

# SOCIAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

IN A TRIBAL STATE

A CASE STUDY OF MIZORAM

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**C. LALKIMA**

The study of the Social Welfare Administration of any given area usually makes for interesting reading. The present volume covers the State of Mizoram, where administrative machinery to carry out Social Welfare activities under the erstwhile Assam administration, barely existed prior to 1972. It was after Mizoram first became a Union Territory and subsequently a full-fledged State, that the Government could begin to take up various welfare programmes and make best use of the existing voluntary organizations, and to improve the functioning of Social Welfare Institutions for social development.

This study is perhaps the first attempt to systematically describe and analyse the working of Social Welfare Administration and its various dimensions in Mizoram. Proceeding step-by-step the author traces the historical background when the area was under chieftainship rule and then its abolition, the impact of British rule and Christianity, right upto the formation of democratically elected Village Councils. The function of voluntary agencies, the setting up of a separate Department of Welfare and its Directorate that implements Social Welfare measures through its field agencies and the State Social Welfare Advisory Board, are also detailed.

Based mainly on interviews and field work, this study discusses the impact of social development on the needy, destitute, deprived and under-privileged sections of Mizo society and subsequent achievements. The value of the Mizo principles of life and the pitfalls of ' money power ' are also highlighted.

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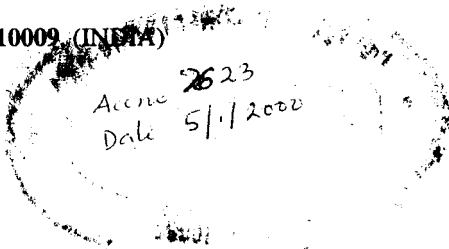
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## Chapter - 1

# A PROFILE OF MIZORAM

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### The Land

The Mizos were originally known as the Lushais, though now they prefer to call themselves Mizo as the term generally includes all the sub-tribes of Mizo hills. Mizoram is the new name given to the hilly areas earlier known as Lushai Hills. It was one of the districts of Assam till 21 January 1972. In 1954, it was rechristened as Mizo Hills District. It became a Union Territory and; consequent upon the passing of the Constitution 53<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill 1986 by Parliament on 7 August 1986, statehood was conferred on 20 February 1987. It became the 23<sup>rd</sup> state of the Indian Union.

Mizoram, the land of Mizos, is sandwiched between Burma (Myanmar) in the East, Bangladesh in the west, and on the north are the Cachar district of Assam and the State of Manipur, while on the north west lies Tripura. It is geographically located between 92.15 to 93.20 degrees (E) Longitude and 21.58 to 24.35 degrees (N) Latitude. The Tropic of Cancer passes just at southern periphery of Aizawl town, the state capital of Mizoram at 23.30 degree (N) Latitude. It has 404 Km international boundary with Burma (Myanmar) and 306 Km with Bangladesh. The total area of Mizoram is 21,087 sq. km.<sup>1</sup> Thus Mizoram occupies a very strategic position in the North Eastern corner of India. Unlike the major ranges running East to West in other parts of the country, the mountain ranges of Mizoram run North to South with an average height of about 900 metres and with the highest peak called '*Phawngpui*' (Blue Mountain) 2065 metres above the sea level. The hills are rugged and steep. The ranges are separated by rivers flowing either to the north or south; creating deep gorges between the hill ranges. It has a pleasant climate, being moderately warm in summer and not very cold in winter. The temperature ranges between 11 degrees centigrade to 21 degrees centigrade in winter and 20 degrees centigrade to 30 degrees centigrade in summer; with heavy monsoon rain from mid-April to October. The average rainfall is 250 cm per year.<sup>2</sup> The state capital Aizawl receives an average rainfall of 208 cm

### *Social Welfare Administration in a Tribal State*

and Lunglei in the south receives an average rainfall of 250 cm. The entire Mizoram is under the direct influence of monsoon. Mizoram is rich in flora and fauna. Almost all kinds of tropical trees and plants are found in the forest. The forest wealth has been so far one of the main sources of income to the state. Mizoram is poor and under-developed. There being no good communication to outside Mizoram, the state could not make progress in its developmental works. The rugged physiographic condition of the region poses a great difficulty in establishing good communication in Mizoram. It also compels the Mizo Tribe to live in isolation. The only means of communication in the pre-world War-II was rafting along the river Dhaleswari (Tlawng) from Cachar (Assam) to Sairang which is 12 Km away from Aizawl. The river Tlawng Joins Barak river at Katakhal near Silchar. The Silchar--Aizawl motorable unmetalled road was constructed by the Indian Tea Association and it was completed in November 1943 while the Second World War was in its climax.<sup>3</sup>

The chief occupation of the Mizos is agriculture but they adopted shifting jhum cultivation which is destructive and wasteful for forest wealth. After cutting down all vegetations in the jhum area, it is burnt off for one year cultivation. They shifted their jhum every year. In some cases, it may involve shifting of their village in search of fertile and ideal land for jhumming within the jurisdiction of their chief. The traditional way of cultivation is gradually dying down because it did not produce enough grain, inspite of the hard labour involved in the system. The attitude of Mizo people towards the traditional system of cultivation changed, particularly after Mizoram had been administratively lifted from District to Union Territory and thence to statehood.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Population**

The census of 1991 shows that Mizoram has a population of 6,86,217 out of which 3,56,672 are males and 3, 29,545 are females. The sex ratio is 924 females per 1000 males.

The density of population in Mizoram is 33 persons per square km. The literacy rate has further improved from 59.88 percent in the 1981 census to 81.23 percent in 1991 in which male literacy percentage is 84.06 and the female literacy is 78.09 percent. The total population of Mizoram signifies a considerable growth during the ten years period of 1981-1991. During these years there had been a net addition of 1,92,460; whereas the net addition during the years 1971-1981 was 1,61,367. It is interesting to note that the capital Aizawl has crossed more than one lakh population in

the last decade. The population of the state capital Aizawl in the last census of 1981 was 74,493 and in the current 1991 census it became more than double, it is now 1,54,343. The sudden increase in population of Aizawl town was not because of the high birth rate alone, but the Mizo living in the neighbouring states of Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya etc. during disturbance of Mizoram returned to Mizoram after it had been resettled and elevated to the status of Union Territory and thence to statehood. The people that migrated to Mizoram from the neighbouring states settled mostly in Aizawl town, if not all, certainly 90 percent of them settled in the Aizawl town. This is based on assumption in the absence of official records on the subject.

The respective areas and their populations of the three Districts of Mizoram are as follows :-

- (a) Aizawl District is the largest. Its area is of 12,588 square Km. and with a population of 4,75,360 male and 2,28,895 female. The density of population in the district is 38 persons per square km.
- (b) The second largest town of Mizoram is Lunglei and the district has been named Lunglei district. It is the central portion of Mizoram state. It has an area of 4536 square km. with the population of 1,11,209. The density of population of this district is 25 persons per square km. and the sex ratio being 51,978 males and 47670 females as per 1991 census.
- (c) The southern most administrative district called Chhimituipui district consists of three autonomous districts namely—Lakher or Mara autonomous district inhabited by the Lakher tribe with its Headquarters at Saiha, Pawi or Lai autonomous district mainly inhabited by the Pawi tribe with Headquarters at Lawngtlai, and the Chakma autonomous district inhabited mostly by the Chakmas and few of the Bru and Riang tribes with its Headquarters at Chawngte. The Chhimituipui District covers an area of 3957 Sq. Km. with the population of 99648. The sex ratio in the district is 51978 male and 47670 female with a density of 25 persons only per square km.

Aizawl district has 345 villages and 18 small towns. Lunglei district has 197 villages and 3 small towns, and Chhimituipui district has 159 villages and one town only. Therefore, there are 701 villages and 22 small towns in the whole of Mizoram State. From the following it will be seen that the population of Mizoram State is heavily concentrated at the

state capital and in the district headquarters. This has created urbanisation problems in Aizawl, which may be soon declared as a city. The state is divided into 20 Development Blocks and into 9 Sub-Divisions for administrative purposes.

