village administration, he could seldom afford to ignore the advice of the elders and the general well-being of the villagers. The chief was to help the villagers in their difficulties and adversities, encourage them in all ways possible and also reward them in their achievements. When the villagers were found guilty of misdeeds or infringement of established customs, they were punished by the chief. In other words, he was the administrator, the protector and guardian of his village. Hence, the villagers, on their turn, had to obey chief's orders and carry out duties assigned to them individually and collectively.

Thus, they used to help the chief in all possible ways. It may also be mentioned that in the early days, the chief had the power to seize all the property of man who disobeyed his orders. Perhaps, this was the most severe punishment which could be inflicted on the villagers by the chief and his elders. This punishment was really deterrant to any wayward behaviour on the part of a villager. After the advent of the British rulers, the chief started resorting to the same without any substantial grounds and consequently the infliction of such punishment was soon disallowed by the Superintendent. As a general rule, prevailing punishments were substituted by cash fines ranging up to maximum amount of Rs 40 only.

Besides, the chief, taking advice from the expert Jhum cultivators on the selection of various plots of lands for good jhuming, had to allot lands every years to the villagers for cultivation according to his whims and fancies. He had the privilege to select the best plot of land for his own jhuming. Thereafter, the Ramhuals (expert jhum cultivators) were allotted a good portion of land because they paid him most. After they had their share, other villagers were allotted. But they all had to pay Fathang (Tax) in terms of baskets of paddy that varied according to the productivity of the jhum lands. Thus no private ownership of land was recognised by the Mizo society.

Another important right of the chief was to get his house built by the villagers without paying any cost either for labour or collection of building materials. The villagers were bound to obey such orders. But in return for house building, labour by the villagers, it was customary for the chief to feed the villagers.

The chief was also responsible for supervising the work of his village writer, compiling all district standing orders, communicated to him by the Superintendent from time to time maintaining inter-village paths and communications in his village, constructing and repairing Zawlbuk, signing the house tax assessment register prepared by the circle interpreters and also reporting to the Superintendent or his assistants all epidemics, heinous crimes, violent deaths, and serious accidents occurring within the jurisdiction.

In addition, the chief was at liberty to stop the sales of food stuffs from his village due to general shortage reporting his decision to the headquarters. The council of elders fixed the price at which paddy was to be sold. He used to invite the villagers to do Hnathlang (voluntary work) for building and repairing teacher's house, clearing jungle in and around the village, clearing and fencing water supply and building bridges over rivers crossing the village. But the chief could not by right levy any tax. He occasionally called for the meeting of the council of elders to formulate general village policies frame, activities to foster Tlawmngaihna to maintain all accounts of fines imposed and to keep accounts of proceedings through his village writer.<sup>29</sup>

### *Judicial Powers*

As regards judicial powers, the chief used to administer justice according to the customary laws of the Mizos. He also disposed of all litigations in accordance with the District Rule for disposal of civil and criminal justice. The chief and the council of elders constituted as the village court and decided all types of cases and disputes except murder and rape. The cases of murder and rape were reported to the Superintendent for trial. An appeal against the decision of the chief was referred to the Superintendent. If an appeal within two months of the disposal of a case by the chief was not preferred, it became time-barred. But no appeal was to be admitted against the order or decisions of the chief in petty cases with a view to maintaining the general principle of non-interference, the Superintendent seldom changed the decision of the chief. He always upheld the authority of the chief. This practice, in its turn, made the chief almost the sole repository of supreme authority in his own jurisdiction and enabled him to carry out effective administration of his village. Thus all disputes were heard and disposed of in the chief's house unanimously despite the view expressed during the deliberations by the members of the court.