### **The Origin of Mizo**

Ethnically, the Mizos are Tibeto-Burman and Kuki-Chin Tribes that have formed the homogeneous Mizo Society. The closely ethnic tribes living in and outside Mizoram could speak one common language which is also called Mizo. Their complexion is less fair than that of the Chinese yet they are descendant of Mongoloid stock. They live in a secluded society. The primitive life and the society of the Mizos was uniquely different from British society or the societies of the mainland of India. The Mizos identified themselves mainly with the other clans of Tibeto-Burman.<sup>5</sup> The word '*Mizo*' is a generic term and is used to mean hill people or highlanders. '*Ram*' means land. Therefore, Mizoram would mean the land of the hill people or the land of the highlanders.

The Mizos are believed to have migrated into their present habitat from Upper Burma about the year 1700 A.D. There being no authentic record of their migration into this area, it is still a mystery as to the history of the origin of Mizo. It is therefore not possible to ascertain their origin and the year that they settled in the area now called Mizoram. However, the Mizo historians such as Rev. Liangkhaia, and Mr. K. Zawla who wrote '*History of Mizo*' have stated that the Mizos were in Chin Hills in Burma from 1400 A.D. to 1700 A.D. and migrated gradually to their present area.<sup>6</sup>

The Mizo migration from Chin hills (Myanmar) was believed to be mainly because of suppression by the stronger tribes in the Chin hills. In the process of their migration the Mizos used to live in small hamlets.

Each of the small hamlets were under the care of a brave and able man or village chief. The different clans of Mizos lived separately and there was no unity among these separate clans. For this reason no resistance could be offered against the raids from Pawi clans from Chin hills (Myanmar).

By about the year 1740 A.D. these separate Mizo clans gradually formed themselves into a larger group and even became stronger in strength thus becoming a formidable force even for the enemy. This was possible only when they began to live as a homogeneous tribe in a much

bigger village. The first biggest Mizo village called "*Selesth Sangsarih Khawpu*" (Selesih Nagar) came into existence in the eastern part of Mizoram bordering Chin hills (Myanmar). The old location of Selesih is Zawlsei near Khawbung village. The so called "Selesih Nagar" as is implied in the name, was said to consist of seven thousand houses. However, the number of houses in Selesih Nagar seemed to be an exaggerated number from the economic and administrative point of view. It could not have been possible to accommodate so many villagers in one village for economic and administrative reasons, particularly in a hilly terrain. However, raids from Chin Hills came to an end after the establishment of Selesih Nagar. Therefore, this revealed that Selesih Nagar had positively enough strength of Mizos to stand against the raids from Chin hills. The undisturbed Mizos, continued to occupy the area without further migrations to any other place. The youngmen of Selesih Nagar were responsible to safeguard the villagers against any threat. The youngmen of their respective village lived together in one place during the night for any emergency call in the village. The house where the youngmen lived together during the night was called '*Zawlbuk*' (Bachelor's den) It is therefore, evident that *Zawlbuk* came into being in Mizo society after Selesih Nagar was established.<sup>8</sup> Since Selesih Nagar was formed by seven villages chiefs, there could be more than one *Zawlbuk* in it. The initial purpose of *Zawlbuk* was to accommodate village youngmen at night to provide security and to safeguard the village from raids or any other threats. And as such, *Zawlbuk* was located in a central place near the house of the village chiefs. The origin of *Zawlbuk* and the Mizo code of morals and '*Tlawmngaihna*' emerged together in the Mizo society after they had migrated into their present habitat.

### **Mizo Society**

The Mizos live in a close-knit homogeneous society and with no class distinction. There is no discrimination on the ground of caste or sex. It is one society in which the poor and rich live together, and share joys and sorrows whole heartedly. In spite of being a poor state there are no beggars in the Mizo society. Disabled and handicapped persons who are prone to beg for their survival are kept at home and are given good care by their relatives. The Mizos have a deep sense of duty towards others, especially to their kith and kin. This accounts for the absence of Mizo beggars in the society even today. A Mizo would not like to see his fellow men begging and as a result he would try to help him in all possible ways. On the other hand, the needy person would not like to shame himself or

herself by begging<sup>9</sup> Even though the economic condition of the Mizos as a whole is still poor, yet they lead a contented life. One may not be too wrong in assuming that it is the general economic poverty that is responsible for maintaining an equal standard of living and a class-less society in Mizoram. However, the close-knit homogeneous and class-less society is being slowly invaded by money power which will ultimately give birth to a class society in the evolving modern society in Mizoram.

But to date the Mizo society is society wherein a minister and his peon or an officer and his driver dine together on the same table. It is because there is no caste system in the society. Mizos are today cent percent Christian with a common faith. If ever a class distinction emerges in the Mizo society, it would be purely economic in nature. A have and have not society may emerge gradually among the Mizos in this fast changing world. However, there would never be a class-distinction on the basis of religion in this society. Unlike the Hindu society, no one has a birth right to be a priest; anybody who academically qualifies and fulfills the Christian religious norms could be a priest. Accordingly, Rev. Chhuahkhama, a Mizo, was ordained and he became the first Mizo Pastor on 11th October, 1913 by Ceredig Evan from Shillong and the English Pioneer Missionary J.H. Lorrain from Lunglei delivered the ordination speech at Aizawl. Rev. Chhuahkhama qualified in the first Lower Primary Examination in 1903 at Aizawl. He supported himself when he was studying by cleaning utensils of an Assam Rifleman, Shamsher (Nepali). He further qualified in the Upper Primary Examination in 1906. He then went to the Theological College, Cherrapunji (Meghalaya) for three years study (1910-1912).<sup>10</sup> His 36 years of religious service ended on 16th February 1949. He baptized 4634 persons and performed the marriage ceremonies of 748 couples.<sup>11</sup> The British Missionaries, although they belonged to a different race, had no reservation against a qualified Mizo becoming a Pastor for they had a common faith. Similarly, the Mizo Presbyterian church ordained Rev. Nandi (Bengali) Rev. Gaurango (Manipur), Rev. A.K. Doi (Bru) and Rev. Ved Singh Lalrinawma. The last Non-Mizo Christian ordained as Pastor was Rev. B.R. Sinha (Bishnu Priya) in 1989.<sup>12</sup>

The socio-economic development is growing in Mizoram after the administrative system has developed in the state. In spite of the effort and well planned policies for equal growth and all round development in the State; economic disparity persisted to exist in the society. There is no doubt that a socio-economic gulf is emerging between the rich and the poor among the Mizo, which was not heard of in the past. To bridge the gulf,

which is in its initial stage, the political party whichever comes up to form the state government, must be realistic, innovative and to keep up a socialistic view to guide the Mizo people in order to maintain reasonable equality among the Mizos.<sup>13</sup> Although there is no class-distinction among the Mizos on the basis of caste system, money-economy has cropped up and is causing a gap between the rich and the poor which may transform the class-less society into a class society. To avert such an emerging trend in Mizo society, Christianity would serve as one of the best uniting forces. Church administration plays an important role in the life of every church member. Church elders are elected from the members of the church and not on the basis of social status of a person but on his individual devotional and spiritual aptitudes. They are responsible to teach and guide the members on the subject of moral ethics. An officer or a rich man with a better economic position in the society is not necessarily elected as church elder or Sunday school teacher. A peon or a person with lower position in the society whose dedication to God and whose spiritual life is acceptable is more often elected by the church members as a church elder. Sunday school teachers take Sunday school classes and teach Sunday school lesson on Sundays.

The Church elders, on the other hand occupy an important position on occasions of joy and sorrow in the society. The responsibility of church elders demand a very high degree of sacrifice and it is voluntary in nature, whereas a Pastor is a church employee with a monthly salary from the church fund. The church elders and Pastors are jointly held responsible for the church administration. A feeling of oneness in spirit, and a sense of equality binds together the people of lower and higher strata of the Mizo society through church activities. A question arises, as to how long Christianity would act as a force of unity in Mizo society in this fast changing world, where-in money-economy has already emerged. Could cultural and traditional changes towards development compel the Mizo society to adopt a class-society in the near future? The emergence of money-economy in the Mizo society would divide the society into the rich and the poor. The sincere desire of the people is to lead life in which all men live close to one another and render help to those who need help even at the cost of reasonable inconvenience to oneself. As found in the Holy Bible New Testament in the book of Act, Chapter 4, Verse 32, "And the people that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common". Neither political development nor economic development could be regarded as instruments for bringing together the

rich and the poor. Sincere desire of the society is to continue to lead the life of one heart and one soul which should avoid exploitation of the poor by neo-economic class. Christianity has been adopted and followed by the Mizos in which all are on equal footing in faith and faith should control and guide the human life. In actual practice, Christianity is taught much more in church and less at home. The home becomes a secondary institution in Mizo life, which should have been the first. This may be because even in the semi-primitive society, the Zawlbuk which was a social institution had played an important role. When the practice of the Zawlbuk institution came to an end, the church seems to have taken over the role of the Zawlbuk in the society. However, the role of the church may have to be re-analysed in the fast changing Mizo society. The church would be required to introduce innovational changes to meet the various needs of the people brought about by development changes without diluting the Christian faith and continue to maintain the church administration which has become the focal point of Mizo society.

### **The Mizo Village System**

The Mizo villages, in the past, were built on hill tops. They believed the hill top areas were more healthy than low lying areas. Moreover, the advantage of height was considered important for village security. Each of the villages was under one village chief. The chieftainship emerged out of the collective need of the villagers. There is no definite record on the origin of the chieftainship institution in the Mizo society. The exact year of its origin could not be mentioned but it could be reasonably ascertained from the traditional life of the Mizo that the chieftainship originated in the 16th century in the process of their migration to their present habitat. Zahmuaka had six sons, strong and able, who had proved their worth in safeguarding their village against external attack. The chieftainship, in actual fact, originated through physical ability and intellectual power to provide security to the primitive tribal village life. Thangura, one of the six sons of Zahmuaka had two sons, namely Chawnglula and Thangmanga. Thangmanga had only one son, Sailova. Sailova had three able sons to keep up the name of their father Sailova from whom the Sailos traced their descent.

The Sailo chiefs domination was established throughout Mizoram except in the areas of Pawi and Lakher. Pawi and Lakher had their own chiefs to rule in south Mizoram.<sup>14</sup> And the non-Sailo chiefs in the north were very less in number. The village chiefs were highly regarded and they exercised sovereign power over their subjects even in matters of life and

death. The village chief was the head of the village, protector, owner of the village and the father too. He distributed land for cultivation among the villagers. He was the hope and the aspiration of the villagers. After the annexation of Lushai Hills (Mizoram) by the British in 1891, their powers and functions were curtailed. The village chiefs had to carry out village administration in the way the superintendent of Lushai Hills wanted but Mizo culture and tradition were enforced in the administration.<sup>15</sup> The village chiefs lived on taxes contributed by the villagers. He practically enjoyed an independent life. The chiefs lived in isolation and far away from the superintendent who could not interfere much in the village administration due to difficult communication. He ruled over the villagers with the help of his council of elders (*Upa*) who were appointed by the chief himself. The Council of Elders held their appointment as long as they enjoyed the pleasure of the chief. The chief enjoyed autocratic power, his and judicial power was beyond challenge. If a person committed a murder either intentionally or unintentionally he could seek the village chief's protection by fleeing from the avenger of his action and running down before the chief. If the murderer could manage to cling to the central post in the chief's house which was called 'Sutpui', it was no more lawful for the avenger to touch the murderer, who then found sanctuary by abandoning his freedom of life and, by becoming a 'slave' called, '*Chemsen bawih*'.<sup>16</sup> The village chief could administer his village well with the assistance of his council of elders.

The council of elders had to perform multifarious functions. In return, the elders were exempted from payment of taxes to the chiefs. They also had the right to select suitable and fertile land for cultivation. In addition to the village elders, there were some key persons of the village administration. There were village writer, blacksmith, village crier and village priest etc. The customary duty of every village was construction and repairing of the village school, blacksmith's shop, teacher's house, clearing and fencing village water point, clearing of inter-village roads and construction of bridges over rivers. All these works within the village area were carried out through '*Hnatlang*'. Every grown up man was a required to participate in '*Hnatlang*'. At least one member either male or female from each house must participate in *Hnatlang*. If a person could not attend the '*Hnatlang*' due to sickness or any other reasons he had to inform the village authority before *Hnatlang* commenced. If there was cyclone or a landslide or any other natural calamity in the village, *Hnatlang* was called for immediately to give all possible help to the affected persons or families. This was a good custom in the Mizo village

to meet and encounter any emergency that took place in the village.<sup>17</sup> If a village chief was found unhelpful, autocratic and not being kind to his subjects, the villagers were at liberty to migrate to another village. This custom was an effective check on the arbitrary use of autocratic powers by the village chiefs over their subjects.

The semi-primitive tribal village administration in Mizoram had under-gone development changes. Autonomous and regional councils were established in 1952. Political life was democratised. Adult franchise was introduced. Women were politically emancipated. Chieftainship became unpopular. There was an agitation for its abolition. The chiefs of North Mizo District were abolished on 1st April 1955 and the village chiefs in South Mizoram were abolished on 15th April 1956. They were paid compensation by the Assam Government.<sup>18</sup> In North Mizoram the Sailo chiefs formed a majority with 165 members and with few commoner clan chiefs. And in the South, the Mara (Lakher) chiefs were 20 and the Fanai (Pawi) chief were 17 in number alongwith other village headmen. With the abolition of chieftainship the village system came under the Mizo Hills District Council. In accordance with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, the Lushai Hills was granted autonomy and, the Mizo Union, a regional political party formed the council. The total strength of the council was 24, out of which 6 were nominated. In the first District Council election, the Mizo Union won all the seats excepting one. Aizawl town, which went to Pachhunga of Bara Bazar of the Zalen Party. The political party block officers and the newly elected M.D.C. (Mizo District Council) members jointly elected Mr. Lalsawia of the Mizo Union Party as the first Chief Executive Member of the Mizo Hills District Council. The Assam Chief Minister Shri B. Medhi inaugurated the District Council on 26th April, 1952. The first session of the District Council was held on 23rd June 1952 in which the first Chief Executive Member Mr. Lalsawia alongwith his Executive Members. Mr. Hrangaiia and Mr. F. Sangkhuma took oath in the presence of Shri S. Barkataki, the Deputy Commissioner of the Mizo District. This session decided to send a high level delegation consisting of the Chief Executive Member Mr. Lalsawia, Mr. R. Thanhkira, the first Mizo M.P., Mr. Ch. Saprawnga, the first Mizo Parliamentary Secretary of Assam, Mr. S. Barkataki, the Deputy Commissioner and Mr. Sainghinsa, the Political Assistant to discuss with the Chief Minister of Assam about the abolition and payment of compensation to the village chiefs; so that the village administration might be democratised in Mizoram.<sup>19</sup> The high level delegation was successful in their mission and accordingly the chieftainship in Mizoram was abolished.

### **Establishment of Village Council**

In accordance with the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953, there should be a village council in each village, composed of members according to the number of houses in the village as below :-

- (a) A village not exceeding 60 houses should have 5 members.
- (b) A village of 61 to 100 houses should have 6 members.
- (c) A village of 101 to 148 houses should have 7 members.
- (d) A village of 141 houses to 180 houses should have 8 members.
- (e) A village of 181 to 220 houses should have 9 members.
- (f) A village of 221 to 260 houses should have 10 members.
- (g) A village of 261 houses and above should have 11 members.