Whenever a case or dispute was tried by the chief and his council of elders, they were to get remuneration known as Salam. The party losing the case, had to pay maximum

fine of Rs 40 to the winning party. Besides, the losing party had also to pay another amount of Rs 5 to the chief and his council of elders who usually spent the same on feast. Sometimes, in lieu of cash, payment of salam, offering of a pig was accepted. In case a dispute was compromised, salam was shared equally by the two parties in the dispute. The party fined normally accepted the chief's decision and paid fine within time fixed by the chief. If the person fined proved to be very difficult to be handed effectively by the chief, his decisions and orders were enforced by the Superintendent. In case a villager committed an offence repeated or was found guilty of petty thefts on many occasions, the chief had to turn out of the village realising from his Fathang (tax of unhusked rice) provided this turning-out took place when his jhum crop was ripe, or the same had been harvested. But if he was turned out earlier, than this, the chief could not claim Fathang. The proceedings of all cases or disputes tried by the chief and his council of elders were recorded and maintained by the village writer. Thus the policy of non-interference by the British ruler, in the village customs and also in the decision taken by the chief, really paid a rich dividend in the smooth administration of the Lushai Hills without much expenditure. Except in cases where serious offences were committed or the people of two or more villages were involved, non-interference was the general policy of the Superintendent. Only grave or serious cases were referred to the court of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills (Mizoram). The chief and his council of elders were thus the highest court of justice among the Mizos. But after the abolition of the chieftainship, this judicial power has been invested with the village councils which administer justice according to the customary laws of the Mizos.<sup>30</sup>

Apart from executive and judicial powers already discussed above, the chief had in the beginning, the traditional right to inflict the capital punishments, to seize food stores and property of villagers, wishing to migrate to another village, to own the lands, to tax traders within his jurisdiction, to appoint his son as chief within his own lands, and to attach the property of villagers when he deemed fit or

wished, with or without fault on the part of the villagers. But with a view to meeting the exigencies of the situation, these traditional rights of the chief were arbitrarily curtailed and invested with the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. The main motive behind the curtailment of these traditional rights by the British Superintendent was to have control over the chief and also to use him as an agent of the British administration in the Lushai Hills. He thus, acted as link between the people and the Superintendent and never defied the orders of the Superintendent.

### *Privileges and Status of Village Chief*

The village chief was the head of the village administration and as a token of respect for his high status, he was entitled to certain privileges. Most of these privileges had their origin in ancient custom or in the willing and voluntary contribution of the people. For instance, the villagers had to pay the forelegs of all animals killed by hunting or trapping to the chief. This due was called Sachhiah flesh tax, failure to pay Sachhiah (flesh tax) resulted in a fine of Rs 40.

The second tax was Fathang—a traditional paddy tax. The villagers were required to pay the chief six tins of paddy, equivalent to about three maunds after every harvest or Rs 2 per year, if sufficient paddy was not harvested. But the payment of this tax differed according to the fertility of the jhum lands. The Ramhuals also used pay greater Fathang to the chief. When the Act passed by the Government of Assam in respect of abolishing the chieftainship in 1954 was made effective in 1955-56, Fathang (Paddy Tax) was discontinued and thereafter it was being realised by the Mizo District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council as land revenue. But after the elevation of the Mizo Hills district to the status of Union Territory, the land revenue in Aizawl and Lunglei districts is realised by the Government of Mizoram, whereas in the Chhimtuipui district, the Lakher, the Pawi and the Chakma District Council realise the land revenue. In addition, the chief was entitled to other privileges such as Thirdengsa (Blacksmith Tax). Khuaihhiah (Bee Tax) and Chi-Chhiah (Salt Tax). Salt was prepared by the villagers from salt springs with the

permission of the chief. Later the chief also expected material benefits from the earnings of the villagers from horticulture and cultivation other than agriculture. He also received a portion of each fine levied. But all these privileges and rights of Lushai chiefs, the Pawis and the Lakher chiefs were, however, abolished on 1st April 1955, and 15th April 1956, respectively. After the abolition of chieftainship, the administration of the affairs of village is now entrusted to the village councils.

There were also instances that there were some chiefs who abused their rights and privileges absolutely. And they treated the villagers as their personal servants and reduced some to slavery. In the misuse of powers and privileges vested in the chief, the Superintendent never interfered and on the other hand, he used to uphold such decisions or steps taken by the chief. The people felt that the chief's rule was oppressive and unbearable no doubt but they could do nothing because the position of the chief was fully safeguarded by the British rulers. The chief and his counsellors, thus, formed the royal or upper classes who lived on the villagers. It was so despite the fact that the Mizo society was classless and not caste-ridden unlike the plains' areas. Even the chief had inter-clan marriage and free intercourse with other clans, unlike the plains' Zamindars/landlords. But he hardly worked even for his necessaries. Most of the chiefs were ignorant of the village administration. Hence, the British ruler had granted special stipends to the eldest sons of the chiefs to enable them obtain general education so that they might prove to good chiefs after succeeding their fathers. Later, stipends were extended to all the chiefs' sons.