One third of the total strength of each village council would be nominated by the Executive Committee of the District Council and the rest would be elected on the basis of adult franchise. The nominated members held office during the pleasure of the Executive Committee of the village council. And the tenure of the village council once elected would be three years. Each of the village councils should have a President, Vice President and a Secretary and formed the Executive Committee of the Village Council. The President and the Vice President should be elected by the members of Village Council. The Village council had powers to enforce *Hnatlang* within the village in the interest of the villagers. Any person who could not participate in *Hnatlang* should inform the village Council Secretary or any members, and was liable to pay Rs. 4/- for his absence. This practice is continued till today but the amount to be paid to a Village Council to get oneself excused from *Hnatlang* varies from Rs. 4/- to Rs. 20/- The village Council members are responsible for the collection of taxes from the village members and maintain sanitation of the village. The President is responsible to comply with orders and notifications issued either by the District Council or by the Deputy Commissioner. He should execute such orders and instructions to the village members through the secretary and Village Crier. The President, Vice-President and members and the Secretary were paid a very nominal salary fixed by the District Council from time to time. The need for revising the existing honorarium of village council members is greatly felt now. As a result the local Administration Department, Government of Mizoram is being pressed for the same by a Committee, which is formed by the all Mizoram Village

Council. The Committee which is working on behalf of all Mizoram Village Council has made recommendations for enhancement of their honorarium as under :-

	<i>Existing Rate</i>	<i>Recommended Rate</i>
President, Village Council	Rs. 85/-	Rs. 300/- pm.
Vice President	Rs. 51/-	Rs. 200/- pm.
Secretary, Village Council	Rs. 68/-	Rs. 250/- pm.
V.C. Member	Rs. 42/-	Rs. 150/- pm.
Village Crier	Rs. 25/-	Rs. 100/- pm.

The Village Council is empowered to make rules on :-

- (a) Control and preservation of forests products.
- (b) Maintenance and preservation of water supply.
- (c) Control of stray animals in the village.
- (d) Prevention and control of fire in the village jurisdiction.
- (e) Sanitation and cleanliness of village.

The Village Council Court could deal with all cases except murder and rape cases. The Village Council could be dissolved by the District Council in the Chhimituipui District and the State Assembly for failure to discharge its duties required by the Act.<sup>20</sup>

The first Village Council election in Mizoram was held on 21st July, 1954. The Mizo Union Party won a landslide victory. It was a joyful day for the Mizo people for they gained control over the village administration. The people elected leaders of their own choice to rule over themselves.

The democratic form of Government at the grassroot level aroused the interest of the villagers. The new system of administration provided a training ground in democracy.<sup>21</sup>

### **Village Administration**

The comparison between the Village Chief system after the Lushai Hills District was annexed by the British and the Village Council system after the Establishment of Village Council on 29th June 1954 had revealed changes in Mizo Society. The Superintendent, Lushai Hills District found it fit and expedient to continue the indigeneous system of village administration through the village chiefs and recognised the

village chiefs as independent, yet kept them all under his administrative control indirectly. The British administration had adopted the policy of non-interference in the village customs and the decision of village chiefs paid a rich dividend in the shape of smooth administration without much efforts and expenditure in the difficult terrain of the District. The village chief was at liberty to select and dismiss the council of Elders (*Upa*). The *Upas* remained in the council till the pleasure of the chief. However, the chief was also conscious of the fact that the Elder (*Upa*) was his right handman in the village administration. The chief exercised limited power in his jurisdiction. He could inflict a cash fine upto Rs. 40/-. The cases of murder and rape had to be reported to the superintendent. A fine of Rs. 40- though a small amount today was quite substantial in those days and served as a strong preventive measure in the past.

In lieu of Rs. 40/- one Mithun could be given as the fine. A Mithun would cost not less than Rs. 4000/- today. Pawi and Lakher chiefs in the South Lushai Hills established customs of their own and the village chiefs ruled their villages accordingly.<sup>22</sup> The village chieftainship was hereditary and the chiefs tended to be autocratic in their way of life. In fact they could not afford to be autocratic but remained benevolent in practice. The chief could not afford to behave indifferently with any of the villagers, for the villagers had the right to migrate to another village after clearing all taxes due to the chief. If a village chief proved to be a democratic benevolent type of chief in the village, all looked upon him as a father, ruler and the protector of the village. If such healthy atmosphere was developed in the village there would be true love and high regard for the chief. A high sense of belonging to the village and to the community prevailed. The villagers talked highly of their village and their chief. It was rather difficult to speak ill of a village and its chief. The villagers would conduct their lives as the chief would conduct himself. If the chief was fond of *Zu* (Rice beer), there would certainly be more *Zu* drinkers in the village. The chief who led a pious life, conducted himself with discipline and hard work and led his subjects to a better life.

In accordance with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, the Autonomous District Council was introduced in 1952. The high powered post of Superintendent of Lushai Hills District was abolished and the district area was put under a Deputy Commissioner with much less power. The District Council had its chief executive member with the executive members to look after the district administration according to the social customs. The District Council had the power to make laws as per the provision of para 3 of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Hereditary Village Chieftainship came to an end and democratised village council administration was established in all the villages of the district by enacting the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act of 1953.

The powers and functions of the village council, headed by the President assisted by the Vice President and Secretary who are elected by the members of village council are almost the same as that of the village chief prior to the establishment of village council. The village council is not competent to take decisions on the cases of murder and rape. An appeal against any order, sentence and decision of the village council court lies with the sub-ordinate District Council Court which may be preferred within 60 days of conviction or order. Since the Village Council Court is conducted on the basis of customary laws no legal practitioner is allowed to appear before any village council court bench.<sup>23</sup> The village chief lived on various taxes contributed by the villagers. The chief was not required to work even to the extent of his house construction. Unlike the village chief, the President, Village Council had to toil hard for earning his livelihood. He has opposition members in the political system who would try to topple him down, even with the help of state level politicians. There are manifold limitations that a President of Village Council encounters in his functions, which would often render him and the village council members in-effective. The village council is not given due financial support. The village council is a custodian of the village fund as per the Village Council Act, but there is no fund in a village council level. A village council has no source of income nor has it any fund generating scheme at its level. It is worth noting that the village council, being the authority of the local administration, lacks powers in the matters of taxation. And the Village Council Executive and the members of many villages in Mizoram have no place or court to officially assemble, convene meetings or draw up plans and schemes for development. It has no room to preserve documents and papers connected with the village administration. Due to these reasons the Village Councils have not been functioning effectively and could not secure public participation and cooperation in rural administration. In order to enlist local participation in local affairs, the existing administrative structure will have to be changed and restructured to suit the requirement of the local people at the village level. Actual rural development could be expected if plans and schemes are carried out at the local level assisted by experts. This would necessitate the restructuring of the existing administrative system on the pattern of village institutions like the Panchayati Raj System where the village council members do not have to go directly to the state ministers for their local affairs vis-a-vis a

minister to village Council Members. If a political body is instituted at the Blocks and at the District level in Mizoram, then only could one expect the real decentralisation of democracy. Local institutions at the village level being the best schools for the practice of democracy could then be utilised by the state.

### **Zawlbuk**

*Zawlbuk* is a Mizo word meaning a big house, occupying a central position in a village and near the house of the village chief. It had an atypical look with a humped roof unlike other houses. It would accommodate all the bachelors of the village at night and it served as a meeting place for aged men during the day when all the youngmen were usually out for work. No female was allowed to visit *Zawlbuk* and they were not allowed to participate even in the construction, which was done on voluntary basis. It was exclusively meant for the men folk. Every village had one *Zawlbuk*. Drinking water was made available to the members of the *Zawlbuk*. Food was never served even to guests or travellers who would stay in the night with the bachelors. In the centre of *Zawlbuk*, a big fire place was provided on an earthen floor to light the big house during the night. Young boys of the village were given the responsibility of collecting fire wood for burning in the night. A boy would continue to collect fire wood till he attained the age of puberty. This was the first step of social control over the young lads and through it the young lads were taught the importance of social or community obligation. It serves as a good system of disciplining the young boys of the village. The boys were called '*Thingnawi fawn*', which literally means "the firewood collecting boys." If a boy failed to bring a bunch of fire wood to *Zawlbuk* for a day without prior permission of the monitor, he was liable to get punishment.<sup>24</sup> There was a peculiar method of deciding adulthood when the boy reached puberty. The monitor so appointed by the youth leader would pull out one hair from his genitals. If it was long enough to go round the stem of a bamboo pipe, used for smoking by men folk then the boy would be classed as an adult called '*Tlangval*'. He would be exempted from the duty of collecting fire wood and join the adult group.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, in the semi-primitive Mizo society, the male child, soon after he passed the accepted age of infancy became an inmate of *Zawlbuk* and not his parent's house. The priority claim on him would first go to society and not to his parents. *Zawlbuk* served multifarious purposes of the village. The village youngmen organised their recreational activities in the *Zawlbuk*. The younger people were given training to learn the social

customs and traditional life and the village chief made good use of it for passing instructions and orders to the youngmen as to what he wanted them to do. The man-power being available to the village chief at one place for any kind of emergency was a great advantage not only to the chief but also to all the villagers. The dwellers of Zawlbuk had a youth leader called 'Val Upa'. He had a big say in the society; to the extent that nothing moved without his directions among the village youths. His displeasure for any village man would mean the Zawlbuk being up against him which was dreadful for that village-man. No inmate of Zawlbuk should violate the established social norms of behaviour and conduct. If he does, the *Val Upa* had powers to deal with such cases severely. Discipline of a very high order was expected from all the inmates of Zawlbuk. Dr.(Mrs) N. Chaterjee, former Senior Research Officer, Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram stated in her book *Zawlbuk as a social institution in the Mizo Society* "the fact that all those who were to sustain and perpetuate the village society were required under the Zawlbuk system to work through a uniform code of conduct and discipline was the potential source of strength for maintaining health and vitality of the village society. The initial forced discipline which exercised in the conduct and affairs of the Zawlbuk members took permanent root in their personality, structure and enabled them to sublimate many of the rather antagonistic instinctive drive in their lives, resulting in what was forced discipline to start with and free discipline in their later life."<sup>26</sup>

The discussion on Zawlbuk in the Mizo society would be incomplete if the philosophy of Mizo Tlawngaihna is not highlighted. *Tlawmngaihna* is a Mizo word. The former Superintendent Lushai Hills, N.E. Parry, in 1927, commenting on the subject wrote, "It is really a very good moral code enforced to the society by public opinion". Also Maj. A.G.Mc.Call, the former Superintendent of Lushai Hills wrote in his book, 'Lushai Chrysalis' in 1949 that, "A system of community obligation existed under the term *Tlawmngaihna*, implying public service. Crops of the sick would be tended by the strong, the chief's land would be given to re-build houses accidentally burned down, warriors would volunteer when asked for, hunters would strive to be energetic in the chase, and, in general, the good citizen was he who was foremost in meeting calls that were really necessary for the good of the whole village. In return for this, the braves were always rewarded by public acclaim and they would often be invited to share select toasts held by the chief in his own house".<sup>27</sup>

The children of the Mizo society were taught *Tlawmngaihna* from their teens. They would receive perpetual training from their elders

at Zawlbuk. In this way continuity of teaching *Tlawmngaihna* goes on from one generation to another. *Tlawmngaihna* has been surviving in the Mizo Society as the guiding principle of social life. In fact, *Tlawmngaihna* is a part and parcel of the Mizo society. Zawlbuk was successfully operated by the principle of *Tlawmngaihna*. It is also believed that the principle of *Tlawmngaihna* was responsible for the excellent progress and development of the Christian churches in Mizoram.

The origin of Mizo *Tlawmngaihna* could not be really ascertained in the absence of authentic records of the Mizo society. However, it was believed that its origin could be Zawlbuk according to Mr. V. L. Siana, a retired school teacher and church elder. In his book, 'Mizo History 1961' *Tlawmngaihna* originated from the Zawlbuk system of Mizo life.<sup>28</sup> The insecure and unsafe Mizo life in the semi-primitive society necessitated the evolution of a kind of security system which bounded the community together in times of security needs. The spirit of sacrifice for others permeates the whole community. Thus the seed of *Tlawmngaihna* was unconsciously sown in the Mizo society.<sup>29</sup> It is the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* which provides a high motivation in all men to do any social voluntary work in the society.

A critical study of the Mizo society reveals the presence of *Tlawmngaihna* both in the primitive and present society. It continues to exist till today even after the extinction of Zawlbuk in mizo Society. However with the change of time, the practice of *Tlawmngaihna* has also under gone a change. In the past, people practised *Tlawmngaihna* both at the social and individual level. The spirit of sacrificing for the needy was noticed and eventually it became an integral part of the society and, the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* did not waver even when an individual or personal sacrifice was called for.

A close look at the present society reveals that *Tlawmngaihna* is now practised at the superficial level. One is eager and willing to work and do things or sacrifice for others as a part of a group performing the work together. But the same willingness seems to diminish when one is to do the same thing individually at one's own expense.

### **Extinction of Zawlbuk Institution**

Zawlbuk occupied the central position when the Lushai Hills were annexed by the British in 1891. The North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated on 1st April, 1898.<sup>30</sup> The British administration introduced certain reforms. They appointed circle interpreters. The area was divided into circles. One circle would consist of 15-25 village chiefs. The

Superintendent controlled the village chiefs through the circle interpreters and the *chaprassy*. The administrative area of each village chief was determined and their judicial power was curtailed. The chiefs should deal with all cases in accordance with customary laws except murder and rape. All disputes between the village chiefs were reported to the Superintendent by the circle interpreter and *Chaprassy*. His decision was final. The new system of administration over the Lushai hills had adversely affected the people. The circle interpreter and the *Chaprassy* gained an upper hand over the chiefs for they had direct contact and support of the superintendent. The new village system of life, with the super power in the hands of the superintendent decreased the importance of the indigeneous spirit of Zawlbuk.

The arrival of Christian Missionaries brought about enormous change in village life. The Mizos were animist yet they had many goddesses whom they worshipped with a lot of sacrifices with the help of village *Puithiam*, who was like a priest of the Hindu religion. There being no alphabet in Mizo, nothing was kept in writing but they had a lot of chanting words. Rev. Dr. Zairema in his article on, 'The Mizos and their Religion' mentioned that, "The Mizos also claimed that they had a script of their own but lost it."<sup>31</sup> It is believed that the Manipuris of the neighbouring state, at one time lived in the Eastern Region of Mizoram, for there still remain traces of their occupation. They used the Manipuri script. This was perhaps mistaken by the Mizos as their own script.

### **Education**

The pioneer Missionaries Rev. J.H. Lorrain and Rev. F.W. Savidge arrived in Mizoram on 11th January 1894.<sup>32</sup> They found the British were concerned with the maintenance of Law and Order only in the Hills. So the Missionaries took over education and medicine and the conversion of the animists to Christians. The two Missionaries learnt the Mizo dialect in a very short time and formulated the Lushai alphabet, A,AW,B. They opened a school and the Mizos learnt the alphabet with zeal and enthusiasm. Rev. J.H. Lorrain wrote a letter to Colonel T.H. Lewin on 25th April 1899, "Meanwhile, we began to teach the youngmen and children to read and write, adopting Sir William Hunter's system of transliteration; and they proved most intelligent pupils, soon beginning to teach others, so that the new strange and wonderful art of reading and writing spread over the whole of the North Hill Country."<sup>33</sup>

The pioneer Missionaries continued to work hard in translating the Bible into Lushai language for teaching the Mizos in the schools. The art

of reading and writing was spreading quite fast among the Mizos. The labour of the Missionaries in the field of basic education was a land mark in the history of Mizo society. The spread of education resulted in the condemnation of the Zawlbuk. The Missionaries believed in the philosophy of individualism, which was different from the philosophy of Mizo society. The new system of life brought about changes in the society. Educated parents, employed in Government service also realised that the future of their wards would be dark if the Zawlbuk system continued. Parents were then convinced that there could be no formal education in Zawlbuk and educational discipline could be imparted to children only at home and school. Thus, the importance of Zawlbuk system gradually reduced and was finally eliminated from society. The village chiefs could not insist on old customs to remain in practice.<sup>34</sup> Instead of becoming a Mizo *Tlawmngai* fellow one liked to become an employee of the Mission or Government, which required formal education which could not be attained through the Zawlbuk institution. The simultaneous spread of Christianity and education in Mizoram brought about a change in the society. Mizos became cent percent Christian in a period of around fifty years. The Missionaries established many Primary Schools but not a single High School till 1945. The first High School was established in 1945 and was taken over by the Assam State Government. Today, there are 14-colleges, 194-High Schools, 509-Middle Schools, 1127-Primary Schools and one Polytechnic School.<sup>35</sup> The literacy rate in Mizoram according to the 1991 census is 82 percent. Mizoram is racing to the top position of literacy of the nation but is still very backward as far as technical and science education are concerned.