In regard to the status of the village chief, it may be pointed out that he was prominent at all social and religious gatherings and festivals of the village. He was the supreme head of the village and the villagers were bound by custom to obey him implicitly and also to carry out his orders into practice without any condition. He being a head of the village, was also the leader in war, the owner of lands and the protector and father of his people. It, thus, appears from the above that the chief was really a despotic ruler. But the social mores were so shaped through the process of

evolution that he could seldom afford to exercise unrestricted powers over his people. In fact, there was a great deal of mutual trust that existed between the chief and the people due to the fact that the people could shift their allegiance from one chief to another chief and thereby often did migrate from one village to another village, if they lost trust in their chief. As a result, the chief could lose his share of tribute levied from villagers. So he seldom ignored the advice of the council of elders and the well-being of the villagers. He never interfered with the findings of the elders in the trial of disputes and cases. He thus tried to give it the semblance of people's government in the governance of his village through the council of elders. As per Government's desire, the chief used to do all in his power to support all welfare schemes to be taken up at village level. That is why, in turn, the young villagers helped him build and repair his house as well as cultivate his field. He was thus an object of intense devotion and respect in the Mizo society.

The institution of the Mizo chieftainship may be, to some extent, compared with the plain's landlord (Zamindar) no doubt but they differed in many respects. For instance, the plain's Zamindars, before the abolition of Zamindari system, used to collect revenue both in cash and kind from the cultivators and thereby became wealthy or rich due to accumulation of wealth. They hardly bothered for the welfare of the villagers or cultivators. On the other hand, the Mizo chiefs had no scope at all of accumulating wealth because the Mizo society was always egalitarian. So the chiefs were not affluent. They received support from his subjects through their offerings in kind and labour. Even the village officials, who worked for him, were not paid directly from him but were to receive subsistence and remuneration from the people mostly in kind. Thus they were very consciously made to realise their position as the people's servants. The chief with his village officials, had to perform a lot of welfare functions and also to help the implementation of welfare schemes at village level. He was also spokesman for his villagers on all issues as well as link between the people and the British Superintendent. That is why, the British ruler traditionally

supported the chieftainship whereas the Mizo union urged the people not to obey the Government and instigated the people to stone the chiefs.<sup>31</sup>

But it is experienced from the vast powers of the chief that some of the chiefs had become real despots and acted in a very cruel manner towards the common masses which were unbearable.

As regards the abolition of the chieftainship, it may be further stated that the abolition of this autocratic institution of the chieftainship by the Mizo union was fully justified in keeping with the fulfilment of the democratic aspirations of the commoners.

So in view of the above facts, it was not desirable at all, on the part of the democratically elected members of the Mizo district and Regional Councils to leave the village administration to the hereditary autocratic chiefs. Because to allow the village administration to be carried out by the hereditary chiefs was entirely contrary to the democratic provisions of the sixth schedule to the Indian Constitution and economic programme of fighting the vested interests of the chiefs as laid down by the Mizo union. Therefore, the abolition of the chieftainship became an expedient and consequently, it was done away. Such a step was appreciated and welcomed by the Mizo commoners. There was no hue and cry made by the common masses against it. A few disgruntled ex-chiefs, of course, joined the Mizo National Front, no doubt, but it did not mean that the Mizo National Front rose partly because of the abolition of the chieftainship. There were other important reasons for the rise of the MNF which can be explained in other chapter.

### **Christianity in Mizoram—The Tribal Faith or Religion of the Mizos**

The Mizos, like other primitive people, were originally animists. They believed in a spirit called Pathian who was the creator of everything and a beneficent being. But he had little to do with human affairs. They also believed in Ramhuais (Demons) and malevolent spirits which inhabit the hills, the streams, the trees and the rocks. These evil spirits were responsible for all the ills and misfortunes in this world.