### **Marriage Customs**

The frank and free society of the Mizos in their semi-primitive stage had set up a system of marriage where a marriageable boy used to court a girl. A boy was free to go to the house of a girl to establish contact with her and her relatives. If a congenial atmosphere prevailed between the two and, there being no indication of objection from the girl's parents then the boy and the girl would decide to work together in their jhum works of weeding and de-weeding. Equal number of days of work would be performed by the two together in their respective jhum belonging to their parents on alternative days or on a weekly basis. This system of exchanging work between the boy and the girl was called '*In-lawn*'. The boy was called '*Lawmpa*' and the girl was called '*Lawmnu*'. The boy and the girl would go together to the jhum and come back together after day-long work in the

evening. The girl would carry the boy's working dress and implements and, he would follow and escort her to the place of working and back home. During this period of prolonged courtship interference of others was neither expected nor desired. After courtship, if the boy wanted to marry the girl, he would inform his parents who, in turn, would send mediators, invariably two persons, to the girl's parents for settlement of marriage. These mediators were called 'Palai'. The two main considerations for the settlement of the marriage were, firstly, the willingness of the girl to get married, secondly of the marriage price which the boy's parent were prepared to pay. Good mediators or *Palai*, who know the minds of the boy's parents, would act diligently in negotiating with the parents of the girl in order to settle the marriage even if there were differences of opinion in regard to the marriage price. Marriage price was fixed in terms of cash or in kind. As mentioned earlier, a fine of Rs. 40/- that a youngman had to pay, when he was found to be the putative father of a conceived child was considered to be a heavy amount in the past. Payment of Rs. 400/- as a marriage price was regarded as a huge amount for the boy's family. The whole family of the boy would work very hard to accumulate the amount for marriage. If Rs. 40/- could buy one Mithun in those days, it would be equivalent to Rs. 4000/- which is the price of one mithun today. And the marriage price of Rs. 400/- would buy 10 mithuns which would be equivalent to more than Rs. 40,000/-. The marriage price for a girl continued to be Rs. 400/- even today. This custom and tradition practised in the past continues to exist in the present society. In the present context the amount needs to be increased. In the north of Mizoram, marriage price was settled usually at the rate of Rs. 300/- to Rs. 400/- whereas in Southern Mizoram marriage price was much higher say Rs. 1000/- or so. The marriage price was quite heavy in those days. In fact, very few parents could pay the marriage price in cash. So it was also paid in kind. Among the items of payment in kind are valuable items like guns and big jar of brass are given as a marriage price in lieu of Rs. 200/- and Rs. 100/- respectively. Marriage was usually the liking and the love for each other which initiated their life-long settlement but much was left to be negotiated by their parents through mediators or *palai*. There were also quite a number of inter-village marriages where the boy and his parents looked for a girl out of their village. In such cases marriage would be a more complicated affair to manage due to the distance involved and the absence of a bride's relative in the groom's village. There had been many occasions where a girl was compelled to marry against her will.

The settled marriage price would be paid to the girl's father in the evening. On the following day, the girl was brought to the house of the groom and the village priest or *Puithiam* would cut a fowl and chant words wishing the couple a very long life and many children. This was followed by *Zu* (Rice beer) drinking which had been prepared by the relatives of the bride and the groom. The marriage concluded with a feast to which the whole village was invited. The bride and her relatives retired to her father's home at night. She would finally come to the groom's house with her belongings the next evening to live permanently.<sup>36</sup> It was the custom for the youngmen of the village to throw mud and cowdung etc. on the bride when, she went or came out of the groom's house. They would try to make her fall down on the slippery path. It was for the care-taker or '*Lawichal*' to give protection to the bride from falling or mud being thrown at her. It was for this reason that the Mizos avoid marriage in the month of August; which they called '*Thlaserh*' meaning the cursed month for it would be damp and unfavorable weather for marriage.

The bride price was intended to establish a relationship with her dear and near ones who would help her in time of need either in sickness or in the hardships of life in the absence of her parents. And as such the bride price was distributed among the close relatives of the bride. The bride price had two main parts, the '*Manpui*' called the main price which would be received by the father of the bride, and in the absence of the father by her brother. In the past, the custom was that the mother should not receive it. The second part was the '*Mantang*' called the subsidiary prices. The *Mantang* was received by a number of persons, male and female relatives of the bride. The *Mantang*, subsidiary price was distributed among the relatives as follows :-

- (a) *Palal* Rs. 5/- : The price of *Palal* given to a man whom the bride had selected as an adoptive father. He belonged either to the same clan of her father or well-known to the bride's family. He would support the bride and take the position of her father. He would in turn give a fowl and a pot of rice bear (*zubel*) for the marriage feast.
- (b) *Pusum* Rs. 6/- : Next to *Palal* was *Pusum* price which was received by the father of the bride's mother or any maternal uncle.
- (c) *Ni ar* Rs. 2/- : *Ni-ar* price would be received by the paternal aunt.
- (d) *Naupukpuan* Rs. 2/- : This price would be given to the bride's elder sister in consideration of her having carried the bride when

she was a baby. In other words, the elder sister took care of the bride when she was a baby in the absence of her parents.<sup>37</sup>

The above marriage prices were compulsorily paid and if the father of the bride was in a better position, he might give out the same price to more than one person. There were also two optional prices, usually given out by the bride's father on the day the marriage was celebrated. They were :-

- (a) *Thain man Rs. 2/-* : This was paid to the female friends who accompanied the bride to the groom's house and assisted her to settle down in the groom's house.
- (b) *Lawichal Rs. 2/-* : This price was optional but usually paid by the bride's father. *Lawichal* or the care-taker of the bride was responsible for the protection of the bride against any foul play. This was the toughest duty on the day of marriage, particularly in the rainy season. He had to ensure that the bride should reach the groom's house without falling or any disruption of the movement enroute. *Lawichal* or the care-taker of the bride would be selected by the bride's father who had power and strength to face any mischief that youngmen may play.

### **Mizo Christian Marriage System :**

Christianity disapproved the old marriage system of the Mizo among Mizo Christians. The Missionaries introduced Mizo Christian marriage system but the old marriage system was not rejected. The settlement of marriage, the payment of bride, and the distribution of the bride price to the near and dear ones of the bride were also not rejected. All other things else remained but marriage had to be performed solemnly by a Pastor or so appointed church elders. The pioneer Baptist Missionaries were succeeded by Rev. D.E. Jones and Rev. Edwin Roland the Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries who arrived at Aizawl on 31st August 1897 and 31st December 1898 respectively. Both of them introduced the Mizo Christian Marriage system. This is found in the marriage register of Rev. D.E. Jones, kept and preserved under the care of the Presbyterian Church, Mizoram Synod Office. The marriage agreement between the Lushai Christian as found in the register of Rev. D.E. Jones read as follows :-

1. To live together until death. There is no cause of separation but adultery.
2. Whatever we may possess is not the property of either in particular, but of both equally.

3. Whoever cast the other off or leaves him or her, the same forfeits everything of the house, children, domestic animals and any possessions. The same showed one fall into adultery.
4. So price to be paid.

It is seen from the Marriage Register of Rev. D.E. Jones that on 27th May 1907, in accordance with the above agreement Mr. Liansawta of Sakawrtuichhun and Dartawii of Zobawk got married in which Mr. Siama of Sakawrtuichhun and Buki of Zobawk were the witness of the marriage. The marriage was solemnised by Rev. Edwin Roland assisted by Robert Evan. The Mizo Christian Marriage system was different from that of Indian Christian Marriage Act. The Mizo Christian marriage system was formulated by the Missionaries to suit the requirements of the Mizo Christians. The Indian Christian Marriage Act was not applied in the Lushai Hills or Mizoram. If any Mizo Christian wanted to adopt the Indian Christian Marriage act they have to necessarily go out of Mizoram for marriage. Even a Mizo Pastor, a licence holder can not perform the marriage of a Mizo Christian under the Indian Christian Marriage Act in Mizoram. The first Mizo Theologian, B.D. Degree holder Rev. Dr. Zairema who had obtained such licence from the Governor of Assam had used the licence only at Silchar, Cachar District, Assam and not in Mizoram.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, the Mizo marriage custom of the past continues till today. The bride price, on an average is Rs. 400/- paid to the parents of the bride in the evening who, in turn, distribute the same to their relatives called '*Man-eitu*' or Marriage Price receivers. The marriage price remained the same but distribution of marriage price to the *Man-eitu* (Marriage Price Receiver) has become a much higher rate than before. The father of the bride would receive Rs. 400/- or so, but he would give out double the amount to the *Man-eitu*. At present the bride price is just a token. The Mizo Christian Marriage will have to be necessarily solemnised in accordance with the Christian rites in the church by a Pastor or a church elder or a Marriage Licence holder. After the marriage function in the Church is over, then only congratulatory words are spoken and the right hand offered for congratulations to the new couple outside the Church. The Mizo Christian Marriage system has to conform to the teachings of Christianity which says, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder." Holy Bible St. Mathew 19 : 6 and "Marriage is honourable in all" Hebrew 13 : 4.

In order to maintain the sanctity of marriage, a notice was placed on the Church Notice Board for a minimum period of fourteen days. During

this period, the wedding cards are prepared and despatched or distributed to all before the marriage takes place. New trends have developed, particularly in the urban areas to organise a reception jointly by the families of the bride and the groom, either in the fellowship hall in the church compound or elsewhere. They sing songs, and tea and snacks are served to all. A feast is also organised in the evening but this is no more considered to be compulsory. What has also become a practice in the modern society, particularly in the towns, is to give some gift to the bride or to the groom either in kind or in cash ranging from Rs. 10/- onwards to any amount depending on the individual's ability.

### **Public Health Engineering (P.H.E.)**

In spite of the fact that Mizoram is under direct influence of monsoon and having received rainfall every year above 208 cm. at Aizawl and 350 cm. at Lunglei, there is acute shortage of water supply to the people in the whole state during dry season. While monsoon is playing havoc, the dry summer that preceded it, caused as much misery, forcing the people to walk miles away up and down for fetching water, or sitting all night at the nearer water points, collecting water drop by drop. The Mizo traditional practice of establishing villages on top of hills should be changed as water sources like rivers and streams are far down in the valleys. The increase of population had further aggravated water supply. The Public Health Engineering Department resorted to solve water supply problem to the extent of hiring trucks and distribute water to the public by rationing tins of drinking water on alternate days for a family of five members. During the days of dry season, a tin of water is sold for five rupees. The workload of water supply increased tremendously in the urban and rural areas of Mizoram and, the U.T. Government of Mizoram decided to separate Public Health Engineering from the Public Works Department. The P.H.E. started functioning as a separate department from August 1988 and is headed by a Chief Engineer.

As per the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade 1981-1990, Aizawl and Lunglei towns are placed under urban areas in respect of water supply the remaining areas are considered as rural areas. The greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme Phase-I designed to meet the requirement of 80,000 people of Aizawl town at the rate of 135 liters of water per head per day (i.e. 30 gallons per day).

The source of water is the Tlawng river and the minimum discharge of water by Tlawng river is 121 cusecs. The Scheme involves pumping

of water through a height of 1040 meters which is the second highest pumping water supply scheme in India next to Shimla.<sup>39</sup> The work of Greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme was completed in December, 1988.

The total cost of the Greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme Phase-I worked out to be Rs. 165.9 lakhs and annual maintenance cost is estimated to Rs. 16.7 lakhs.<sup>40</sup> The capacity of the Scheme Phase-I is for the population of 80,000 people. The Aizawl population according to 1991 census is 1,54,343 which is almost double the population to be catered for. It is, therefore, imminent that the Greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme Phase-II is required to be implemented at the earliest. Water supply pipe connection to the consumer in Aizawl town area charged with flat rate of Rs. 75/- pm. The P.H.E. is proposed to supply 135 liters of water per head per day to the consumers. In the absence of water meters, quantity of water supplied to the consumers could not be ascertained. This may necessitate the introduction of metre system to all the consumers in order to justify payment.

To the great surprise and interest of the people in the hilly area of Mizoram, the resource of under ground water was tapped out with the help of U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) in 1987. The drilling machine donated by the UNICEF to the Government of Mizoram was used for the drilling and for the installation of hand pumps in the Aizawl town.

The initial estimate cost of the greater Lunglei Water supply scheme was Rs. 14.20 crores as sanctioned on 25 Mar 1989. The target date for completion of the scheme initially was 1992 after three years of the contract agreement signed by the contractor Messrs Subhas Project and Marketing Ltd Calcutta and the Government of Mizoram State. The delay of the project works put the people to trouble for a much longer period due to the shortage of water supply in Lunglei District. It had also resulted in the revision of sanctioning additional amount of Rs. 8.34 Crores for the same scheme on 6 Oct 1993. (Rs. 14.20 Crores to Rs 22.54 Crores). Public have sensed that there was faulty contract agreement in the Scheme which brought out a State Assembly starred question in July 1996 session, that the contractor demanded additional amount Lakhs as the interest on the amount which the Government of Mizoram had not paid to him, till then. This had put the people of Mizoram in suspicion that there was a disputed amount between the Contractor and the State Government of Mizoram. and in the July session of 1996 the Assembly passed a resolution for forming an inquiry commission to look into the matter and the terms of

reference were known to the members only. The Mizoram State Assembly proceedings revealed that the members of the Inquiry Commission of different political parties were as under :-

- 1 Mr Lalbiakzuala, MLA,. Chairman
- 2 Mr Lalsawata, MLA, Member
- 3 Mr John Rotluangliana, MLA, Member
- 4 Mr Lalrinchahana, MLA, Member
- 5 Mr H Zathuama, MLA, Member
- 6 Mr F Lalzuala, MLA, Member
- 7 Dr J V Hluna, MLA, Member

However, the Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme had been commissioned and inaugurated by the Chief Minister Mr Lal Thanhawla on 22 Nov 1995. As the Contractor Agreement included 12 Months maintenance of the scheme after the works was commissioned the period came to an end in Nov 1996. Hence the Department of PHE, Government of Mizoram has now to carry out the operational function of the Lunglei water supply scheme.

Success of the water supply scheme depends on actually supplying the requirement of water to the people of the town which is yet far from done. Money involved in the scheme is Rs 22.54 crores for supply of water to the population of 35,599 (1991 Census) and the ultimate population of the town is 66,000 as indicated in the literature of the scheme distributed to public by the department of PHE on the inaugural function of Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme of the town.

Sailent features of the Greater Lunglei Water Supply scheme as shown in the literature are as follow :-

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| (a) The Height of water pump Head  | - 886.0 M. It is the highest pumping head in India |
| (b) The capacity of main Reservoir | - 2,50,00 Gallons per day                          |
| (c) Supply Rate                    | - 30 Gallons per Head per                          |
| (d) Number of Pumps                | - 4 Nos  |

(e) Diesel engine	- 2 Nos
(i) Capacity	- 1120 HP
(ii) RPM	- 1590
(f) Electric Motors	- 2 Nos
(i) Capacity	- 850 KW, 6.6 KV 3 phase
(ii) RPM	- 1488
(g) Transformer	
(i) 33/6.6 KV, 5 MVA	- 2 Nos
(ii) 6.6/0, 4 KVA	0 1 No

The on going Works of water supply schemes in Mizoram are for the towns of Serchhip and Kolasib which are expected to be commissioned shortly. Along with these schemes gravitational supply of water in rural areas are also in progress.