The malignant influence of the evil spirit often causes a variety of troubles to man in many ways. So in order to have a good health, good harvest and general well-being, these evil spirits had to be propitiated by a series of sacrifices and offerings. These sacrifices or offerings were made according to a certain scale or a type of illness. In one case, the sacrifice might be a pig, in another a hen, or a cock or some other domestic animal. It, thus, appears from the above that the Mizos did not know the worship of Gods and goddesses in the beginning. No names were given to evil spirits as god or goddesses. But they had constant fear of the infinite and respect for nature. As one of the Mizo historians, Rev. Liangkhaia believes that "the religion of the Mizos had its origin in the consciousness of their need for deliverance from physical illness and from other misfortunes which they attributed to evil spirits".<sup>32</sup> The Mizos did not only offer sacrifices to evil spirits but they also offered sacrifices to good spirits with a view to getting their favour. It is interesting to note here that the Mizos do not worship the sun or the moon or any of the forces of nature though when wishing to emphasise a statement, they frequently say "if what I say is not true, may the sun and the moon desert me."<sup>33</sup> It was mentioned by J. Shakespeare in his book 'The Lushai-Kuki Clans'.

The Mizos believed in the existence of soul and life after death or other worlds wherein the spirits of the dead lived. After death, the soul goes to Pialral (Paradise) or Mithikhua (dead man's abode or village). In Pialral, all good things are available in plenty. Rice is abundant and the life is luxurious. The people, who had hunted a number of dangerous animals and had given a number of feasts, would go to Pialral, they live in perpetual bliss, comfort and happiness and are freely fed with meat and cooked rice. Those (common men) who had not performed meritorious works, will live in Mithikhua which is a place of sorrow, troublesome and difficult and is supposed to be located in the Rih Lake Burma near Champhai a border village of Mizoram. After staying in these places for some time, the spirits would be reborn in this world. The soul according to the Mizo belief had to cut off all connections with the earthly life while going either to pialral or mithukhua. Not only this but according

to legends, these two methods were devised for the sake of convenience of the different sections in the society. The rich could buy their way to paradise with all the sacrifices and the meritorious works while the poor could or common men could go there by passing through all the adventures. Thus it seems from these two devices that there is no reference available to women going to the paradise. These ceremonies were meant for men and men alone—not only this but most of the Mizo festivals were also connected with the old Mizo religions. It, thus, appears from the foregoing narration that the faith of the Mizos is very simple. They do not indulge in idol worship. Their aspirations are simple and unsophisticated. They aspire for rains, good crops, protection from evil spirits or forces of nature and victory over enemies<sup>34</sup>

The traditional religion or belief is, however, today of academic interest because all these primitive religious practices have since been discarded and forgotten as the Mizos have embraced a new religion Christianity with so much dedication and submission that their entire social life and thought process have been altogether transformed to an extent which is amazing. Thus, christianity has made tremendous advances in the Mizo society. As it was prevalent elsewhere, christianity came into the Mizo hills in the wake of the Pax Britannica. According to an arrangement, different areas in Assam were parcelled out among different missions and the Mizo hills (Mizoram) fell to the share of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Aizawl and the British Baptist Mission at Serkawn (Lunglei). The first christian missionary Rev. William Williams of the Welsh-calvinistic Church stationed in Khasi Hills visited Mizoram in 1891 and communicated to the Mizos about the christian god. But he stayed only for a month. In 1893-94 Rev. F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain, both of the pioneer mission, came to Aizawl and stayed there till 1897. They toured the entire district and worked hard to learn and reduce the language to writing, using the Roman script with slight modifications. During their four-year stay in Aizawl, they translated the gospels and also wrote a grammar and dictionary containing seven thousand words, which was published by the Government in 1898. After it became the foundation of all educa-

tional works in Mizoram. Thus, they gave the supreme gift "language and literature" to the Mizo people and prevented Bengali from becoming the trade and court language for the Mizos. They did this for communicating gospels to the Mizos. Their pioneering work was subsequently taken over by Welsh Presbyterian Missionary, Rev. D.E. Jones who established Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Aizawl in 1897. Both the Reverend F.W. Savidge and the Reverend J.H. Lorrain returned to Mizoram in 1903 to operate on behalf of the London Baptist Mission in the South Mizoram who established the London Baptist Mission Society at Serkawn (Lunglei district). The Lakher Pioneer Mission was established at Serkawr by Rev. R.A. Lorrian. This marked the beginning of organised Christian Missionary work in the Mizo Hills.