As on 7th May 1991 there are 80 successful hand pumps and there are 33 numbers of unsuccessful hand pumps in the Aizawl town.<sup>41</sup> The drilling machine is in full use in the rural areas of Mizoram for tapping out under ground water resources. Also as on 7th May 1991, there are 177 successful hand pumps and 53 unsuccessful drillings in the rural areas.<sup>42</sup> The underground water resources recently found all over of Mizoram have been a great boon to the people of Mizoram.

Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme was also placed under the Urban Water Supply Scheme. The work progressed slowly and the source of water was the rivers Tlawng and Pialthleng. The scheme was expected to be completed in the year 1993, The scheme was actually commissioned two years later on 23rd Nov' 95. The town was supplied with water by a gravity scheme from the source of a spring called 'Vatui' The average flow of this spring source is only 3,600 litres of water per day during the months of December- April; whereas the population requirement is of 45,000 litres per day. Therefore, emergency water supply by trucks was adopted during dry seasons from the rivers Tlawng and Mat. Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme was estimated cost to Rs. 14.20 crores. This scheme is also a pumping scheme similar to Aizawl Water Supply Scheme. During the 8th Five Year Plan augmentation of water supply is to achieve the per capita supply level of 40 litres per capita per day, programmed for every town and village. The Government of India is assisting the State

Government in terms of plan and accelerated water schemes under the central sector.

Some facts of water supply in Mizoram in the past are as under :-

1. Number of problem villages provided with drinking facilities.

1985-1986	—	60 villages
1986-1987	—	70 villages
1987-1988	—	106 villages
1988-1989	—	151 villages

2. Fund utilised for emergency water supply scheme and for mobile distribution of water in dry season by trucks in Mizoram (1985-1989).<sup>43</sup>

1985-1986	—	Rs. 92.90 lakhs
1986-1987	—	Rs. 89.39 lakhs
1987-1988	—	Rs. 173.25 lakhs
1988-1989	—	Rs. 34.85 lakhs

### Maternity and Child Welfare

Health Services and Family Welfare have improved tremendously in Mizoram after the attainment of Union Territory in 1972 and its becoming the 23rd State of the country on 20th February 1987. Health promotion steps in the state with the aim to improve the general health and quality of life of individuals in Mizo society have been taken under the Directorate of Health in the Government of Mizoram. Importance of mother and child care had been emphasised in the recent past. Mothers and children not only constitute a large group of the total population, children form a supremely important asset to the nation and they are vulnerable to diseases. The health of mother and child still constitute one of the most serious problems affecting society. Mother and child are considered as one unit.

The antenatal period of development of the foetus in the mother is about 280 days. During this period the foetus obtains all the building materials and oxygen from the mother's blood. The child's health is closely related to maternal health. A healthy mother brings forth a healthy baby.<sup>44</sup> Supervision and guidance of *Dais*, Health Workers, Nurses and Doctors are the real need of the rural poor. Steps taken to promote health



2. Khawlailung	—	10
3. Lungdai	—	10
4. Lengpui	—	10
5. Phuldungsei	—	10
6. Mimbung	—	—
7. Rabung	—	—
8. Phaibuang	—	10
9. Khawruhlian	—	10
10. Farkawn	—	10
11. Kawrtethawveng	—	—
12. Khawhai	—	—
13. Bairabi	—	—

**Subsidiary Health Centres**

1. Zawlnuam	—	10
2. Sairang	—	10
3. Vairengte	—	10
4. Kawnpui	—	10
5. Aibawk	—	10
6. Bukpui	—	10
7. Darlawn	—	10
8. Suangpuilawn	—	10

**Subsidiary Health Centres****No. of Beds**

1. Kawikulh	—	10
2. Hnahian	—	10
3. Lungdar (E)	—	10
4. Kanghmun	—	10
5. N.E. Khawdungsei	—	10

6. N. Vanlaiphai	—	10
7. Ngente	—	—
8. Bungzung	—	—
9. Kulikawn	—	—

#### Lunglei District

Medical Institution		No. of Beds
1. Civil Hospital, Lunglei	—	100
2. Tlabung Hospital	—	50+20 Beds for Leprosy.

#### Primary Health Centres

1. Hnahthial	—	10
2. Chhipphir	—	10
3. Buarpui	—	10
4. Lungsen	—	10
5. Bungmun (S)	—	—
6. Haulawng	—	—
7. Tawipui	—	—

Subsidiary Health Centres		No. of Beds
1. S. Vanlaiphai	—	10
2. Cherhlun	—	10

#### Chhimituipui District

Medical Institution		No. of Beds
1. Saiha Hospital, Saiha	—	71

#### Community Health Centres

1. Lawngtlai	—	30
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Primary Health Centres		No. of Beds
1. Tuipang	—	10
2. Lungpher	—	10

**Subsidiary Health Centres**

1.	Bualpui (NG)	–	10
2.	Bungtlang (S)	–	10
3.	Chawngte	–	10

**NB :** Number of beds not shown against the centres indicate Doctor not yet posted as on 25th June, 1990.

There are some Non-Government Medical Institutions in Mizoram which are aided by the Health Department in the form of Grants-in-aid by the Health Department. The Institutions with their numbers of Beds are as shown :-

(a)	Presbyterian Church Hospital, Durtlang, Aizawl	–	200 Beds
(b)	Christian Hospital, Serkawn Lunglei	–	100 Beds
(c)	AMSHA Hospital, Kulikawn, Aizawl	–	10 Beds

The number of Medical personnel in Mizoram are as under :-

(a)	Doctors	–	112
(b)	Staff Nurse	–	298
(c)	Sisters	–	36
(d)	Pharmacist	–	106
(e)	Health Supervisor (M)	–	66
(f)	Health Supervisor (FM)	–	77
(g)	Health Worker (M)	–	285
(h)	Health Worker (FM)	–	370
(i)	Community Health Officer	–	29

The number of Family Welfare Clinics/Centres upto 1989 :-

1.	Aizawl District	–	10 Nos.
2.	Lunglei District	–	5 Nos.
3.	Chhimtuipui District	–	3 Nos.

**Total : 18 Nos.**

### Universal Programme of Immunisation

Protection of children and mothers especially pregnant women from communicable diseases have been given in 1980 as follows :-

(a) T.T. (Pregnant Women)	--	14,216
(b) T.T. (Children 10 yrs)	--	14,979
(c) T.T. (Children 16 yrs)	-	11,495
(d) D.P.T.	-	16,684
(e) Polio	-	17,834
(f) B.C.G.	-	18,677
(g) Measles	-	12,836
(h) D.T.	-	17,790

### Maternal and Child Health

Maternal and Child Health Scheme was organised through the work of the Multipurpose Workers all over Mizoram. The target and percentage of the achievement were as follows :-

Method	Target	Percentage of Achievement
(a) I.F.A. (large)	- 31,000	- 124.1
(b) I.F.A. (small)	- 65,000	- 52.7
(c) Prophylax against Blindness due to Vit 'A' Deficiency	- 65,000	- 114.2

### Training of Dais

The Government of India fixed a target for 5 T.B.A. during 1990-1991. But the State Government used its discretion and enhanced the target to 30 T.B.A. During the year 30 T.B.A's were given training and stipend @ Rs. 300/- per head was given. There were 929 Dais in the State. They were given Rs. 3/- only as delivery service charge in accordance to Central Government instruction. The State Government has recommended to raise Rs. 3/- to Rs. 50/- for the same service.

### Training of M.P.W.

Multipurpose Worker Training Institute at Kulikawn, Aizawl selected 30 candidates to undergo 18 months M.P.W. training in 1990-1991.

M.P.W. or simply called Health Workers are the actual working hands of the Doctors and Nurses in the rural areas. They are posted at the Health Centres. The number of female Health Workers is 370 and males is 285, a total of 655 in Mizoram. The Health Workers drew a basic salary of Rs. 1350/- to 2200/- per month and other allowances.

### **V.H.G. (Village Health Guide)**

Village Health Guides are the village volunteers to assist the Health Workers in the village in advising the village people about Hygiene, Sanitation and Family Welfare. They are awarded honorarium of Rs. 50/- per month per head. There were 535 V.H.Gs in Mizoram in 1991.<sup>46</sup>

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