In the beginning, the Mizos were hostile to the Christian Missionaries. But very soon, they responded and the message of christianity started spreading. One important reason was that the Mizos were originally animists. Hence, their indigenous mode of worship was based on the constant fear of the evil spirits or devils. So in order to please these spirits or devils, they had to offer costly sacrifices and feasts which were very heavy burdens. So the Mizos readily welcomed anything which promised freedom from that heavy burden such as excessive ritualism and frequent sacrifices and feasts. That is why, the earliest missionaries had devised two methods of preaching based on salvation from all ills through belief in Jesus or Pathian who has overpower the evil spirits or devils. This also meant freedom from the costly and innumerable sacrifices to be offered to the evil spirits. Secondly, to the Christian Missionary, those who believe in God's words, will go to Pialral (paradise or heaven). The animistic Mizo mind was capable of grasping that kind of message with a view to meeting of their needs. Thus, christianity helped the early Mizos in getting rid of evil spirits and so on. Gradually they started putting trust in Pathian and also responded to the gospels preached by the Missionaries. In this way, the conversion of the early Mizos into Christians started. New converts felt themselves free from the yoke and nothing happened to them when they broke the laws of the spirits. Apart from its spiritual side, this fact alone was good enough

to draw many into the Christian fold. Thus with a view to bringing the early Mizos to the fold of christianity, miracle phenomenon, better known as revival, took place several times in 1906, 1913, 1919 and 1935 respectively and these four revivals are regarded as major events. And consequently the conversion in large batches took place and it soon became a fashion to be a Christian. In addition, freedom from the fear of evils, honourable position in the society and good qualification for getting employment, all these things made conversion to christianity attractive. So the number of christians grew very large.

After giving written language and literature to the Mizos, the missionaries had taken steps to establish truly Mizo Church and also determined that the Church from the beginning should be self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating so that it belonged in the fullest sense to the Mizo people. This wise policy was endorsed by the Missions as a whole; no mission grants were made for the Church at any time. Money received was used for education, medical work and the production of literature so that Mizo men and women might be trained to take full responsibility in every sphere of the Church's life and the shortest possible time. As a result, it is noticed today that a Mizo village has Church of its own professing protestants' faith. The activities of the church continue to have a stronghold over the individual's mind and his daily life at all levels and of age-groups. Thus the missionaries made their impact on the Mizo people through evangelical work, educational work and medical reliefwork which may be dealt with at some length.

The evangelists with Aizawl and Serkawn (Lunglei) as their bases went from village to village preaching the gospel of Christ. Regular Bible classes were organised at the above places that were attended by the representatives of the local Churches. It was emphasised that every soul was directly responsible to God and it was for the people to accept Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Lord. In addition, Sunday schools at different places were also held to explain the teachings of Christ to the early Mizos. The Christian Missionaries brought the printing press to Mizoram with a view to getting christian literatures, scriptures, hymn books and other useful literatures

printed. These printed literatures were distributed among the Mizo people and they were encouraged to read the same. Thus such evangelical works really helped the early Mizos to go in for conversion very fast. Success in evangelistic work was measured by the number of converts baptised. In the beginning, the progress was slow. But due to the evangelical works of missionaries the first baptism took place on 25 June, 1898 and according to the first census conducted in Mizoram in 1901, there were altogether 45 christians. Rapid conversion into christianity was affected as shown below :

2.7% in 1911, 28.1% in 1921, 47.6% in 1931, 64.3% in 1941, 80.31% in 1951, 86.64% in 1961. In 1971 about more than 90% of the Mizos embraced the christian faith and the primitive belief mentioned above have become more or less things of the past. As the years rolled on, the light of christianity radiated to the distant corners of the Mizo hills. Thus the early missionaries helped the Mizos acquiring a due sense of unity, centring round a common religion and the gap was soon cemented by the common faith.

Education was an important instrument of conversion and it formed a *Praeparatio Evangelica*. They first concentrated their works on education and gradually monopolised the education system in the entire district till the Independence of India. They established Lower Primary, Upper Primary, Middle and High Schools through which they used to do spiritual and educational teaching work for the people which in turn helped the spread of christianity in Mizoram. They, apart from general education, discipline, cleanliness, christian love, service for others and sharing of gospels with others used to teach them. The Missionaries were also pioneers in literature work which always accompanied the educational work. So in order to print books in Mizo, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Aizawl and the London Baptist Mission at Serkawn (Lunglei) established two printing presses. As a result, the first books printed in Mizo were School Text Books, portion of the christian scriptures, christian hymns and some other christian literatures. Thus education progress made by the Missions with their own funds as gauged from all-India census reports is remarkable. Even today there are many schools in Mizoram run by these Missions. So that could be

said to have been the beginning of educational work among the Mizos by the christian Missionaries. Maccall recorded that "chiefly due to missionary efforts, the rate of literacy in the Lushai Hills reached 12.9% in 1931 and 19.3% in 1941. The cost incurred by the Government on the education of the Lushai has never exceeded three half pence per head of population per year within the first forty years of the British administration. In the later part of this period seven hundred pounds sterling have been spent yearly on 150,000 people".<sup>35</sup>

Besides educational work, the Missions were engaged in medical and philanthropic works like caring for orphans in furthering the missionary cause which, in turn, helped the spread of christianity among the Mizos. For these works, there were two hospitals—The Welsh Mission Hospital at Durtlang (Aizawl) and the Baptist Mission Hospital at Serkawn (Lunglei) established by the Welsh and London Missions. These hospitals, today, have grown into big establishments with qualified doctors and other trained medical staff. Help, in the beginning, given to the villagers, in the form of medicines was greatly appreciated and it went a long way towards winning their confidence. People from distant places used to come to these hospitals for treatment. But the same hospitals have, now, become commercialised ones where the poor villagers can hardly afford to have their treatment.

Thus the results of all this missionary work spread over more than seventy years are to be seen in the magnificent network of the Mizo Presbyterian, Baptist and the Lakher Churches all over Mizoram. And consequently, the Mizos embraced their new-found-faith with so much dedication and submission that their entire social life and thought process have been altogether transformed to an extent. The Mizo society, today, whether in the town or in the remote villages is to a very great extent influenced and guided by the christian Church organisations directly or indirectly and their sense of value has also undergone drastic change. A remarkable feature of the christian organisation in Mizoram is completely indigenous and rooted in the soil today. All the preaching, proselytisation and management of the missions and that of the Churches are in the hands of the Mizo

Pastors/Missionaries. The Government of India, during the outbreak of Mizo insurgency in 1966, asked all foreign missionaries to leave Mizoram as soon as possible.

In addition to Presbyterian and Baptist, there are now many denominations such as Roman Catholics, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists and United Pentecostal Church, functioning and making considerable progress in Mizoram. But all these denominations have drawn membership from those people who have already been christians. Their growth is thus mainly the result of their shifting to other places outside. Thus the response of the people to christian teaching was very rapid and the Church grew and developed with remarkable speed. It is still a steady and definite progress, year after year, bringing within its fold more souls, offering them a new light, hope, and faith in place of inchoate and irrational animism of the past.

It is, thus, believed that there were certain factors which helped the Christian Missionaries in Mizoram to make sound and rapid development easier. Three factors came to the fore. In the first place, the district was isolated and hence Hindu Missionaries had no easy access to those parts. The British colonial regime also protected and helped the missionaries to convert the Mizos without much labour. In addition, the conversion was easy because there was neither caste system among the Mizos nor extreme social and economic differences. With the coming of christianity, ancient feuds ceased to exist and the clans, even the tribes merged and inter-married, while retaining the clan names. This lack of social rigidity or caste system was a great advantage and helpful in the rapid development. Secondly, the early missionaries were undoubtedly men of grit and determination and they had a tremendous crusading zeal to enlighten and proselytise the early Mizos by facing a lot of difficulties, hazards and unpredictable situations. And in the third place, the missionaries had the vision and foresight to identify themselves completely with the tribals in whose midst they lived. A sympathetic attitude backed by acts of practical piety like providing medical facilities and opening schools, naturally drew a sympathetic response from the Mizos and a steady stream of them were drawn to the Cross.

In fact, christianity has helped eradicate many evil practices and customs like head-hunting, sorcery, sacrifice, magic, slavery, warfare system and inter-tribal feuds. It has replaced them with modern intellectual pursuits like the spread of western education, literacy and improved ways of living. There was the growth of vested interest of the Church due to much reliance of Government on the Church as an agency of education and other social services. The Church was not only the religious and cultural agency in the remotest parts of a district but also an employment of the educated people who took to teaching and preaching as a black coated occupation. For a talented young man, the favour of a Church could mean financial assistance to enable him to reach the threshold of higher education in the plains.

The Church thus became a centre of power and patronage in the Hills districts. Referring to the Lushai Hills, Maccall wrote, "Local educational practice soon gave rise to the belief that education and christianity were the pass-port to "salaried job", relief from wearisome toil of cultivating a hard land. Education has constituted a means to a dead end, the salaried post.<sup>36</sup> He adds that, "Black coated occupations became synonymous with progress. Christianity led towards black-coatism".<sup>37</sup> The result was the creation of an oligarchy, the privileged, the salaried and therefore, the materially powerful. Most of them are on the missions' pay-roll, are Church executives, or in the employment of Government, in which case, they are probably, in any case, subject, spiritually to the Lushai Church.<sup>38</sup> Christianity and oligarchy according to Maccall bred individualism, flourishing in the headquarters, towns and naturally imbued with the thrill of seeking independence of the chiefs, and freedom from customary communal discipline,<sup>39</sup> which the British administration had always tried to retain in its own interest. The Christian Missions also preached to the Mizos of the loftiness of individuality and equality before God whereas the British administration denied the Mizos the equality of opportunity and status. The new religion has, thus, helped the making of a new Mizo society. There is no doubt about it. But regarding the effects of the Christian Missionaries on the Mizo society, it can be mentioned here that it was Christian Missionaries

who had mainly been responsible for adulteration of the Mizo culture and age-old customs, traditions. Most of them did not understand the Mizo culture and on the other hand, tried to impose an alien western culture on their converts. Not only this but the aim of most of the Missionaries in Mizoram, as in other parts of India, was to increase the number of their converts and in many cases were responsible for the destruction of their sound economy by giving them a taste for foreign made goods that is responsible for the partial destruction of small scale cottage industries. These missionaries never tried to help the christian Mizos to stand on their own feet. And on the contrary, they made them dependable on their (Missionary) help. The missionaries had neither established any new industries in christian villages nor introduced the improved agricultural methods that would enable the Mizos to produce for sale and thus obtain the money necessary to satisfy their new wants. Thus, they never drew up schemes to provide the necessary form of assistance to the needy and deserving Mizos. On the other hand, they only provided the means of seeking their religious conversion in the name of their hood-winking technique of dealing with the simple Mizos. Apart from that there are numerous evidences to show that though administration and Church were functioning in the Hills with the same object, namely the consolidation of the British rule. The results of their operations were not fair or just in all respects. The strategy of administration was least interference with the existing order while the activities of the Church were undermining their foundations. The inevitable result was a social imbalance that not only lingered but also became aggravated after Independence.

It will not be out of place to mention here that while in the plains, the Christian Missionaries were mainly engaged in evangelical works, in tribal areas, in addition to that, some of them engaged in politics. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed in Kohima, on March 30, 1953, "The works of the missionaries were not clean of politics".<sup>40</sup> But at the same time, the fact should not be forgotten that all the missionaries were not bad. In fact, many were good and the persons, who played politics as well as taught the tribals to hate the non-

tribals (outsiders) were very few. Here we should agree with Mrs. Ranu Saizathat, "it is useless to put blame always on the missionaries".<sup>41</sup> It is also a fact that the underground Mizos, demand for complete independence is also instigated by some of the missionaries and Church leaders. This should not lead us to conclude that the influence of the foreign christian missionaries is the only factor behind the underground Mizo demand for sovereign independent Mizoram outside the Indian Union. There is no denying the fact that the mischievous deeds of some missionaries outweigh their benevolent and humane works such as the development of education and provision of medical facilities to the needy Mizos. However, having realized the partisan and prejudicial activities of Rev. Michael Scott, the most active member of the Naga Peace Mission, the Government of India took a wise step to ask the foreign christian missionaries working in Mizo Hills to pack off the district just after the breaking-out of the Mizo disturbances in 1966 and the management of the Church/Missions was taken over by the educated Mizos themselves. There is no denying the fact that dissociation with the foreign missionaries has posed certain problems, while in turn it has also opened the greater avenues for shaping local leadership for developing the talents and for making the local Church more and more supporting.

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